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EDITORIAL

History, like sermons, is not high on United Reformed Church priorities. If it were our society would be larger than it is, its membership would be younger, and its *Journal* would be more widely read within our churches. Since history is often focused on buildings which, being expensive, can inflame passions and consume time, its denominational downgrading is understandable. Indeed, even historians can sympathise, given the current vogue for theme-parking heritage into an industry; that is fashion, not stewardship. Yet it is stewardship that is at issue. Churches which proclaim a faith once delivered for all time, and which thus context time in eternity, ought to find room for history in their stewardship. The articles and reviews in this issue illuminate the extraordinary range of faith that has formed our churches: a temper which encompasses Richard Baxter and pacifist coal miners and a perspective which explains how mind-sets in Kidderminster and Wigan eventually met have some relevance for churches about to breast the twenty-first century.

We welcome as contributors David Wykes, who lectures in history at the University of Leicester, and Peter Ackers, who lectures in industrial relations at Loughborough University Business School. Dr. Wykes enlarges on the theme which he chose for the society's 1992 Annual Lecture, delivered at the week-end school held at the University of Nottingham. Dr. Ackers's paper is an outworking of his doctoral dissertation on W.T. Miller (1880-1963), the trade unionist and Nonconformist whose family contributed greatly to Wigan's Churches of Christ and who, as it happens, was Dr. Ackers's great-grandfather.

Note:

Members of this society who enjoy reading buildings will know of the *Chapels Society* (honorary secretary, Mrs. Christina Van Melzen, Rookery Farmhouse, Laxfield, Woodbridge, Suffolk) which focuses on England's non-Anglican religious architecture. June 1993 saw the formation of the *Historic Chapels Trust*. Since the Congregational Chapel at Walpole is one of four buildings which the Trust has reached agreement in principle to acquire, its progress will be of particular interest to members of our society. In its own words,

The Historic Chapels Trust has been established to take into its ownership redundant chapels and other places of worship in England of outstanding architectural or historic interest. Its object is to secure, for the benefit of the public generally, the preservation, repair and maintenance of buildings of Nonconformist, Roman Catholic, Jewish and other religious bodies, together with their contents, burial grounds and curtilages. Anglican churches eligible for care by the Redundant Churches Fund of the Church of England are excluded.

All the buildings to be acquired must be no longer in regular religious use and generally graded I or II on the Statutory List. Once they have been put into good repair, they will be made accessible to the public and it is hoped that occasional services will be held. Alternative uses may also be agreed when appropriate. The Trust will help to foster greater understanding of these buildings by means of research, publications and publicity. Supporters of the Trust will be invited to become **Friends** and the formation of local groups of **Friends** will be encouraged.

Further information can be obtained from the Director, Mrs. Jennifer M. Freeman, Historic Chapels Trust, 4 Cromwell Place, LONDON SW7 2JJ.

**“THE SETTLING OF MEETINGS AND THE
PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL”
THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE DISSENTING INTEREST,
1690-1715¹**

It is clear that religious Dissent underwent a remarkable transformation during the twenty-five year period that followed the granting of toleration in 1689. In 1689 Dissenters were still emerging from the effects of nearly three decades of persecution, which, if not continuous, had at times been extremely fierce. In some areas, principally the larger towns, Dissenters had held their meetings for many years, often served by the same minister. Few congregations, however, had escaped the disruptive effects of the two Conventicle Acts and the other penal laws. Many Nonconformist groups had been scattered by the intense persecution which followed the Exclusion Crisis, re-establishing their meetings only after James II had issued his Declaration of Indulgence in April 1687. In other places Dissenters had never succeeded in holding regular meetings or been able to support a minister of their own, having instead to rely upon the efforts of occasional preachers. By 1715, when the survey known as the Evans List was undertaken, religious Dissent had been transformed, and the returns reveal a pattern of settled meetings covering most parts of the countryside as well as the main towns, a majority served by their own minister.

If the origins of modern Dissent can be said to date from the Restoration religious settlement of 1662, the pattern of institutional Dissent found today dates from the period after the passing of the Toleration Act in 1689. The Act undoubtedly marked a new phase in the development of religious Dissent. Religious Dissent before toleration, particularly in the countryside, had often consisted of little more than small, fluctuating pockets of Nonconformity. The permanent features of congregational organisation associated with modern Dissent – the establishment of regular services and a system of church government, the appointment of a minister, the acquisition of endowments and a building in which to worship – came only with the removal of the legal threat to Nonconformists worshipping in public. Although Dissenters continued to experience discrimination in many areas of everyday life because of their refusal to conform to the Established Church, worship in public by Dissenters was at last permitted.

1. The substance of this paper was given as the 1992 Annual Lecture to the Society. I am grateful to the members of the Society for their kind invitation to give the lecture. I also wish to thank the Revd. Dr. G.F. Nuttall for his advice and comments on this paper, to acknowledge the permission of my fellow trustees to quote from the manuscripts in the keeping of Dr. Williams's Library, and to record my thanks to the Librarian and his staff for all their help. I am grateful to the Arts Budget Centre Research Committee of the University of Leicester for a grant in aid of some of the research.

Surprisingly little attention, however, has been given to these crucial decades in the development of modern Dissent. One explanation is the current focus of research. The period under the penal laws has been studied very largely in terms of the sufferings of the ejected clergy, for which Edmund Calamy's *Account* (with later editions and revisions) remains the preeminent source.² On the occasions that lay Dissent has been examined, the focus has been similar: historians have sought to record the penalties suffered under the penal laws for recusancy or for holding conventicles. There have been few attempts to examine the evidence relating to congregational organisation and activity before 1689. It is generally accepted that with the coming of toleration Dissenters obtained their religious liberty and that the period of persecution was at an end. Unlike the earlier heroic age this later period has also failed to attract much interest from historians.³ There is also a difficulty over sources. Up to the end of the eighteenth century congregational records are rare, and when available they are seldom a detailed record before the early nineteenth century. Nevertheless, a surprising amount of evidence exists to enable the historian to study religious Dissent during this crucial period.

The broad outline of the transformation undergone by Dissent during the twenty-five year period following toleration is apparent from a comparison of the 1690 Common Fund Survey with the 1715 Evans List, the two main surveys of early Dissent.⁴ The minutes of the Common Fund and its denominational successors, the Presbyterian and Congregational Fund Boards, contain much

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2. E. Calamy, *An Abridgment of Mr. Baxter's History of his Life and Times. With an Account of many other of those Worthy Ministers who were Ejected* (London, 1702); E. Calamy, *An Account of the Ministers, Lecturers, Masters and Fellows of Colleges and Schoolmasters, who were Ejected or Silenced* (London, 1713); E. Calamy, *A Continuation of the Account of the Ministers, Lecturers, Masters and Fellows of Colleges, and Schoolmasters, who were Ejected and Silenced* (London, 1727); Samuel Palmer, *The Nonconformist's Memorial* (London, 1775; 1777-78; 2nd. ed., 1802); *Calamy Revised: Being a Revision of Edmund Calamy's Account of the Ministers and Others Ejected and Silenced, 1660-2*, ed. A.G. Matthews (Oxford, 1934).
 3. For an important exception see G.F. Nuttall, "Dissenting Churches in Kent before 1700", *Journal Ecclesiastical History*, XIV (1962), pp.175-73; less successful is J.J. Hurwich, "Dissent and Catholicism in English Society: A Study of Warwickshire, 1660-1720", *Journal of British Studies*, XVI, (1976), pp.24-58.
 4. Dr. Williams's Library, London [hereafter DWL], Presbyterian Fund Board Archives, ODI161, "Common Fund Survey of Dissenting Ministers and Meetings, c.1690", published "verbatim et literatim" as *Freedom After Ejection: A Review (1690-1692) of Presbyterian and Congregational Nonconformity in England and Wales*, ed., A. Gordon, (Manchester, 1917); DWL, MS38.4, "John Evans List of Dissenting Congregations and Ministers in England and Wales, 1715-29". For a person and place index to the returns, see J. Creasey, "Index to the John Evans List of Dissenting Congregations and Ministers 1715-1729 in Dr. Williams's Library", *Dr. Williams's Library Occasional Papers*, No.11 (London, 1964). The returns for Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire and Rutland were published as "The Evans List and Dissenting Congregations in the East Midlands, 1715-29", ed., A. Rogers and M. Watts, *Bull. Local History: East Midland Region*, XIII (1978), pp.14-27.

evidence on the changes in ministers and meetings which took place between 1690 and 1715.⁵ They are particularly valuable for evidence on the smaller rural meetings for which few details otherwise exist. In addition to the denominational sources available nationally there are local records, notably the evidence on the registration of Nonconformist meeting-places under the Toleration Act at Quarter Sessions, ecclesiastical records (especially visitation returns), and a range of local sources, of which the most important are the wills of Dissenters recording bequests to ministers and meetings. This paper seeks to examine the period following toleration, to demonstrate that the decades after 1690 represented the crucial period in the development of modern Dissent, but it will begin with a consideration of the impact of persecution and its consequences for the structure and organisation of Dissent in 1690.

Dissent during the period under the penal laws

The majority of ministers ejected between 1660 and 1662 were moderate puritans or Presbyterians, though their numbers included around 130 Congregationalists and seven Baptists.⁶ The situation after the 1662 Act of Uniformity was particularly difficult for Presbyterians, because unlike the sects they had little experience of congregational organisation outside the national Church. The penal laws also made it difficult for Nonconformist ministers to gather a new congregation. Most were forced by the 1665 Five Mile Act to leave the parishes from which they had been ejected, and the Conventicle Acts, by severely disabling efforts to hold open Nonconformist meetings, made it difficult for ejected ministers to gather new congregations.

Evidence of the difficulties ejected ministers experienced in gathering congregations is provided by the 1669 Return of Conventicles. In the return for the Archdeaconry of Northampton only nine of the sixteen Nonconformist ministers recorded had been ejected from livings in the county. Of these nine only John Maidwell at Kettering was reported as continuing to live with and preach regularly at his former congregation. The Five Mile Act, by prohibiting any minister who refused to take the oath prescribed from residing in a corporate borough or any place where he had previously ministered or where he had preached since the Act of Oblivion, was intended to prevent Nonconformist ministers from serving their former congregations or residing in any of the main towns. It is unclear how Maidwell evaded the terms of the Act. Evidence from other studies suggests that Maidwell was exceptional, but even he was forced to

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5. DWL, Presbyterian Fund Board Archives, OD67, Common Fund minutes, 1 Jul. 1690 - 26 Jun. 1693; OD68, Presbyterian Fund Board [hereafter PFB] minutes, 5 Feb. 1694/5 - 4 Jun. 1722; OD401, Congregational Fund Board [hereafter CFB] minutes, 17 Dec. 1695 - 19 Feb. 1699/1700; OD402, CFB minutes, 5 Feb. 1699/1700 - 10 Dec. 1704.
 6. G.F. Nuttall, "Congregational Commonwealth Incumbents", *Trans. Congregational Historical Society*, XIV (1943), pp. 155-67; G.F. Nuttall, "Another Baptist Vicar", *Baptist Quarterly*, n.s. XXXIII (1989-90), pp.331ff.

leave Kettering in the early 1680s as a result of the renewed persecution Dissenters experienced following the Exclusion Crisis.⁷ There are rather more examples of ministers elsewhere attempting to serve their former parishioners despite being forced to reside at a distance. Nottingham had been a stronghold of puritanism from before the Civil War and the three Presbyterian ministers, John Whitlock, John Barret and William Reynolds, from the 1650s had held livings in the town. Although they were forced to leave the town in 1662, with Whitlock and Reynolds retiring eventually to Mansfield and Barret to Sandiacre in Derbyshire, they were able to continue preaching to members of their former congregation, though not without interruption or risk. As Whitlock later wrote, "During our stay at Mansfield" (which was for nineteen years),

God gave us (blessed be his Name) many opportunities of going over to our People at Nottingham, though with some intervals by Reason of Persecution sometimes breaking out. We usually were with them every fortnight's Lord's Day, as my Brother Barrett was with them the other Lord's Day, assisted by some other of our Brethren, in a stated Course.

Whitlock and his colleagues seem to have managed to maintain something approaching a regular meeting every Sunday for their former parishioners. Certainly Whitlock's reference to "a stated Course" suggests the organisation of regular meetings. Evidence from elsewhere in the country, however, makes it clear that their situation was exceptional. As Whitlock himself admitted,

to have liberty so frequently, to see and converse with our People, was a Mercy highly valuable, and the more so, because [it was] denied to several others of God's Ministers; who, to their great grief were quite driven from their People, and their relation to them rendered incapable of being kept up by personal converse, or any proper ministerial Acts; their People broken, and they driven from them, and not able to administer and enjoy any Ordinances with them, nor express their affection and relation to them, but by Prayer far from them at a great distance.⁸

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7. D.L. Wykes, "The Church and Early Dissent: the 1669 Return of Nonconformist Conventicles for the Archdeaconry of Northampton", *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, VIII, No.3 (1991-92), pp.202-3. No more than a handful of ejected ministers were able to establish permanent congregations from amongst their former parishioners. Three pastoral letters survive which were written by Maidwell in 1683 when he was in hiding, together with a further letter written in Leicester Jail where he was imprisoned in July 1685: see Northamptonshire Record Office, KTURC 1/1-3 [published as "The Pastoral Letters of Thomas Maidwell", *Trans. Congregational Historical Society*, III, pp.367-78]; DWL, Papers from the collection of the Revd. Wilton Edwin Rix, 12.63 (22), J[ohn] M[aidwell] sen., Leicester Gaol, to his daughter and son-in-law Gidley, 6 Jul. 1685.
8. J. Barrett, *A Short Account of the Life of the Reverend Mr. William Reynolds, Who slept in Jesus Feb. 26th 1697/8 in the 73d Year of his Age* (London, 1698), pp.42, 43-44.

It was said of Robert Porter, who was ejected from Pentrich in Derbyshire, that “he kept as long as he could within the Parish, to help his People in Private, when he might do Publickly”, until he was driven off by the Five Mile Act. He then retired to Mansfield.

From thence he would often visit his former Charge and Flock ... And many a dark Night hath he been engag'd in Travelling in dirty and dangerous Ways, on their account. ... At *Mansfield* he attended on the Publick Worship and kept his Meetings before or after the Publick Service, that he might not interfere.⁹

In many areas, however, ejected ministers were unable to continue ministering to their former parishioners, either openly or by stealth. Matthew Clark sen., who was ejected from the rectory of Narborough in Leicestershire, “preached to his friends in private houses, as long as he had opportunity, but the persecution growing hot, ... he removed with his family from Narborough to a solitary house in Leicester Forest”, some time before February 1663/4 when his son Matthew jun., the future Nonconformist minister, was born. With the enforcement of the Five Mile Act in 1665, Clark retired to Stoke Golding near Hinckley on the border with Warwickshire, where a number of other Nonconformist ministers also sought refuge.¹⁰ The situation in Leicester after 1662 was probably typical of other parts of the country. Although two ministers in the town refused to conform, neither was to take any part in organising religious Dissent. A number of Nonconformist ministers came to live in Leicester in the early 1660s, including Nicholas Kestian and Gabriel Major, but efforts to organise regular meetings before 1672 appear to have failed. It was not until Charles II's Declaration of Indulgence that Kestian and Major had the opportunity to gather a congregation of their own. Following Major's death in 1679, the two meetings met together under Kestian's leadership to form a single meeting known by the eighteenth century as the Great Meeting.¹¹ In contrast to Leicester, Northampton and other boroughs, Birmingham was a non-corporate town. As

9. Calamy, *Account*, p.180.

10. *Sermons upon Several Occasions; by the Reverend Mr. Matthew Clarke: some of which were never before published. To which are added, Some Memoirs of his Life, and the Sermon preach'd at his Funeral by Daniel Neal* (London, 1727), pp.viii-ix; *Calamy Revised*, ed., Matthews, p.118; *Calamy Continuation*, p.583. The funeral sermon for Matthew jun. dates these events and is perhaps more closely based on family knowledge, but Calamy uses the more evocative phrase in describing the house in Leicester Forest as “lonesome”.
11. G.L. Turner, *Original Records of Early Nonconformity under Persecution and Indulgence* (London, 1911) I, pp.758-9; *Calamy Revised*, ed., Matthews, pp.307, 333. After 1672, the Congregationalist Kestian was regularly presented for keeping conventicles or for not attending church, see Leicestershire Record Office [hereafter LRO], Archdeaconry Correction Court Act Books, 1 D 41/13/81 fos.7, 17, 96, 13/80 fos.18, 30, 41, 73; Borough Records, BR/IV/1/9/13, 11/1 & 2, 12/2, 13/[-], 14/2; BR/IV/3/125. In contrast, Major was never prosecuted, though it is clear he had an active congregation, see LRO, Will 1679/52, Jane Baddeley, spinster; Will 1680/214, Mary Simms, wid.

a consequence in the early 1660s it was, in the words of one ejected minister, "an *Assylum*, a Place of Refuge to nine of us, and two more who lived near your Town".¹² Nevertheless, in 1684, at the time when the Tory reaction against Dissenters was at its height, it was said that only five ministers were left in the town, though "We have others which come to our toune often."¹³ Mansfield, in north Nottinghamshire, another non-corporate town, likewise became, in Whitlock's words, "a Zoar, a Shelter and Sanctuary". At some point in the 1660s at least eight Nonconformist ministers sought a refuge there. Evidence can be found for other parishes which provided havens for Nonconformist ministers, as a result of the protection of a gentry patron, or because they lay near the county boundary and thus offered a ready means of escape from an approaching constable.¹⁴ Nonconformist congregations can be found in most of the larger towns before 1689, though few had a continuous or uninterrupted existence during the period under the penal laws, and there were doubtless many meetings that lasted for only a year or two before they were scattered by persecution. Although persecution might enforce at least outward conformity, it is clear that the long standing demand for a godly preaching ministry was such that in most towns efforts continued to be made to hold meetings.

The years 1678 to 1686 saw the last period of intense religious persecution in England as the Crown and its Tory allies took revenge on the Whigs and their Dissenting supporters following the Exclusion Crisis. A great many congregations, which had met more or less continuously since the 1660s or 1670s, were forced to suspend their meetings, and in many cases they broke under the intensity of the persecution. At Chester three ejected ministers, William Cook, Ralph Hall and John Harvey, had gathered meetings in 1672 as a result of Charles II's Indulgence, but the meetings fell as persecution intensified in 1682. Cook and Hall both died in 1684.

Those of their Congregations that continued dissenters generally joyn'd with Mr. Harvey, who kept close and preach'd very privately in his own house or elsewhere, and rode out the storm. But some few

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12. Thomas Bladon, *Presbyterian Meetings, Where there is a Parish-Church, are no Schisms; And they that go thither are no Schismatics. Being an Answer to Mr. Abraham Jeacock, Curate in Birmingham* (London, 1702), p.6.
 13. Letter from George Dodd, Birmingham, to his Father in London, 6 Nov. 1684, see C. Hutton Beale, *Memorials of the Old Meeting House and Burial Ground, Birmingham* (Birmingham, 1882), p.26n; J. Hill, *The Book Makers of Old Birmingham: Authors, Printers, and Booksellers* (Birmingham, 1907), p.22. The letter is now missing, and is presumed to have been lost in the major fire which occurred at the Birmingham Reference Library in 1879.
 14. At least eight ministers found a refuge in Mansfield during the late 1660s: see J.H. White, *The Story of the Old Meeting House, Mansfield* (London, 1959), Ch.2.

had Dr. Long and Mr. Burnet, who came to them now and then, and administr'd the Lord's Supper to them, and other ministers occasionally preach'd in private to them.¹⁵

The Monmouth Rebellion greatly increased the hazards faced by Dissenters. Their houses were searched for arms, and large numbers of Nonconformist ministers were rounded up and imprisoned. Philip Henry, from Broad Oak in Flintshire, was among those less fortunate, and found himself confined in Chester Castle with a number of ministers from Lancashire. Thomas Rose, ejected from Blidworth in Nottinghamshire in 1662, had continued preaching in the neighbourhood, "sometimes within Doors, and sometimes without, and contin'd so doing, till the Duke of Monmouth's Landing in the West, at which Time he was clapp'd up, together with a great many others." They included his neighbours, John Barret, William Reynolds and John Whitlock, preaching to their former parishioners in Nottingham, who were taken to Hull. Prominent lay Dissenters were also threatened with arrest.¹⁶

In April 1687 James II issued his Declaration for the Liberty of Conscience granting a general religious toleration. The Declaration was to undermine the alliance which had existed between the Anglican High Church Party and the Crown since the Exclusion Crisis, and thus ended the last great period of persecution for Dissenters. The transformation was dramatic. The Nonconformist minister, Matthew Towgood, wrote at the end of 1687 about

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15. Chester City Record Office, Records of the Matthew Henry Chapel, Chester, D/MH/1, Chapel Book, M. Henry, "A Short Account of the Beginning and Progress of our Congregation" (1710), fos.7r-8v [published in H.D. Roberts, *Matthew Henry and his Chapel, 1662-1900* (Liverpool [1901]), pp.72ff]; Roberts, *Matthew Henry*, pp.74, 36. For the ejected ministers active in Chester at this date, see *Calamy Revised*, ed., Matthews, pp.29-30, 132-33, 242, 251, 327. Roberts, because of Henry's peculiar script, read Barnet as Burnet. I am grateful to Mr. Simon Harris, Archivist at the Chester City Record Office, for confirming that the correct reading is Barnet, and therefore either Joshua Barnet, who died in June 1684 or his brother Andrew.
 16. *The Autobiography of Henry Newcome, M.A.*, Volume II, ed., R. Parkinson, Chetham Society, XXVII (1852), pp.259-60; *The Note Book of the Rev. Thomas Jolly, A.D. 1671-1693. Extracts from the Church Book of Altham and Wymondhouses, A.D. 1649-1725, and an Account of the Jolly Family of Standish, Gorton, and Altham*, ed., H. Fishwick, Chetham Society, ns. XXXIII (1894), pp.70-71; Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Eng. lett. e.29, Papers of the Henry family of Broad Oak, fos.10v, 12r, 13r, Philip Henry to his son Matthew, Gray's Inn, 20 Jun.; Matthew Henry to Philip, 7 Jul.; Philip Henry to his wife, 8 Jul. 1685 [these letters were printed in *Diaries and Letters of Philip Henry, M.A., of Broad Oak, Flintshire, A.D. 1631-1696*, ed., M.H. Lee (London, 1882), pp.337-8, 339-40, 340-1, as letters 7, 8 and 9]; British Library, Department of Manuscripts, Add MS 42849, "Papers, mainly of Philip Henry", fo.2r, P[hilip] H[enry] to Matthew Henry, Gray's Inn, 27 Jun. 1685; Calamy, *Continuation*, II, p.700, sv. Rose; Barrett, *Short Account of the Life of... William Reynolds*, p.51; *Some Remarkable Passages in the Holy Life and Death of Gervase Disney, Esq; To which are added Several Letters and Poems* (London, 1692), pp.81-92; *Diary of Ralph Thoresby, F.R.S. Author of the Topography of Leeds (1677-1724)*, ed., J. Hunter (London, 1830), I, p.181. Reynolds and Barrett had earlier been seized in Newark and jailed for infringing the Five Mile Act when they went to cast their votes as freeholders in the 1685 General Election.

A strange & astonishing providence ... now the Broken, scattered Congregations were gathered again, & such who a while ago were constrained to skulk up & down in the solitary darksome night seasons in secret corners & caves of the earth to worship God, that did gather Bread for their souls with the peril of their lives because of the terrible persecution, could now go in flocks & droves & assemble by hundreds in the streets in open publick places, & in the view & sight of their enemies ...¹⁷

Jolly experienced a similar liberty. In the month the Indulgence was issued he wrote in his diary: "At Chester I found a great change, that where I might not before appear at all, now I had the opportunity to preach openly to a congregation of severall hundreds, soe also in all my journey." It was this Indulgence, rather than the Toleration Act itself, which brought relief to Dissenters. Ministers in many parts of the country began once again to preach in public. Matthew Henry, who had promised friends he would preach at Chester if liberty was granted, came down from London and preached his first sermon to his new congregation in June.

About two or three Lord's Daies before I came the Congregation was remov'd from Mr Henthorn's Hall to a large stable of his adjoining, to which some addition was made, and at the expence of the Congregation it was fitted up and made tolerably decent and convenient for the purpose.

At Coventry "the Dissenters had every Sunday & at some other times sermons preached at St. Nicholas or Leather-hall in the morning by John Shewell & in the afternoon by Mr Gervase Bryan". Many Dissenters, however, remained suspicious of the King's intentions and some ministers refused to acknowledge the King's Indulgence or even to preach.¹⁸

The widespread enthusiasm with which Nonconformist preaching was greeted as ministers once again began their work in public again is clear. In August 1687, Matthew Henry told his father that at Chester "the work continues great, the fields white, the frame people are in encouraging, many coming in daily, above 20 additional Communic[an]ts last Sac[ramen]t day."¹⁹ In November, Matthew Henry's sister, Sarah, was writing from Nantwich to their father that "truly the harvest is very great, People flock in from the Country in

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17. [Matthew Towgood], *Ecclesiastica, or A Book of Remembrance Wherein the Rise, Constitution, Rule, Order ...* (Exeter [1874] pp.104-5.
 18. *Note Book of ... Jolly*, p.82; Roberts, *Matthew Henry and his Church*, pp.76-79; British Library, Department of Manuscripts, Harleian MS 7017, "Some Account of the City of Coventry", fo.295r; *The Life of the Reverend Mr. George Trosse; Written by Himself, and Published Posthumously According to his Order in 1714*, (1714), p.92; *Diary of Ralph Thoresby*, I, p.186.
 19. "frame" as in state of mind: Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Eng. lett. e.29, fo.44r, Matthew Henry to his father Philip, 20 Aug. 1687.

abundance 'twould do one good to see them - wee had a great meeting this morning at Mr Sevils." At Nantwich they had begun to build themselves a meeting-house because of the numbers. The response was so great that there were insufficient preachers to meet the demand for sermons. Samuel Turton, who was engaged to preach a lecture at Stafford each third Sunday, told Sarah Savage that unless her father would help by preaching for him at Nantwich, "hee knows not what to do". But Henry senior could only help if he in turn was assisted. George Illidge had made similar efforts to secure Henry's services at Wrenbury, indeed "he saies his tongue is tied up from asking you this winter". Turton felt it was incumbent upon him to preach at Stafford, for these people were "of his old acquaintance", who had supported his preaching during the dark times and who now sought his help: "hee cannot bee satisfied but to go to them sometimes."²⁰ These difficulties are evidence of the extent to which the small number of active ministers became over-stretched by the widespread popular demand for sermons that the new liberty encouraged.

The 1690 Common Fund Survey and the state of Dissent

By 1689, after twenty-five years of persecution, the situation facing the Presbyterians and Independents was critical. The important survey on the state of their meetings undertaken in 1690 by the Common Fund reveals the legacy of nearly three decades of persecution. Many of the original ministers who had suffered ejection were still preaching and, though "wonderfully preserved to this time, are aged." Under 400 (about a fifth) of the ministers silenced in 1662 were living in 1690, of whom only 330 were recorded in the Survey, and not all of those were still active in the ministry.²¹ Although they were supported by a new generation of men who had begun to preach since 1662, there was a considerable shortage of ministers. Some forty years later it was recalled that in London in 1689 there had been a great demand for young ministers.

Those who had been silenced were either dead or grown very old, and few had been educated with a view to the sacred ministry among Protestant Dissenters in late times. ... There was [also] a disposition in the people to favour the Dissenters, which filled their congregations and obliged them to press into the service of the city such young candidates as might be an ornament to religion and a supporter to the interest. It might truly be said of this time, *the harvest was great and faithful labourers were but few*; but God was mercifully pleased to lengthen the days of our fathers, 'till their children were fit to fill up their places'.

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20. DWL, Henry Manuscripts, MS 90.4, S[arah] S[avage], Nantwich, to her father, Philip Henry, 5 Nov. [1687] (The year is determined from internal evidence that the letter was written on a Saturday: November 5th was a Saturday in 1687).
 21. *Calamy Revised*, ed., Matthews, p.xvi. In addition to 330 ejected ministers recorded in the Common Fund Survey, the names of a further 60 survivors are also known.

Matthew Henry was importuned by friends both at London and at Chester with requests to settle as their minister.²²

There was a shortage not only of ministers, but of opportunities for serving a congregation, because of the harassment Dissenters experienced as a result of the penal laws. A total of 759 ministers are named in the Survey (the returns are not complete), of whom 218 were described as not having an adequate means of support together with a further 133 ministers who did not even have a congregation. Whereas some of those without a congregation were no longer preaching, due to old age or infirmity, others were clearly struggling to maintain themselves on what small gifts they received from individual sympathisers.²³ Even those fortunate enough to have a congregation were far from comfortable. John Turner, minister of a fashionable congregation in Leather Lane, Hatton Garden, told Matthew Henry in 1685:

hee hath been these 7 years upon travel & change & removal so much, & his income for the most part so small, that it cannot bee imagin'd how hee should gather much wealth & live fashionably. His present income for this year hee thinks may amount to 60£ but allowing 20£ to Mr Rushw. for that half year hee serv'd & other ordinary & accidental necessary expences the remaind[er] will be little.²⁴

At Leicester Major and Kestian, who came to live in the town after their ejection, had only been able to gather their own congregations as a result of Charles II's

22. *Sermons upon Several Occasions; by the Reverend Mr. Matthew Clarke*, p.xiv; Roberts, *Matthew Henry and his Church*, pp.76-77.
23. The Survey is not a full census of all the active ministers in 1690. There is an incomplete return for London, and no ministers are named for either Bedfordshire or the North Riding of Yorkshire. In addition, ministers known to have been active at this date in other counties, such as William Tong, are missing from the returns: see *Freedom After Ejection*, ed., Gordon, p.177. The ministers in London can in part be identified from those who registered their meeting-houses and made the necessary oaths and subscriptions under the 1689 Toleration Act: see Guildhall Library, London, MS9579, Certificates of Meetings in and about London, 1689-1715; A.D. Tyssen, "A List of Ministers residing in and about London in the Summer of 1689", *Trans. Unitarian Historical Society*, II (1920), pp.42-3. See also "London Ministers in 1695", *Trans. Congregational Historical Society*, II (1905-06), pp.43-49.
24. These comments were in answer to the charge of covetousness made against Turner. DWL, MS90.5.5, Henry MSS, Matthew Henry to his father, 24 Nov. 1685. Turner was preaching in Goldsmith's Court, Fetter Lane, in 1683. In 1685 he removed to Leather Lane. Cf. *Calamy Revised*, ed. Matthews, p.497; *Freedom After Ejection*, ed. Gordon, p.371. I am grateful to Dr. Nuttall for the following references and the suggestion that the assistant was probably Isaac Rushworth, ejected rector of Llanfair Llythynwg [i.e. Gladestry], Radnorshire: see *Diaries and Letters of Philip Henry*, ed., Lee, pp.102, 134, 138, 231; R.T. Jones and B.G. Owens, "Anghydfurfiwyr, Cymru, 1660-2", *Trafodion Cymdeithas Hanes Bedyddwyr Cymru* (1692), pp.77-8; T. Richards, *Wales under the Indulgence* (1928), p.149; DWL, MS90.5.29, Matthew Henry to his father, 11 May 1686, where Rushworth was described as minister at Warnham near Horsham in Sussex.

Declaration of Indulgence in 1672. Younger men seeking to enter on their first ministry must have faced even greater difficulties, particularly after 1672.

The Common Fund Survey discloses that many ministers were facing real hardship by the time toleration was granted, because without the support of a regular congregation they were unable to maintain themselves. In addition, there was a substantial number of embryonic congregations lacking the resources and organisation to maintain a minister. The growing seriousness of the problem caused by the shortage of ministers is evident from the Survey and, in addition to seeking information about the condition of individual ministers and congregations, the Fund also sought to establish those places "that have had & where there maybe opportunity of Religious assemblies ... were there a Minister". In Dorset it was reported that at Bere Regis, Sturminster Newton, Wimborne Minster and Winfrith Newburgh "there would be a numerous auditory if means could be found to afford a maintenance".²⁵ At Ely it was reported that there were "people willing to hear [but they] have noe minister", and similarly at March and in the rest of the Isle of Ely that the people "doe meet but have noe minister, would be willing to allow 20£ pr An." The shortage of ministers was particularly marked in Cornwall. In Padstow, Penryn, Saltash, St. Germans, Launceston and a succession of other towns, it was reported that "all these places where meetings were ... cease for want of ministers". At Carlisle it was reported that "no Minister can be got", and it was suggested that "Some Serious young men to be Sent, and to Set Up Itenerant Preachers, for Ministers is the great Want." Gainsborough, Stamford and a number of other towns in Lincolnshire were without ministers, and from Winchester it was reported that "ministers are Scarce". Sandwich in Kent, with 400 hearers, was reported vacant. The situation was more serious than even this evidence would suggest. Many of the ministers in those congregations which did have ministers, were aged, a situation likely to cause further vacancies within a very few years as death or infirmity led to their removal from the active ministry. From Hinckley in Leicestershire it was reported that the death in February 1690/1 of Henry Watts, an ejected minister, had left only the "aged Mr [Timothy] St. Nicholas", another ejected minister, to preach.²⁶ Of the fifteen ministers named in the Northamptonshire return, John Harding of Northampton was dead before the Survey was complete, and another four ejected ministers, including Strickland Negus described as "past his work through age", died within the next three years. Where sermons were provided, the provision was often precarious. At Peterborough there was only a Lecture kept up by Simon King, who had no more than a "very Small maintenance".²⁷

25. *Freedom After Ejection*, ed., Gordon, p.35, cf. p.5 sv. Bedfordshire.

26. *Freedom After Ejection*, ed. Gordon, pp.13, 19, 23, 71, 102, 57, 68, Cf. pp.77, 81, 89-90. Cf. "London Ministers in 1695", *Trans. Congregational Historical Society*, II (1905), p.48.

27. Francis Dandy of Great Oakley died in 1691; John Courtman senior in February 1691/2; John Maidwell of Kettering in January 1692/3, aged 83; and Negus died in April 1693; *Calamy Revised*, ed., Matthews, pp.138, 156, 247-8, 332, 361.

Leicestershire Dissent in 1690

Detailed studies of the Common Fund Survey for three counties in the Midlands, Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Nottinghamshire, provide evidence of the pattern and structure of Dissent in 1690. Of the urban meetings recorded for Leicestershire those for Leicester, Loughborough, Hinckley, Market Harborough and Ashby-de-la-Zouch were all gathered by ejected ministers before toleration was granted. Nonconformist congregations can be found in most of the larger towns before 1689, though, as already noted, Dissenters in Leicester, Northampton and other boroughs had had difficulty in establishing regular meetings, at least before Charles II's Declaration of Indulgence in 1672. Two market towns in Leicestershire, however, appear not to have had regular meetings before 1689. Dissent always seems to have been weak in Melton Mowbray, probably because it served a mainly agricultural hinterland. It was reported in 1690 that "there may be opportunity of publick Service", indicating at least that there was none at that time. At Lutterworth "where there had never before been any Settled meeting in those parts", the first attempt to establish a meeting shortly before the Toleration Act failed because Joseph Lee, an aged Nonconformist minister who "preached there for a little time, hee falling into weakness the meeting fell as to constancy of helps". The Dissenters in the town had acquired an old barn to meet in, and after some initial difficulties obtained preaching supplies from Peter Dowley who, by the time of the Survey, had preached there for two years: "in which time he found a very great blessing upon his ministry. Hee is now desirous to fix among them." The new congregation, however, required some financial help to enable it to support Dowley.²⁸

The other meetings in Leicestershire recorded in the Survey were rural meetings. Diseworth, Appleby, Temple Hall, Bardon Park and West Langton near Kibworth Harcourt had all been gathered before 1690. The meeting in Diseworth, near Castle Donington, had been gathered by William Smith after his ejection from the vicarage of Packington in 1662. He licensed Diseworth Grange for public worship under Charles II's Declaration of Indulgence in 1672. In April 1680 a warrant of distraint for £40 was issued against him for

28. Internal evidence points to the account for Lutterworth as dating from 1691, the date recorded against Stoke Golding, the next entry. Although the Common Fund Survey was begun in the Autumn of 1690, the return contains additions and corrections up to 1692. The three entries relating to Dowley illustrate this point. The first reference records that he was allowed £20 *p.a.* The discussion of Lutterworth under the heading "where there may be opportunity of Religious assemblies" records that he was receiving £7 a quarter, a fact revealed in the second entry under ministers with "a competent supply": *Freedom After Ejection*, ed., Gordon, pp.68, 66, 67, s.v. Dewly, Dowley. The evidence therefore suggests that Dowley began his preaching about the time of the Toleration Act, and Lee a little earlier, perhaps following James II's Indulgence in 1687, and therefore shortly before the Revolution.

holding a conventicle there.²⁹ According to the Common Fund Survey, after his death in October 1686 he was succeeded by William Pike, who was reported at the time of the Survey in 1690 as having “a very great auditory”. Pike was also preaching at Burton upon Trent. Another minister, John Woodhouse, was reported as preaching at Diseworth in 1690 as well. After 1690 the meeting at Diseworth appears to have been served by Woodhouse, with Pike becoming minister at Burton. Thomas Fox when he made his will in March 1693 left “Mr John Woodhouse of Diseworth Grange, preacher at the Meeting there, 20s. for ten years after my decease and no longer.”³⁰

The Survey also records a number of ministers who were preaching, or in some cases supporting a meeting, from their own resources. John St. Nicholas, who having married the youngest daughter of Anthony Earl of Kent owned extensive property in Burbage, was one of the ministers listed as having “a competent supply.” After the death of his son-in-law, Henry Watts, in February 1689/90, he preached at Hinckley, a mile from Burbage, from where it was reported he “doth what hee can gratis.”³¹ Thomas Davil was also preaching on his own estate to a meeting he supported at Stoke Golding where he lived, though since he lacked St. Nicholas’s wealth the burden, “which doth almost wholly lye upon” him, “is too heavy for his Estate.”³² John Jennings was recorded as preaching at West Langton to a meeting of 400 hearers, but it was noted that he “is not ingaged as pastour [and] has noe maintenance”, though he received about £5 a year in contributions. The meeting had originally been gathered in the house of Mrs Pheasant, whom Jennings had served as Chaplain after his ejection. Mrs Pheasant had died in 1689 and Jennings was therefore supporting the meeting himself while living on an estate he had purchased in the neighbouring parish of Kibworth Harcourt.³³

In addition to Langton at least two other meetings had been gathered as a result of gentry patronage, namely Temple Hall and Bardon Park. John Sheffield was one of the new generation of men who had entered the ministry after 1662. The son of an ejected minister, he was educated by John Shuttlewood

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29. Will 1686/133 William Musson, Beeby, yeoman; *Calamy Revised*, ed. Matthews, p.450; LRO, photocopy of the Town Book of Castle Donington, p.272; DE 726/2, Diseworth Parish Register, s.v. 22 Sep., 22 Oct. 1686.
 30. Pike died at Burton on 21 October 1706, aged about 50, see Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Eng. Misc. c330, Matthew Henry’s Diary, 1705-13, s.v. 26 Oct. 1706. Gordon identifies Pike with Joseph Pike, and A.G. Matthews, *The Congregational Churches in Staffordshire, with some account of the Puritans, Presbyterians, Baptists and Quakers in the county during the 17th century* ([1924]), p.251, as Thomas, but his forename is given as William in the will of Elizabeth Smalley of Shepshed, see LRO, Will 1698/1; *Freedom After Ejection*, ed. Gordon, pp.66, 96, 389; LRO, Will 1693/3, Thomas Fox, Castle Donington, yeoman.
 31. *Calamy Revised*, ed., Matthews, pp.423-4; J. Nichols, *The History and Antiquities of Leicestershire* (London, 1811), IV, pp.269, 460.
 32. *Freedom After Ejection*, ed., Gordon, p.249.
 33. *Calamy Revised*, ed. Matthews, p.297; Joseph Hunter, *Familiae Minorum Gentium*, ed., J.W. Clay (Harleian Society, XXXVII, 1894), I, p.180.

at his academy in Sulby, Northamptonshire, and ordained in September 1682.

The first Place he was at for any Continuance, was Temple Hall in Leicestershire, where he was Chaplain to Mrs Palmer, and there he married his Wife, and set up a Meeting for stated Religious Worship, which he took Care to keep up, as long as he continued in the Country, tho' he preached also at Atherstone in Warwickshire, in which Place he at length had his stated Abode.

The support by gentry families of ministers as domestic chaplains played a vital role in the provision of a preaching ministry during the period under the penal laws, by providing a maintenance for a Nonconformist minister who could also preach to the neighbouring families, as well as affording some protection to the minister. In January 1685/6 Matthew Henry was told that Samuel Bury had written that for someone who is "necessitous hee has a Chaplan's place in his ey[e], in a good family, but not above 10£ p. ann.", and temptingly "a small living of 35£ p. ann. for a you[n]g sober conformiste". The survival of Catholicism in many parts of the country had also depended upon gentry patrons supporting household priests. The Palmers of Temple Hall had been the leading patrons of Leicestershire since the 1660s, and encouraged both meetings and Nonconformist ministers. The congregation at Bardon Park had almost certainly been gathered from the meetings that John Hood had supported in his manor house through the chaplain he maintained.³⁴ In addition, there are a number of ministers recorded in the return who for reasons of age or health no longer preached regularly, such as Joseph Lee and St. Nicholas, until the latter was pressed back into service.

Nottinghamshire Dissent in 1690

In Nottinghamshire in 1690 meetings were recorded for only two towns, Mansfield and Nottingham. They do not appear to have been held in the other market towns in the County. No meetings are recorded for Bingham, Blyth, Newark, Ollerton, Retford, Southwell, Tuxford or Worksop, though it was reported that the people at East Retford "desier a Settled Minister [and] can raise £12 p. Ann. They were well inclined and doe there Utmost". This contrasts sharply with Leicestershire. Moreover, the pattern had changed little by 1715, except that a meeting was established at East Retford after 1690. It is perhaps not

34. *Calamy Revised*, ed. Matthews, p.436; Edmund Calamy, *A Funeral Sermon for the late Reverend Mr. John Sheffield, Minister of the Gospel in Southwark: Who departed this Life, Jan. 24 1725/6 An. Aetat LXXIII* (London, 1726), pp.34-5; R.H. Evans, "Nonconformists in Leicestershire in 1669", *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological Society*, XXV (1949), p.128 (Temple Hall was at Wellsborough in the parish of Sibson); DWL, MS90.5.12, Matthew Henry to his father, 12Jan. 1685/6; D.L. Wykes, "Bardon Park Meeting-House: The Registration of Nonconformist Places of Worship under the Act of Toleration (1689)", *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*, LXIV (1990) pp.31-34.

surprising to find Dissent weak in Newark, since the town had been raised to Parliamentary Borough status in 1673 as a reward for its loyalty to the Royalist cause during the Civil War. Instead meetings appear to have been held at Flintham, which was just over five miles from the town. In 1701, the Presbyterian Fund Board agreed to grant £8 a year to the meeting at Frampton, which was a mile from Newark, because of its proximity to the Borough. The same meeting of the Board agreed to allow Grantham £8 a year because "tis a Corporation". Particular efforts were made to encourage meetings in parliamentary boroughs because of their importance in returning MPs.³⁵

The other meetings in Nottinghamshire recorded in the Survey were rural meetings. Blidworth, Selston and Sutton Ashfield had all been gathered before 1690. In addition there were a number of ejected ministers who were preaching though without regularly gathered congregations. As a consequence they were all in need of assistance. John Leighton and Thomas Rose were living at Adbolton near Nottingham. Each minister was said to have "noe constant people or place" that he "preacheth in". John Jackson, who had been ejected from Bleasby in 1662, had returned to his former parish, but was said to be "very poore, [with] little encouragm^t, the people about him very poor". In October 1689 a house was registered by Joseph Hutchinson at Kneesall for Jackson to preach in. Jackson appears to have preached there until his death in 1696, though he continued to live at Bleasby, at which place he was recorded in the Presbyterian Fund as in receipt of a grant. Leighton's case was a particularly sad one: "hee is very poore, his wife very much discomposed in her head and mind, now in London for cure at his charge of 5s pr week". Both Leighton and Rose were remembered by a number of Nottingham testators in their wills, and were among the many aged ejected ministers who were assisted by the Common Fund with a grant.³⁶

As in the case of Leicestershire, at least one other meeting had been gathered as a result of gentry patronage. Wallingwells, an extra-parochial area lying on the Nottinghamshire-Yorkshire border, consisted of a substantial house and park. The owner, Richard Taylor, was a leading patron of Dissent, and a major figure in the county. In 1690 he was the High Sheriff of Nottinghamshire. It was noted in the Common Fund Survey that he "keeps a meeting in his house, hath frequently other ministers on Lords dayes and allows 20s pr Sabbath." He registered his two houses at Wallingwells and Carburton for Nonconformist worship in July 1689. Eliezer Heywood, the younger son of the celebrated Nonconformist minister Oliver Heywood, was a domestic chaplain at Wallingwells for nearly twenty years, from about 1680 until 1700, when having married he took a house in Dronfield. Although being a chaplain to a gentry family had many advantages for a young minister, particularly during the penal

35. DWL, OD68, PFB minutes, 5 Feb. 1694/5 – 4 Jun. 1722, II, pp.89-91.

36. Nottinghamshire Record Office, PRNW 1695, John Hydes, Nottingham, haberdasher of hats; PRNW 1696, Elizabeth Goodale, Nottingham, wid; *Freedom After Ejection*, ed., Gordon, p.302; DWL, OD67, Common Fund Minutes, fos.38, 53.

period, it would have been much less attractive to a married man, especially if he had begun a family. John Sheffield, who had been a domestic chaplain to Mrs Palmer in Temple Hall in the 1680s, subsequently moved to Atherstone to his own house after he had married.³⁷

Northamptonshire Dissent in 1690

In Northamptonshire the Survey listed thirteen places where there were “Congregations formerly, [but] now discontinued”, and “if they had Ministers there is a likelihood of great Good”. The list included market towns such as Daventry, Towcester and Welford. A number of entries in the Survey also recall the earlier pattern of Dissent before toleration. Francis Dandy had retired to Col. Brooks’s house at Great Oakley following his ejection in 1662, where he remained preaching until his death in 1691. Stephen Fowler, ejected from Crick, was recorded in 1690 as preaching in his former parish together with John Worth sen., who had been ejected from the adjoining parish of Kilsby. Earlier, in December 1687 following James II’s Indulgence, both ministers had been reported as preaching in their houses with “an open door”.³⁸ Nevertheless, the Survey also records a number of developments that had occurred since toleration. Three ministers came to Northamptonshire shortly after the Toleration Act was passed. Richard Davis, later to gain notoriety for his part in disrupting the accommodation between the Presbyterians and Independents, was chosen pastor at Rothwell early in 1690. William Shepherd and Michael Harrison both resigned livings in the Church of England. William Shepherd, Rector of Tilbrook, Bedfordshire, had “conform’d at first, and continu’d for some Years in his Living as a Conformist ... At length he quitted his Living, and became Pastor to a Dissenting Congregation at Oundle.” Harrison, according to Calamy, gathered “a congregation of Dissenters about Potterspury, designing to quit the Church, and settle among them”, and he converted a barn for the use of the new meeting. Five individuals were also named in the Survey as qualifying themselves in preparation for entry into the ministry, though none were to serve in Northamptonshire. Although the returns make clear that many meetings were unable to support a minister without assistance, and, indeed, that a number of ministers were in urgent need of financial help, it is nevertheless clear that there were also meetings able to maintain their own minister. Both

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37. Taylor died 20 April 1699, aged 50. *The Rev. Oliver Heywood, B.A. 1630-1702; His Autobiography, Diaries, Anecdote and Event Books*, ed., J.H. Turner, in 4 vols., (Brighouse, 1882-1885), I, p.92, III, pp.300-01, IV, pp.152-3, 162-3; *The Nonconformist Register, of Baptists, Marriages, and Deaths, Compiled by the Revs. Oliver Heywood & T. Dickenson, 1644-1702, 1702-1752, Generally known as the Northowram or Coley Register*, ed., J.H. Turner (Brighouse, 1881), pp.306, 51, 261; Nottinghamshire Record Office, QSM 1/15, Quarter Sessions Minute Book, [July 1689] – 21 April 1699.
38. *Calamy Revised*, ed., Matthews, p.156; *Calendar of the Correspondence of Richard Baxter: II, 1660-1696*, ed. N.H. Keeble and G.F. Nuttall, (Oxford, 1991), p.294. John Worth and his son John jun. were reported as preaching mainly in Warwickshire, see *Freedom After Ejection*, ed., Gordon, pp.76, 118-19, 390.

Richard Davis at Rothwell and William Shepherd at Oundle were noted as having £30 a year. John King, one of the new generation of ministers, was reported as “gone Downe” to Wellingborough, and “is Settling a congregation where they will raise him 30£ p Ann. to Stay”. He already had a wife and child and “more Comeing”. The congregation at Potterspurty was reported as having undertaken to provide their minister with “a maintenance.”³⁹

The 1690 Common Fund Survey

The Common Fund Survey is invaluable as a record of the state of the two main Dissenting denominations on the threshold of toleration. In many respects the Survey records the pattern of Dissent belonging to the earlier period under the penal laws rather than the developments that had occurred since toleration. This in itself is hardly surprising since the time that had elapsed since toleration was too short for any widespread change in the structure of Dissent to have occurred. Nevertheless, the Survey by recording the surviving ejected ministers, the “aged Mr St. Nicholas” and the increasingly infirm Joseph Lee of Cotesbach, and by gathering information on those places “that have had & where there maybe opportunity of Religious assemblies”, inevitably looked back to the period of Dissent under the penal laws. A major purpose of the Survey was to identify the areas where Dissent was weak and where financial support was needed. It is clear meetings still largely depended upon the efforts of individual ministers, although in the countryside the contribution to the gentry who allowed their chaplains to preach to their neighbours, or in some cases to Dissenters in nearby parishes, was important.

Before toleration most Presbyterian meetings were personal meetings that relied upon the willingness of a minister to preach and often a lay patron to provide a meeting-place. Such meetings existed only as long as the minister or lay patron was willing and able to uphold the meeting. It is true the Congregationalists had a number of well established meetings with their own congregational organisation and structure before 1689, indeed in some cases before 1662. Nevertheless, even those Congregational churches that can successfully claim an uninterrupted history from before 1689 appear to be exceptional and few in number, and the majority were established as permanent congregations only after toleration was granted. Undoubtedly many congregations, particularly in the towns, though they lacked any formal status until after 1689, were of many years standing, and indeed had often been served by the same minister over a long period. A small number had acquired their own buildings for worship and, in a few exceptional cases, had even taken advantage of the Declaration of Indulgence issued in 1672, or James II’s Indulgence in 1687, to

39. Calamy, *Continuation of the Account*, p.131; *Freedom After Ejection*, ed., Gordon, p.280; Calamy, *An Historical Account of My Own Life*, ed. J.T. Rutt (London, 1829), I, p.301. Shepherd’s Nonconformity appears to have been a *cause célèbre*, see Historical Manuscripts Commission: 25, Manuscripts of S.H. Le Fleming, esq., of Rydal Hall (1890), p.294.

build their own meeting-house.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, although many of the organisational and institutional features of Dissent associated with toleration can be found earlier, most of the meetings concerned cannot be considered settled congregations. Under the penal laws the provision of sermons largely depended upon individual ministers and lay supporters rather than on the existence of a congregation. The renewed persecution of the 1680s that followed the Exclusion Crisis was experienced by all denominations. It was not only the Independents at Axminster who were broken and scattered by this persecution. In January 1682/3 the Independent Church at Cockermonth (founded in 1651) resolved to give up its public meetings at the minister's house because of the intensity of the persecution. They agreed "to keep them very privately" and that the Church "should meet once a fortnight in little companies." Even this proved too dangerous, and by the end of the year all meetings at the minister's house had been discontinued. "A very sad providence then falling in shut up the church's door."⁴¹ Few Dissenters of any denomination were able to hold regular meetings in public during this period. The passing of the Toleration Act in 1689 seems, therefore, to represent a new beginning for many Congregational as well as Presbyterian meetings.

The development of Dissent under toleration

The efforts of individual ministers and their lay patrons kept alive the idea of a reformed preaching ministry during the years under the penal laws, but they and their successors also brought about a remarkable transformation in the structure and organisation of religious Dissent in the period that followed. The two decades after 1689 witnessed the development of Dissent from a series of harassed, often informal, meetings into settled congregations with their own ministers, regular services and meeting-places. Although in practice Dissenters had been able to worship in public without restraint since the publication of James II's Declaration of Indulgence in April 1687, the Toleration Act represented a new and important phase in the development of Dissent. By acknowledging that Dissenters could hold meetings in public, the Act granted them some measure of legal recognition and so encouraged congregations to acquire the institutional forms and structures characteristic of modern Dissent: a system of church government, the setting-up of a quarterly subscription to finance the ministry, the keeping of accounts, ownership of the meeting-place, and control over the appointment of the minister. Lay Dissenters not only supported the minister with their financial contributions, but as trustees, deacons and elders they came to manage and control the meeting itself. As a

40. D.L. Wykes, "James II's Religious Indulgence of 1687 and the early organisation of Dissent: The building of the first nonconformist meeting-house in Birmingham", *Midland History*, XVI (1991), pp.89-93.

41. [Towgood], *Ecclesiastica, or A Book of Remembrance*; "Extracts from 'A Register of the Records of the Church gathered in and about Cockermonth, in Cumberland.'", *Christian Reformer*, X (1824), pp.126-7.

result meetings were no longer so dependent upon the effects of individual ministers for their existence, and congregations could survive both the loss of a minister and the appointment of someone who proved to be unpopular.

The period after 1689 also saw the establishment of trusts and charity funds, not only at a local level for the support of particular meetings, but also at a national level to support the poorer ministers and to finance their education. There is little doubt that the Presbyterian and Congregational Fund Boards played a crucial role in helping both to establish new meetings and to maintain those causes which already existed, particularly in the countryside. Almost certainly without this assistance few rural meetings could have supported an educated minister, and it is likely that a majority of the meetings themselves would have disappeared by the early eighteenth century. Moreover, the establishment of a separate Congregational Fund in 1695, with the design of promoting the Congregational interest, helped to widen the denominational divisions within Dissent in the period that followed the break up of the Happy Union in 1692. The greater freedom that came with toleration also gave a fresh impetus to the establishment of Nonconformist academies, in addition to confirming the urgent need to train new men to replace those Nonconformist ministers who were incapacitated by age or who had died. The success in replacing the ejected ministers, a majority of whom had been university trained, with ministers educated at a Nonconformist academy is one of the great achievements of Dissent in the period following toleration. Perhaps the key factor in the institutional development of congregations was the ownership of the building used for meetings. Congregations that acquired their own meeting-places avoided the uncertainty of having to rely upon the good will of a private individual to provide a place whenever required in which to meet. The need to establish a trust and to appoint trustees to hold the property on behalf of the members also created an administrative structure which assisted in the institutional development of the meeting and therefore its continuing existence. The Toleration Act, despite its many limitations, proved to be a landmark in the development of Dissent since it encouraged the setting up of new meetings as well as the settling of those which already existed. As a result of the Act, Dissent was no longer confined to an illegal, twilight existence, but had at last the opportunity to develop and grow.

DAVID L. WYKES

**“GOD PRESERVE ... NEW ENGLAND”:
RICHARD BAXTER AND HIS AMERICAN FRIENDS**

December 1991 was the three-hundredth anniversary of the death of Richard Baxter, perhaps the most important figure in seventeenth-century English Puritanism and Nonconformity. He was born in Shropshire on 12 November 1615 and died in London on 8 December 1691. He was a “Lecturer” at Kidderminster in Worcestershire in 1641-42 and again from 1647 to 1660, and thereafter he lived in or near London. Much has been written about Baxter¹ but very little of it has dealt with his connections with New England. Yet New England exercised a powerful hold over Baxter’s imagination from the days of his youth up to the last days of his life.

While he was in prison in 1686 (for views expressed in his *Paraphrase of the New Testament* of 1685) Baxter, as an instance of the fact that “ignorant men talk as in a dream of things unknown”, recalled something which had taken place “about 50 years ago”. He and a friend had decided to emigrate to New England and had fixed on the place where they would settle by referring to a map. They later decided against emigration but in 1686 Baxter ruefully admitted that the place they had decided on remained even then inaccessible to New England immigrants.²

The period in question is that from 1634 to 1638, when Baxter was living in his native Shropshire.³ His greatest friend at this period was probably James Berry, the future Cromwellian Major General.⁴ That they both lived in Shrewsbury, the county town, at this time is suggested by a letter which Berry wrote to Baxter from there in 1638⁵ (Baxter’s description of Berry is “my old bosom friend that had lived in my house and been dearest to me”).⁶ It is possible that Berry was the friend with whom Baxter contemplated emigrating to New England. He was impressed by the “very zealous godly Nonconformists in Shrewsbury and the adjoining parts”, and “... when I understood that they were people persecuted by the Bishops, I found much prejudice arise in my heart against those that persecuted them”.⁷ This provides a motive for Baxter and his friend (whoever he was) wishing to emigrate to New England. It is well known that several prominent English Puritans considered emigrating there in the 1630s (they

1. For example, F.J. Powicke, *A life of the Reverend Richard Baxter 1615-1691* (1924) [=Powicke 1] and *The Reverend Richard Baxter under the Cross* (1927) [=Powicke 2]; G.F. Nuttall, *Richard Baxter* (1965) [=Nuttall]; W.M. Lamont, *Richard Baxter and the Millennium* (1979) [=Lamont].
2. Lamont, p.215.
3. See Nuttall, pp. 11-16 on this period.
4. On James Berry see Sir J. Berry and S.G. Lee, *A Cromwellian Major General* (1938).
5. Baxter Letters, iv. f.194, *Calendar of the Correspondence of Richard Baxter* (ed. N.H. Keeble and G.F. Nuttall, 1991), no.1 (= Calendar).
6. *Reliquiae Baxterianae* (ed. M. Sylvester, 1696) 1, i, 57, 83. (Henceforth *Rel. Baxt.*)
7. *Rel. Baxt.* 1, i, 13 {17; *Against the Revolt to a Foreign Jurisdiction* (1691), pp. 539-40.

included John Pym and Oliver Cromwell) and large numbers of people (perhaps some four thousand families)⁸ in fact made the journey in the search for greater freedom of worship than they could enjoy in the England of Archbishop Laud.

Alternatively, the "friend" could be Sylvanus Taylor, who came from the village of Harley in Shropshire, across the river from Baxter's own village of Eaton Constantine. In a work of 1654 which he dedicated to Taylor Baxter, he recalled that, sixteen or seventeen years before, he and Taylor had discussed the rise of Antinomianism in New England (the significance of which, as he admits, Taylor immediately saw).⁹ What they discussed was almost certainly the banishment from Massachusetts of the Separatist Roger Williams and the *furor* caused by Mrs Anne Hutchinson.¹⁰ Both episodes caught Baxter's imagination but that involving Mrs Hutchinson and her disciples may be said to have obsessed him. In particular, what were claimed to be the "monstrous" births produced by Mrs Hutchinson and her disciple Mrs Mary Dyer seemed to Baxter to be supreme examples of divine judgements, as may be seen from the number of references he makes to them.¹¹ In *The Saints Everlasting Rest* (1650), his most famous work, he wrote, "... I cannot digress to fortify you against these sects. You have seen God speak against them by judgements from Heaven. What were the two monsters in New England but miracles? Christ hath told you, 'by their fruits you shall know them' "¹² In January 1689-90 he wrote of "God's miraculous judgements in New England on Mrs Dyer etc."¹³ and in *The Certainty of the World of Spirits* (1691) he refers to "the case of Mrs Hutchinson and Mrs Dyer in New England, ... in the time of Sir Henry Vane's government, detected by wondrous monsters... I entreat the reader to get the history of all in Mr. Thomas Weld's book (one of their ministers)".¹⁴ In 1644 Thomas Weld had brought out *A short History of the Rise, Reign and Ruin of the Antinomians, Familists and Libertines that infected the churches of New England*.

Overall, however, New England was more a source of inspiration to Baxter than a dreadful warning.¹⁵ Though Antinomianism had briefly flourished there, it had been defeated by the determined action of the godly. He would have noted that in 1637 the great Massachusetts General Court had passed an order forbidding anyone to settle in the colony who was not of proven orthodoxy.¹⁶ In the 1650s Baxter sought, by means of the Worcestershire Association, to realise his and others' ideas of "church discipline".¹⁷ Moreover, as Professor Lamont

8. Hugh Martin, *Puritanism and Richard Baxter* (1954), p.26.

9. Lamont, p.148. *Calendar*, no. 168.

10. J.H. Anderson and H.F. Folland, *Sir Harry Vane* (1973), pp. 63, 64, 84f.

11. Lamont, p.215; Powicke 1.231f.

12. *Saints Everlasting Rest* (1650), {5, Introduction.

13. Powicke 1.233 note.

14. *Certainty of the World of Spirits* (1691), p.123.

15. Cf. Lamont, p.215.

16. Daniel J. Boorstein, *The Americans: The Colonial Experience* (1950) p.7.

17. Nuttall, p.66f.

has shown, he was increasingly convinced in this period of the crucial role of the "godly magistrate".¹⁸ In both these respects he looked to New England as the paradigm. As Lamont points out, "the dream of a godly discipline on the New England model" remained with Baxter to the end of his life.¹⁹ And he greatly envied a society in which, though it was not a theocracy in the strict sense, magistrates regularly sought the advice of ministers.

It was during Baxter's stay in Coventry in the Civil War that, as far as we know, he first became acquainted with men from New England: "one or two that came among us out of New England (of Sir Henry Vane's party there)... had almost troubled all the garrison by infecting the honest soldiers with their opinions".²⁰ Sir Henry Vane (1613-62) had been Governor of Massachusetts in 1635-37 and had encouraged and supported the Hutchinsonians.²¹ Almost all the references testify to a profound detestation of him. Baxter's first American correspondent was John Eliot (1604-90), the Apostle of the American Indians. Eliot was a Congregationalist and formed "gathered churches" among the baptised Indians, which, as Powicke noted, "was not precisely Baxter's notion of a church."²² Nevertheless he admired Eliot greatly for his work among the Indians. The propagation of the gospel, whether among the American Indians or among the Welsh,²³ was to him a matter of the utmost moment. As he wrote in his Autobiography,²⁴ "No part of my prayers are so deeply serious as that for the infidel and ungodly world". He sent Eliot a copy of his *Saints Everlasting Rest*, and the first letter of their surviving correspondence²⁵ is Eliot's letter of thanks, dated October 16 1656.

In his reply of 20 January 1656-57 Baxter wrote, "I know no work in all the world that I think more highly and honourably of than yours and consequently no person whom I more honour for his work's sake." In 1665 Eliot produced a pamphlet²⁶ called *Communion of Churches, or the Divine Management of Gospel Churches by the Ordinance of Councils...* This passed largely unnoticed in New England but impressed Baxter, who wrote to him on 5 February 1669/70, "... if your method of communicatory concordant councils were set on foot, the concordant churches... would in time wean out and shame the sects into nothing".

18. Lamont, ch.3.

19. *Ibid.* p.215.

20. *Rel. Baxt.* 1, i, 45 {66. Cf. *Plain Scriptures Proof* (1651), "I have had acquaintance with some of them that left New England when Mr. Wheelright and Mrs Hutchinson were discharged". This was almost certainly in Coventry.

21. J.H. Adamson and H.F. Folland, *op. cit.*, esp. chs. 4 and 5.

22. *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* XV, (2 July 1931), p.7 (= B.J.R.L.).

23. Nuttall, p.82.

24. *Rel. Baxt.* 1, i, 131 {213 (23).

25. F.J. Powicke in B.J.R.L. XV (1931), pp.3-66 prints the entire surviving correspondence between Eliot and Baxter (= *Calendar*, no. 327 etc.). Dr. Powicke estimated that something less than a half of their actual correspondence survives.

26. It was printed at Cambridge, Massachusetts.

An ordinance of the Rump Parliament of 27 July 1649, set up the "Corporation for Promoting and Propagating the Gospel among the Indians of New England". The President was William Steel (later Chief Baron of the Exchequer), and he had a Treasurer (Henry Ashurst) and fourteen Assistants to help him. In 1660, at the Restoration, the lands which the Corporation had bought were seized by their former owner. As Baxter relates,²⁷ "Colonel Bedingfield, a Papist... refuseth either to surrender them or to repay the money... Mr Ashurst called the old Corporation together and desired me to meet them... and, because of our other business, I had ready access to the Lord Chancellor;²⁸ they desired me to solicit him about it". Edward Hyde, the Lord Chancellor, saw to it that the Corporation recovered the lands, which brought in about £700 a year, and also procured them a new charter; "Mr. Ashurst and myself had the naming of the members". The new President was Robert Boyle, the great chemist, with Henry Ashurst once again as Treasurer. Alderman Ashurst (d. 1680) was one of Baxter's closest friends²⁹ in the years after 1600, and his son Sir Henry Ashurst would be one of Baxter's executors. In the last surviving letter between Eliot and Baxter John Eliot wrote, on 30 March 1682, "Mr. Ashurst [Sir Henry] sent me one of the funeral sermons at his good father's decease which was preached by you". Because of his work for the Corporation Baxter "had letters of thanks from the Court and Governor [John Endicott] in New England, and from Mr. Norton [John Norton] and Mr. Eliot".³⁰ The historian of the Corporation has written that Baxter was its "staunchest ally"³¹ at this time and suggests that it was he who saved it from extinction.

Until the year 1670 John Eliot seems to have been Baxter's only regular American correspondent. However, late in the year 1669 or in early 1670 he received a letter from the Revd. John Woodbridge in New England.³² In his reply of 3 February 1669/70 Baxter began with a mild reproof: "worthy brother, the error of your overvaluing expressions of me I impute to your 3000 miles distance. We all seem better to those that behold us afar off". His last words are, "If you write any more to me, leave out your complaints". In his reply Woodbridge sent a detailed account of the ecclesiastical state of New England. Baxter's second letter ends as follows: "I have directed to Mr. Bradstreet at Boston, as my gift to your university library, Dr. Castell's Polyglot Lexicon,³³ with the first of Mr. Poole's four volumes of the 'Critics'.³⁴ I had sent with them the Polyglot Bible

27. *Rel. Baxt.* 1, ii, 290 [148. *Calendar*, nos. 679 and 684.

28. The Lord Chancellor was attempting to secure for Baxter the position of vicar of Kidderminster.

29. On Henry Ashurst, see *D.N.B.*

30. *Rel. Baxt.* 1, ii, 291 [149].

31. W. Kellaway, *The New England Company, 1649-1776* (1961), p.41.

32. On their correspondence see Powicke 2, 46-48. *Calendar*, nos. 784, 791, 834, 855.

33. Dr. Edmund Castell's *Lexicon Heptaglotton* was published in 1669.

34. On Matthew Poole (1624-79) see *D.N.B.* The first volume of his *Synopsis Criticorum* was published in 1669, and the fifth (not fourth) and final volume in 1676. It was a synopsis of the works of commentators on the Bible.

[also by Dr. Edmund Castell and published in 1657], but that I understand that my friend Mr. Boyle had sent it before. I shall, if God will that Mr. Poole live to finish them, send the other three volumes of the 'Critics' ...". There exists a letter of 5 February 1671/72 from Simon Bradstreet to Baxter acknowledging receipt of books by "my cousin John Woodbridge".³⁵ The university referred to by Baxter is of course Harvard, which has some fifty books which once belonged to him.³⁶ In 1682 he wrote,³⁷ "I purposed to have given [my library] almost all to Cambridge in New England. But Mr. Knowles³⁸ (yet living), who knew their library, told me that Sir Kenelm Digby³⁹ had already given them the Fathers, Councils and Schoolmen; but it was history and commentary which they wanted. Whereupon I sent them some of my commentaries and some historians".

Baxter was much encouraged by the New England Synod of 1662, which he saw as setting its face against Separatism. The Synod produced the "Half-Way Covenant" (allowing for a form of church membership by those who had not had a conversion experience of the kind so valued by strict Congregationalists). There is an extended discussion of the Synod and its results in Baxter's *Defence of the Principles of Love*⁴⁰ (1671), where he writes, "... since their Synod's late moderation I know not many churches in the world... who are nearer to my own judgement, in order and discipline, than those of New England, and none that for piety I prefer before them... I need not mention the great moderation of New England, where their late healing endeavours greatly tend to increase our hopes of reconciliation... whose experience hath possessed them with a deep dislike of the spirit of separation and division".⁴¹ Baxter was sufficiently heartened by the reconciliation between Congregationalists and Presbyterians there to propose a "new Protestant union" in England itself.⁴²

The "Half-Way Covenant" was drafted by Richard Mather (1596-1669), who would seem to have written more than once to Baxter (though the letters are not extant).⁴³ Richard Mather was the father of Increase Mather (1639-1723) and

35. The letter from Bradstreet is Baxter Letters vi, ff.18-19. (= *Calendar*, no. 875). Simon Bradstreet (d. 1697) was the husband of the poet Anne Bradstreet.
36. C.B. Clapp, "The Gifts of Richard Baxter and Henry Ashurst to Harvard College" in *Transactions of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts* xx (1919). G.P. Winship (ed.), *The New England Company of 1649 and John Eliot* (1920), p. 164.
37. *The True History of Councils* (1682), p.57.
38. On John Knowles (?1600-85) see *D.N.B.* He had been in New England and Virginia in the 1640s.
39. On Sir Kenelm Digby (1603-65) see *D.N.B.*
40. *A Defence of the Principles of Love* (1671), p. 157f.
41. Both quotations appear in Lamont, pp. 226-27.
42. *Ibid.* p. 226.
43. Baxter wrote to John Woodbridge in February 1669-70: "I never wrote to any that I remember in New England but Mr. Eliot". (*Calendar*, no. 791j). However, he wrote to Eliot on September 2 1671 (*Calendar*, no. 848) that he had just been "sealing up letters for New England", which suggests that by that date he had a number of New England correspondents.

grandfather of Cotton Mather (1662-1728). The Mathers⁴⁴ collectively form Baxter's most important American connection, though only Increase Mather was known to him personally. As Professor Lamont has shown, it was during his sojourn in prison in 1686 that Baxter began the millenarian speculation that occupies so much of his last five years.⁴⁵ In 1688 Increase Mather, since 1685 President of Harvard, came to England with other representatives from Massachusetts to negotiate a new charter for the colony. On 20 June 1688 Mather called on Baxter, who was then living in Charterhouse Yard.⁴⁶ In 1690 Baxter turned his mind to publishing his thoughts on the Millennium. To this end he sent Mather the manuscript of what he would publish in 1691 as *The Glorious Kingdom of Christ*. Mather's notes on this manuscript, dated 16 December 1690, survive.⁴⁷ He disagreed with much that Baxter had written but still urged him to publish: "I would not discourage you from printing your sentiments because (1) as to the main we agree... (2) though in some things we differ, yet they are such matters as we may [differ about in charity]". Publication "may occasion further searchings into these mysteries and so discovery of truth...". When the work was published it carried a dedication of Mather "the learned and pious Rector of the New England college (now in London)".⁴⁸

The Preface to this work includes a letter to Mather, dated 19 December 1690 and replying to Mather's notes of the 16th. In this letter he wrote: "I have read no man that hath handled it with so much learning and moderation as you have done. And therefore I know of no man fitter, if I do err, to detect my errors... I therefore direct these lines to you to entreat you to write (whether I be alive or dead) your reasons against any momentous or dangerous error which you shall here find...". One of the subjects on which they differed was Baxter's denial of a general conversion of the Jews as a prelude to the Millennium, which Mather thought against "the judgement of the greatest divines, or the generality of them, which this and the past age has produced". In his *Dissertation concerning the Future Conversion of the Jewish Nation* (1709)⁴⁹ Mather wrote that Baxter "not long before his death, in private discourse,... did seriously profess his desires to me that, if I observed any dangerous errors in any of his writings, in case the Lord should continue my life after his, I would refute that error".

In 1684 Increase Mather published his *Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences*, which recorded instances of ghosts, witchcraft and other supernatural phenomena. The inspiration for the work, as the Preface makes clear, was a manuscript, probably written by Matthew Poole, which Mather had found

44. On the three Mathers see *D.N.B.*

45. Lamont, esp. ch.1.

46. K.B. Murdock, *Increase Mather* (1966 edition) [=Murdock].

47. *Baxter Treatises* VII, no. 220. *Calendar*, no. 1216.

48. A copy of Baxter's *Church Concord* (1691), now owned by the American Antiquarian Society, once belonged to Increase Mather, and is inscribed, in Baxter's hand, "ex dono authoris" (Murdock p. 265).

49. Increase Mather, *Dissertation concerning the Future Conversion of the Jewish Nation* (1709), p.2, *Calendar*, no. 1215, headnote.

among the papers of the Revd. John Davenport (d.1670).⁵⁰ In 1691 Baxter published *The Certainty of the World of Spirits*, a work of the same scope as Mather's essay. It records "providences" which Baxter had been gathering for some 35 years or more. Yet Matthew Poole was almost as great an influence on the "Certainty" as he had been on Mather's *Essay* of 1684. He had written to Baxter in 1657 suggesting a co-operative venture for the "registering of illustrious providences".⁵¹ Though the scheme had died with the Commonwealth in 1660, one may argue that it bore fruit both in Mather's *Essay* and in Baxter's *Certainty of the World of Spirits*.

However, this work would probably not have seen the light of day but for Increase Mather. In 1690 Mather sent Baxter a copy of his *Essay*. In November 1690 Baxter wrote to Mather⁵² "at Major Thompson's house at Newington": "... You have very much gratified me by your two books. Your very style and mode of writing is so suitable to my genius that it pleaseth me even when I cannot consent to the matter.. I am so much taken with your history of prodigies that I purpose to put my scraps into your hands (so much as is not lost) and not only so, but to furnish you with some more from a friend, if you will reprint your book while you stay here and add these as a supplement. For I see you have great skill in selecting and contracting. I pray tell me whether you have any to sell⁵³ (and where)".

Mather seems to have persuaded Baxter to publish his "scraps" himself. In addition, Baxter contributed a Preface to the second (London) edition of 1691 of Cotton Mather's *Late Memorable Providences relating to Witchcrafts and Possessions* (1689). In it he rejoiced to leave behind someone "likely to prove so great a Master Builder in the Lord's work". Cotton Mather also wrote a work on the life of John Eliot, which his father sent to Baxter in August 1691.⁵⁴

Increase Mather paid a visit to Richard Baxter on the day before Baxter died (this took place on 7 December 1691 and Mather was accompanied by Dr. William Bates). Baxter told them, "I have pain... but I have peace, I have peace...". Later he told them that he was "almost well", and he said to Mather, "I bless God that you have accomplished your business. The Lord prolong your

50. Mather suggests in his Preface that Poole's MS had been sent to Davenport (who emigrated to New England in 1637) by his friend Samuel Hartlib. Among the Hartlib Papers at Sheffield University is a copy of Poole's "Design for Registering of Illustrious Providences" (26/8/1A). There is evidence among the Papers that Hartlib circulated copies of the "Design" to some of his friends. Davenport, whom he had known in England before 1637, may have been one of them. I should like to thank the Directors of the Hartlib Papers Project for their assistance in this matter.

51. Lamont, pp.30-31. *Calendar*, nos. 390, 392-94.

52. Baxter letters I, ff. 217-18; Murdock p. 265; Lamont, p. 31. The "friend" mentioned by Baxter may be Henry More (d. 1687), who had taken over and augmented Joseph Glanville's collection of prodigies.

53. Murdock gives "sell" and Lamont "tell". From an examination of the original I am convinced that Baxter, who was presumably being facetious, did indeed write "sell".

54. On this work see David Lewin, *Cotton Mather* (1978), p. 184.

life".⁵⁵ However, the story of Richard Baxter and New England may fittingly end with his letter to Mather of 3 August 1691:

Dear brother, I thought I had been near dying at 12 o'clock, in bed; but your son's book revived me; I lay reading it until between 1 and 2. I knew so much of Mr. Eliot's opinions by many letters which I had from him. There was no man on earth whom I honoured above him. It is his evangelical work that is the apostolical succession that I plead for. I am now dying, I hope, as he did. It pleased me to read from him my case ("my understanding faileth, my memory faileth and my hand and pen fail, but my charity faileth not"). That word much comforted me. I am as zealous a lover of the New England churches as any man... I loved your father, upon the letters I received from him. I love you better for your learning, labours and peaceable moderation. I love your son better than either of you for the excellent temper that appeareth in his writings. O that godliness and wisdom thus increase in all families! He hath honoured himself half as much as Mr. Eliot. I say but half as much. For deeds excel words. God preserve you and New England...⁵⁶

C.D. GILBERT

55. William Bates, *A Funeral Sermon for... Mr. Richard Baxter* (1692), pp. 129-30.

56. Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, (1702), pt. iii, pp. 210-11, *Calendar*, no. 1252.

WHO SPEAKS FOR THE CHRISTIANS? THE GREAT WAR AND CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION IN THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST: A VIEW FROM THE WIGAN COALFIELD

Conscientious objection to conscription into the armed forces, from January 1916 onwards, was a highly complex phenomenon.¹ Quakers and Socialists are the best-known conscientious objectors, but the lesser-known religious sects made up a higher proportion of the total, and their contribution has been neglected. The motives for objection were varied – as Ceadel's classification suggests.² Some, like many Quakers, were "absolute pacifists" guided by a universal moral imperative usually grounded in Protestant Christianity. Others, including some Socialists, were "selective objectors" to this particular war or to imperialist wars in general. Then there were the "quasi-pacifists"; the "elitists" who believed they should be exempted because of their special gifts; and the

1. This account of conscientious objection draws on: M. Ceadel, *Pacifism in Britain 1914-1945* (Oxford 1980), J. Rae, *The Politics of Conscience: The British Government and the Objector to Military Service 1916-19* (Oxford 1970).

2. Ceadel, pp. 8-10.

“esoterics”, such as the Christadelphians, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventists, and the Peculiar People of Essex, whose objection was based not on some straightforward pacifism, but on “unorthodox religious tenets”.

Individual objectors often combined a mixture of motives, and even within the same grouping their degree of objection varied; from objecting to combat service, through objecting to any military command, to objecting even to alternative war work. Overall, the religious motive was strongest, and while this included individuals from almost every conceivable group, most came from Nonconformist bodies. However, only a few groups contributed to conscientious objection as a *movement*, to the extent that it could be regarded as a fundamental expression of their corporate beliefs. Of these, the Quakers were the best known and the Christadelphians the most heavily represented. In both cases, although individuals went their own way, according to their conscience, the sect as a whole was committed to conscientious objection.

The situation in the Churches of Christ was rather different.³ Their group of conscientious objectors was sufficiently large and concerted to constitute a movement linked to certain first principles. But, by 1916, the Churches’ leadership, and perhaps the majority of members, had come round to supporting the war and even conscription. Thus “the First World War had a polarising effect on the British churches”.⁴ The portion of the Churches’ objection movement described here is that centred on the Wigan coalfield. This was distinctive in that many of the objectors and their spokesmen came from the poorer, working-class chapels of this northern mining town. Such origins mark it off from the rather genteel Nonconformist pacifism which dominates much of the literature. Of course these are generalisations, and individuals of all backgrounds chose different attitudes to the war. After all, Lloyd George had grown up in the Welsh Churches of Christ,⁵ and William Robinson, the Churches’ leading inter-war theologian and author of *Christianity is Pacifism* (1933), enlisted in January 1915 and was subsequently wounded.

The Churches of Christ had begun in the mid-nineteenth century as a loose-knit movement calling for a restoration of primitive, New Testament Christianity. A particular blend of beliefs and practices – believer’s baptism, weekly celebration of the Lord’s Supper, lay congregational leadership and a general anti-clericalism – gave it a distinctive “new sectarian”⁶ identity. But, by the onset of the Great War, the Churches were already on the path from sect to denomination, and their beliefs and identity were in a state of flux. Behind them, for the most part, lay the other-worldly isolationism, biblical literalism

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3. I draw heavily here on D.M. Thompson, *Let Sects and Parties Fall: a short history of the Association of Churches of Christ in Britain and Ireland*, (Birmingham 1980).
 4. Thompson, p. 121.
 5. T. Witton Davies, “The McLeanist (Scotch) and Campbellite Baptists of Wales”. *Transactions of the Baptist Historical Society*, Vol. vii.
 6. A.D. Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England: Church, Chapel and Social Change 1740-1914* (London 1976).

and working-class primitivism of the early days. Ahead, lay full-time ministers, a theological training college, and growing integration into the largely middle-class Nonconformist mainstream. This was, however, a complicated and uneven development, proceeding fastest at the large "West End chapels",⁷ like Rodney Street, Wigan, discussed here,⁸ and slowest at the back street Bethels, such as Albert Street and Platt Bridge.

There are dangers in writing the history of a group like the Churches of Christ with the hindsight of a modern denominational perspective. A too selective reading tends to iron out those primitive and working-class, even sectarian and biblical-literalist, elements which sparked the sect's formation. For the Churches of Christ, which in places came as close to a "labour sect"⁹ as any group, these currently unfashionable elements are central to understanding its impact on the outside world, as a source of Labour leaders and conscientious objectors. Arguably, as the sect became more hierarchical and theologically liberal, more middle-class and like other Nonconformist denominations, it lost this cutting edge and ceased to make a distinctive contribution to local working-class communities. From this perspective, conscientious objection among Wigan's Churches of Christ during the Great War is best understood as the last stand of a humble primitivism behind the "old attitude"¹⁰ and against these new compromises.

This article arises from a wider doctoral study of the Churches in the Wigan coalfield, as perceived through the life of W.T. Miller (1880-1963). Miller became

7. H. McLeod, *Religion and the working-class in nineteenth-century Britain* (London 1984). Rodney Street had engaged an "Evangelist", or *de facto* full-time Minister from the outset. The smaller chapels had depended more on lay resources and were most resistant to these changes. What was new were moves towards the recognition and training of a formal Ministry.
8. Wigan became one of the main centres for the Churches of Christ. They reached the town in 1841 through the efforts of Timothy Coop, a clothing store manager and former Wesleyan, who became a major industrialist. The first permanent meeting house was the town-centre Rodney Street (1858), with 398 members in 1916. This joined the URC in 1980 and closed in 1989. The manufacturing dynasty dominated the chapel's history and it played an important part in the Churches nationally. The movement spread into the outlying coalfields from the 1870s, through chapels like Platt Bridge (1883) and Albert Street (1878), with more working-class, mainly mining congregations. In 1916, they had 111 and 136 members respectively. The latter left the association in 1947 and has now closed. The former remained with the Churches until 1980, and continues outside the URC. See W.T. Moore, *The Life of Timothy Coop* (London 1989) and my "Churches of Christ in the Wigan area", *Chapels Society Newsletter*, No. 4, June 1991, pp.44-5.
9. E.J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels* (Manchester 1971), B. Lancaster, *Radicalism, Co-operation and Socialism: Leicester working-class politics 1860-1906* (Leicester 1987) see the Churches in these terms. In reality, their social composition was more complex, even in the Wigan coalfield chapels, where local tradesmen were well-represented at officer level. See too M. and D. Clague, "Churches of Christ in Furness, Cumbria 1842-1981", *Journal URCHS*, iv 504-8, which discusses the Churches' history in terms of its contribution to the URC and the ecumenical movement.
10. Thompson, p. 123.

President (1926-39), then National Secretary (1939-43), of the Pit Deputies trade union.¹¹ Apart from national material, my sources are those closest to his life: the Miller family itself, and the coalfield chapels of Victoria Road, Platt Bridge and Albert Street, Newtown. Miller's brothers and friends were drawn into conscientious objection, and these small chapels became a national focus for the movement, each with its own large constituency of objectors. What follows aims to bring to light the experience of a little-known group of conscientious objectors, within a relatively obscure religious denomination, as one contribution towards telling "the full story of those who remained loyal to their pacifist convictions during the war".¹²

Like other English Nonconformists, the Churches of Christ had traditionally opposed war and militarism. This was their mood at the 1900 Annual Meeting, which regretted "the military spirit now so prevalent in British society generally",¹³ Henry Tickle's 1901 Conference paper called, in the spirit of "the early days of the Church", for members to refuse all military service, "whether voluntary or compulsory", even if this should involve "penalties in person or property". This paper was reprinted in 1914, but the rhetoric was soon forgotten once war was declared. As elsewhere in English Dissent, the outbreak of hostilities prompted an abrupt about-turn of attitudes.¹⁴ Whereas only a minority in the Churches of Christ had supported the Boer war, the struggle to save Belgium won much wider assent. However, while most leading national figures had already shifted their ground in favour of the war, pacifists within the Churches hoped that they would remain firm against conscription. Radical protestantism has a strong voluntarist tendency, suspicious of the "world", and, in the past, the Churches of Christ had opposed compulsory vaccination schemes and education rates.

When war came, it pitched the patriotic leadership in many chapels against pacifist sections of their congregations.

Leaders urged our young men to enlist and fight for King and Country, and scant sympathy was given to those who stood for the old attitude. With the coming of conscription, we saw our young men turned down by tribunals of which leaders of their own Churches were chairmen. Brethren, some of whom were elders in the Churches, sat on magisterial benches and handed over their own Brethren to their persecutors.¹⁵

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11. See my "W.T. Miller" in *Dictionary of Labour Biography* (Hull 1992). See also entries for Robert Fleming of Belfast and Amos Mann of Leicestershire.
 12. K.W. Clements, "Baptists and the Outbreak of the First World War" *Baptist Quarterly*, Vol. xxvi, No. 2 p.76.
 13. Thompson, p.121.
 14. See Clements *art. cit.*, for Baptists.
 15. Walter Crosthwaite, quoted Thompson, p. 123.

In Wigan, this split partly took the form of a division between the more respectable and middle-class Rodney Street, and the smaller, outlying mining chapels.

The debate raged through the pages of the *Bible Advocate*, particularly during 1916 as the Conscription Bill loomed ever larger. An Editorial¹⁶ hoped its "conditions and exemptions" would meet most objections. It also noted that a petition against the war in the name of the Churches of Christ was "in circulation". While this only represented the views of "some members", it probably expressed "what many of the young men desire". The following week's Editorial, "Sympathy",¹⁷ weighed the case for pacifism against the "just war" argument, and found in favour of the latter. But it asked chapels to show "sympathy ... in prayer" for objectors. Yet, by now, the many brethren already in the Armed Forces were suffering horrific casualties, and the atmosphere had become much more emotionally charged. The same edition saw the launch of W. Marshall's regular epistle from the Front, "Letter to Soldiers".

The anti-war brethren had begun both to campaign against the war, and to form self-help groups to prepare themselves for the threat of conscription. One letter¹⁸ offered constructive "Suggestions to Non-conscriptionists" facing prosecution and attempting to establish their genuine religious reasons, and referred, tellingly, to "young brethren who are taking this stand". But in the same edition, under the heading "Our Soldiers and Sailors", Julian Elwes informed readers that the list of "Our Boys" had now passed 600. They wanted "sympathy not scorn", and to be spared the "imputations of careless consciences". The Editor¹⁹ promised to continue publishing any advice for conscientious objectors who opposed "all war", but insisted: "We as a people do not take that view". Another "Letter to Soldiers"²⁰ evoked the "Just War" and claimed the Armed Forces contained "the finest manhood of our nation and Empire".

For the rest of the war, the words, actions and experiences of Robert Price, from Albert Street chapel in Wigan, encapsulated the pacifist predicament. His opening communication²¹ reported a meeting at another Wigan coalfield chapel, Platt Bridge, of "conscientious objectors of the Churches of Christ", to discuss "future policy under the Military Service (No. 2) Act". He outlined the three-stage procedure for claiming exemption on conscientious grounds; the Local Tribunal, the Appeal Tribunal, and finally, the Central Tribunal. The meeting had recommended that brethren "ask for complete or absolute exemption and accept nothing less". They should use all three tribunals, and if exemption were ultimately refused, "patiently await the next move by the authorities". They were then "liable to be called up", and each who refused

16. *Bible Advocate*, 14. 1. 16. (The Churches' main national publication).

17. *Bible Advocate*, 21. 1. 16.

18. *Bible Advocate*, 28. 1. 16.

19. *Bible Advocate*, 4. 2. 16.

20. *Bible Advocate*, 11. 2. 16.

21. *Bible Advocate*, 18. 2. 16.

would “become a deserter” – subject to imprisonment, though the death penalty had been amended from the Act. Thomas Miller of Platt Bridge²² issued what appears to be an ironic rejoinder to the “King and Country” mood of the times; thanking God for continuing “voluntary enlistment into the army of Jesus”, and praying they

‘Fight the good fight’ that at the end we may receive at the hands of our King that glorious reward for faithful service – the victor’s crown.

Robert Price next produced²³ a remarkable “manifesto”, agreed at a meeting on February 26 1916, entitled “Brethren and an Anti-War Attitude”, and

Issued by members of the Churches of Christ who object, on conscientious grounds, to rendering military service of any kind, or to taking the military oath.

This stressed the sanctity of individual conscience, and strikes a pacifist position based on fundamental Christian values and biblical authority;

The case for compulsion is being urged by many who, because they have no conscientious scruples, fail to realise the position of the conscientious objector. Therefore we deem it imperative to voice our protest against the Military Service (No. 2) Act. Our voice is the voice of a number of men who are bound by deep conscientious convictions to refuse to render military service of any kind, whatever the consequences for refusal. Our objection to taking any part in military service is not merely negative, but rests fundamentally upon a recognition of a positive obligation to Christ, whose whole life was a protest against force and militarism. We firmly believe in the sanctity of human life. And to us “Thou shalt not kill” means what it says. We believe it to be a definitive and absolute command, admitting of no exception. To us the human race is one grand brotherhood. We admit the rights of a community to impose duties upon its members for the common good, but we absolutely deny the right of Government to make the slaughter of our fellows a bounden duty. We are uncompromisingly opposed to any Act of Compulsion, because it strikes at the foundation of the Christian Church, national well-being, and, what is more, will tend to fan into religious persecution. It will also mean the serious violation of the consciences of thousands of the most loyal subjects in the land. We are prepared to sacrifice as much in the case of world’s peace as our fellows are sacrificing in the cause of the nation’s war. Our motto is that of the old Christian martyrs, who died fighting a similar warfare to this – ‘We are Christians, and therefore cannot fight’.

22. *Bible Advocate*, 3. 3. 16.

23. *Bible Advocate*, 3. 3. 16.

Conscription came into force on 2 March 1916, and the prosecution of conscientious objectors began. In Nottingham “several young brethren”²⁴ had appeared before the local tribunal. Moreover, Robert Price warned that exemptions were being refused, and described the objectors’ predicament:

Some of these brethren have already left their occupations, they being ‘deemed to be deserters’ and are now awaiting their arrest by the authorities; how long or how soon it will be they do not know. Brethren taking this course require no less courage than is required by a soldier. To combat public opinion, to be still while everybody is active, to stand by a principle, and yet be branded a coward, and last of all, to face what may be the death of a deserter, though misunderstood, none but a man can do. Let it, therefore, not be forgotten that peace has its martyrs as well as war, that peace also can boast her ‘rolls of honour’ none the less.²⁵

Meanwhile, the debates in Wigan resounded through the pages of the *Bible Advocate*. An official-sounding “Day Open Conference on the War”²⁶ representing the views of the Churches’ leadership, was held at Rodney Street chapel on Good Friday. Present were James Marsden JP (1841-1927), Coop’s religious and business successor and a leading national figure in the Churches of Christ, the Mayor of Wigan, and two Church evangelists. The two main sessions concerned; “(1) The outlook of the churches as affected by the war; (2) The Fulfilment of Old Testament Prophecy and its relations to the present war”.

The anti-conscription movement came to a head on Saturday, April 22, with a Platt Bridge conference of those who had “signed the protest form”,²⁷ drawing brethren from Ashton-under-Lyne, Blackburn, Manchester and Swindon, as well as the Wigan District. Its aim was to provide a moral and financial support system for arrested brethren, “who may have to testify their deep Christian conviction against military service”. Two resolutions were passed to this end, a manifesto agreed, and a Committee established to organise a future national conference. A further meeting in Birmingham was suggested.²⁸ The Platt Bridge conference was well-supported²⁹ and another was held in Leicester during the 1917 Annual Meeting. Robert Price convened a further national objectors conference to be held at the Total Abstinence Hall, Greenough Street, Wigan on Saturday 10 June.³⁰ By then there were 125 conscientious objectors in all, thirty-five requiring assistance, seventeen currently in military hands, five released – altogether including 166 Church and Sunday School workers.³¹

24. *Bible Advocate*, 7. 4. 16.

25. *Bible Advocate*, 7. 4. 16.

26. *Bible Advocate*, 14. 4. 16.

27. *Bible Advocate*, 28. 4. 16.

28. *Bible Advocate*, 12. 5. 16.

29. Thompson, p. 123.

30. *Bible Advocate*, 2. 6. 16.

31. *Bible Advocate*, 16. 6. 16.

The issue had already arisen of what the Churches' position was, and who spoke for it. Their whole tradition resisted the idea of a centralised "authority" pronouncing on issues of "the world" without a direct Biblical reference, and brethren were reminded of this.³² Nevertheless, by the late Spring of 1916, the absence of an "official" Church position was leading to a dispute over "who spoke for the Church". The publication of a pamphlet by W. Nelms of Glasgow, *Peace; A Principle of the Churches of Christ*³³ brought this problem to a head. Walter Crosthwaite, who supported the "Peace" pamphlet³⁴ pleaded for more clarity on the war issue. George Talbot from Glasgow likewise expressed concern over the confusion, but blamed the pacifist pamphlet for "masquerading under false colours", claimed the Churches were close to "schism" over the war, and argued that the issue was the Christian attitude towards the "present war", and not "war" in general, "as discussed in the various peace propaganda". The Editor regretted attempts "to represent the Churches of Christ by brethren on both sides of this question", and begged them to "forbear and respect each others convictions". Then, for a short time,³⁵ the debate over principles was sidetracked into a plea for chapel Elders (in the absence of a official paid ministry) to share the "total exemption... granted to clergymen and ministers of all denominations".

By the summer of 1916, brethren conscientious objectors were being "ill treated by military men".³⁶ Robert Price³⁷ gave a vivid report of one such case:

At Richmond Castle, on June 10th, he was ordered to open out his kit for inspection. This he refused to do. He was at once thrown on the floor, being thumped and kicked while there. He was then taken to the guard-room, and again thrown-down, receiving a kick in the back. This was followed by one kneeling on him. His foot was then twisted, and so was one of his arms. This process caused him so much pain that he was compelled to open his kit. His kit having been examined, it was strapped on him, and later he was taken before the Commanding Officer, who sentenced him to fourteen days detention. This expired on the 24th. Although he persists in breaking all orders, he says they will not permit him in the guard-room, and is now waiting to be sent out to France with other NCCs.

Another was sentenced to death in France - although this was commuted afterwards to ten years penal servitude³⁸ - an indication that the military could

32. *Bible Advocate*, 2. 6. 16.

33. *Bible Advocate*, 17. 5. 16.

34. *Bible Advocate*, 26. 5. 16.

35. *Bible Advocate*, 2. 6. 16.

36. *Bible Advocate*, 23. 6. 16.

37. *Bible Advocate*, 30. 6. 16.

38. *Bible Advocate*, 7. 7. 16.

still impose the death penalty, by forcing the recalcitrant onto the battlefield, and then charging him with desertion. Robert Price³⁹ pleaded again for those suffering hardship, and⁴⁰ detailed the circumstances of twenty-two brethren “in the hands of the authorities”, including “Wm Miller”, the son of Platt Bridge chapel Labour councillor. W.T. Miller, “at Walton” gaol for “two years without hard labour, not yet commuted”. He returned to the case for peace and Christian internationalism

The great brotherhood of man has gone to ruin... The Church of Christ has not found itself proof against this storm, and now we think of our fellow-members in Germany, Austria or Bulgaria as being in the enemy's camp. It is impossible that all the brethren should be born in England. It is necessary that the Kingdom of God be world-wide, and take into its number those of all nations. So let us return to our charitable feelings which we once held towards those brethren who live (or die) in Germany. I would submit that the Christian should recognise no enemy other than Satan, and that he should repudiate the rights of Governments to decide who are his enemies.⁴¹

By the end of 1916⁴² the objectors' position, including that of “Wm Miller” of Platt Bridge chapel was “considerably improved”. In Wigan, J.B. Kendrick of Albert Street reported an October 27th meeting,⁴³ and later “a social of brethren objectors... held at Baren's Cafe, on the night of November 16th”.⁴⁴ This involved brethren from Earlestown, Platt Bridge, Albert Street and Rodney Street chapels, “Bro William Miller... paid us a visit from HM Prison at Wakefield”, where he had been “under arrest for six or seven months”.

From December 1916, the two Price brothers of Albert Street themselves faced prosecution. Edward was called up “after being rejected eight months ago”.⁴⁵ On refusing to attend parade, he was “placed in the guard-room at Grimsby”, to await a “district court-marshal”. Soon after⁴⁶ Robert Price, was also recalled to the army. Meanwhile, the “Central Committee of the anti-war brethren” had

39. *Bible Advocate*, 14. 7. 16.

40. *Bible Advocate*, 28. 7. 16. This is a second W.T. Miller, Labour councillor, cousin to the Pit Deputies leader, and also at Platt Bridge.

41. *Bible Advocate*, 8. 8. 16.

42. *Bible Advocate*, 15. 9. 16.

43. *Bible Advocate*, 17. 11. 16.

44. *Bible Advocate*, 1. 12. 16.

45. *Bible Advocate*, 8. 12. 16. The Price brothers attended Albert Street, but lived out in the country. Harry Ackers (1902-), soon to be an engineering apprentice, remembers them bringing sandwiches for the day-long chapel sabbath. Edward managed Platt Bridge Co-op (near the other chapel) and Robert was probably a teacher. I believe Robert died in 1926.

46. *Bible Advocate*, 1. 1. 17.

met again in Blackburn, and J.B. Kendrick communicated Robert Price's complaint of "illegal treatment". And by the summer of 1917 the news was worse:

Bro. Robert Price, after serving one sentence in Wormwood Scrubs for conscience's sake, and being returned to camp at Cleethorpes, where for fourteen days he was kept on bread and water, besides other cruel treatment, was on Friday, June 8th, forcibly taken across to France from Folkestone.⁴⁷

Rumours circulated that he had been "accidentally killed" in France. In fact, "he had been returned to this country", and was now serving "another twelve months hard labour" in Wandsworth Prison.⁴⁸ As Price had insisted, determined conscientious objection was no soft option. The official report of a Wigan District of the Churches of Christ meeting at Platt Bridge,⁴⁹ a couple of weeks before, barely reflected all this - even though Thomas Miller of Platt Bridge was Chairman - except to report another "official" war conference at Chorley. The chapel minutes, however, indicate how solidly it was behind the conscientious objectors, how serious was the rift with the District leadership, and how close the chapel came to leaving the Cooperation.

From the beginning, Platt Bridge agreed to rent a room to "conscientious objectors to Military Service"⁵⁰ and the Secretary was instructed to announce their Friday night meetings in chapel.⁵¹ When brethren began to be prosecuted, a "Special Officers Meeting" agreed unanimously to send a letter "to the President of the Central Tribunal concerning Bro. Wm Miller's release".⁵² The Albert Street chapel conscientious objectors, Robert Price and J.B. Kendrick, were among five preachers the chapel asked "for dates on the next plan".⁵³ When, a few weeks later, the former was arrested this precipitated open conflict with the Rodney Street based District Churches leadership.

The chapel officers were "very willing to give testimony" to Robert Price's "character",⁵⁴ and sent a resolution to the District "disapproving of their action in erasing Bro Robert Price's name from the plan". A "Special Church Meeting" agreed that unless his name was restored they would "leave the committee". Over the next three months, a series of chapel meetings⁵⁵ maintained the call for Price's reinstatement, and by now the threat was to "withdraw from the association". A delegation from the District was received cordially,⁵⁶ but a

47. *Bible Advocate*, 22. 6. 17.

48. *Bible Advocate*, 20. 7. 17.

49. *Bible Advocate*, 10. 8. 17.

50. Platt Bridge Chapel Minutes, 6. 2. 16.

51. Platt Bridge Chapel Minutes, 27. 2. 16.

52. Platt Bridge Chapel Minutes, 3. 9. 16.

53. Platt Bridge Chapel Minutes, 11. 10. 16.

54. Platt Bridge Chapel Minutes, 7. 1. 17.

55. Platt Bridge Chapel Minutes, 24. 1. 17, 18. 2. 17, 18. 3. 17.

56. Platt Bridge Chapel Minutes, 25. 3. 17.

conciliatory move to drop the issue (since Price could not fulfil his “plan” obligations while under arrest) moved by W.T. Miller and his father Simon, was defeated in favour of standing by the threat to withdraw – only to be reversed at the next meeting.⁵⁷ It was perhaps with a view to healing the wounds that the District annual conference was held at Platt Bridge in July 1917.⁵⁸

If there were differences over tactics towards the District, there seems to have been virtual unanimity over principles. The dispute was reverberating round the Wigan churches; and when the District wrote to other chapels about “brethren setting up another table” (ie. breaking away) and circulated “statements alleged to have been made” by two leading Platt Bridge pacifists, Thomas Bennett and William Speakman, the secretary wrote “explaining errors” in their report, and asking them to withdraw it.⁵⁹ A little later, he wrote to the War Office “protesting very strongly against the treatment served out to conscientious objectors”. He and any two officers were

Empowered to write to the War Office at any other future time that they think it desirable in the interests of men being punished for their convictions against militarism.

A resolution to “send parcels” to brethren “serving in the army” was also defeated.⁶⁰

The issue revived after February 1918, when the Cabinet introduced “clean cut”,⁶¹ which ended the exempt status of occupations like coal mining, and took all men below a certain age. During 1918, both the *Bible Advocate* (Bro J. Luck remained a contact for conscientious objectors “in prison, detention camps, or work centres”) and the Platt Bridge chapel minutes are largely silent on the subject. Nonetheless, many of the younger brethren at Platt Bridge and Albert Street were coal miners, including the trade union leader, W.T. Miller, and three of his brothers, John, James and George. It seems that at least two of them became conscientious objectors, probably at this time. W.T.’s daughter, Betty, remembers her father visiting them at Ditton Priors army camp in Shropshire. James eventually went to war, George gained a reprieve for ill-health, but John joined those at Dartmoor. Others from Platt Bridge included Bill and Jim Speakman and Isaac Miller, who refused active service but worked in the medical corps. The chapel asked the District to “petition the Government for the immediate release of the conscientious objectors”, and wrote to their local

57. Platt Bridge Chapel Minutes, 8. 8. 17.

58. Platt Bridge Chapel Minutes, 8. 7. 17.

59. Platt Bridge Chapel Minutes, 3. 6. 17, 17. 6. 17.

60. Platt Bridge Chapel Minutes, 28. 10. 17.

61. Rae, p. 68.

mining MP, Stephen Walsh, on their behalf.⁶² After the war, they also suggested the topic "Can a Christian be a soldier, compulsory or voluntary?" for the Annual Conference paper.⁶³

Overall, sixty-one Churches of Christ objectors were arrested⁶⁴ and twelve spent more than a year in prison. One died of influenza in Strangeways Prison, Manchester. Another, as we have seen, was sentenced to death in France, but had the sentence commuted. Groups of Christian Brethren objectors in Wakefield and Dartmoor prisons held regular services for the "breaking of the bread". Thompson argues that "the strongly committed pacifist group was very small".⁶⁴ His estimate, including the 125 from the Platt Bridge meeting, totals no more than 300 – half the number of brethren enlisted by 1916 and just under two percent of the 15,191 national membership. Yet, it was still a fairly high proportion of so small a religious body compared to the total complement of objectors, who amounted to only 0.33% of those who were conscripted or volunteered to fight.⁶⁵

The sympathy was probably much wider, especially among the young brethren, who were notable by their prominence in the anti-war campaign. We have already seen the situation at Platt Bridge chapel. According to his daughter, Betty, the trade union leader, W.T. Miller, "would have been with them if he hadn't had an essential job", and almost everyone was "against war". Harry Ackers, then a teenager at Albert Street chapel, remembers the Price brothers and others, who came together in the young men's classes, where they trained as lay preachers. He recalls that "practically all the young men" were conscientious objectors, and that he too would not have fought at the time, had he been of age, because war was against their basic principles. There seems no doubt that the mining chapels of Platt Bridge and Albert Street were at the centre of a sizeable movement for conscientious objection, strongly supported by the young brethren. Thompson's national history, inevitably centred on the large, middle-class chapels, like Rodney Street, may understate this strength of feeling.

The Churches' leadership tried to accommodate both sides, in a highly charged atmosphere of great suffering all round. The 1916, 1917 and 1918 Annual Meetings passed resolutions which referred both to those resisting and fighting.⁶⁶ The mood was never bellicose, and the *Bible Advocate*⁶⁷ spoke of the

62. Platt Bridge Chapel Minutes, 25. 11. 18. The MP for Ince which included Platt Bridge. Wigan politics were at a point of transition from Tory to Labour. Harry Twist a Nonconformist mining leader, first won the Wigan seat, briefly, in 1910, anticipating the dominance of mining Labour from 1918. See D. Brown, "The Labour Movement in Wigan" (Liverpool University MA Thesis 1969). Another mining leader and Churches of Christ member, Joseph Parkinson JP (1854-1929), was elected to the Council in 1906 and became an early Labour Mayor.

63. Platt Bridge Chapel Minutes, 21. 9. 19.

64. Thompson, p. 124.

65. Rae, p. 71.

66. Thompson, p. 124.

67. 5. 4. 18.

“horrors of war and evils of militarism” in “this the hour of darkness and sorrow”. The end was greeted with: “Thank God the dawn of a better day has come”.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, relations were not easy in those chapels, like Platt Bridge and Albert Street, with sizeable concentrations of objectors. The Price brothers and J.B. Kendrick attended the latter, but so did families with sons, like Peter Yates, on active service.⁶⁹

He enlisted in the Army in March, 1915, and went to France in December, 1915. He received wounds in the legs and head on July 22nd, 1917, which necessitated an operation to have the leg amputated. On the following day he passed away, at the age of 34 years.

Harry Ackers recalled at least one bereaved father who left the chapel for good because of its pacifist atmosphere.

What kind of conscientious objectors were the Churches of Christ? How did their motives and experiences compare with those of other objectors? Rae describes both those motivated by the corporate position of their church or sect, and individual Christians, exercising, in characteristic Protestant fashion, their individual consciences. With the Churches of Christ's objectors we find a combination of the two, reflecting the reluctance of their tradition to take positions on the “world”. Individuals drew inspiration from a personal understanding of their primitive Christian plea, which was at variance with that of their Churches' establishment. This was apparent in the varying degrees of resistance: some were absolutists, taking the full path to prison; others accepted alternative work; some finally relented and went to war. As absolute pacifists formed only ten percent of all objectors⁷⁰ the Churches seemed to have produced a fairly high proportion.

Given that support for the objectors went well beyond the number who faced the conscription test, what was the general basis for their objection? Here again, Ceadel's classification is instructive. It would be easy to lump the Churches' group with “esoteric quasi-pacifists”,⁷¹ like the Christadelphians, Seventh Day Adventists, or Jehovah's Witnesses, for whom objection reflected not an earthly pacifism inspired by Christ's teaching, but an “interim ethic”, awaiting the second coming and the creation of God's kingdom on earth. Rae⁷² refers to the Churches' “biblical literalism”, and places them with unusual groups like the Dowie Church, Dependent Cocklers and Peculiar People. Ceadel⁷³ takes a broader swipe at “unsophisticated religious beliefs” and those who “expressed an objection primarily in terms of a literal reading of selected biblical texts” – virtually making religious sophistication a condition of conscience.

68. *Bible Advocate*, 15. 11. 18.

69. *Bible Advocate*, 27. 7. 17.

70. Ceadel, p. 32.

71. Ceadel, p. 20.

72. Rae, p. 77.

73. Ceadel, p. 44.

Biblical authority was certainly an important anchor for the Churches of Christ's objectors' case. Moreover, the Churches' earlier nineteenth-century congregations had strong millenarian elements, which indeed had fed Christadelphianism. But, by the Great War, the Churches had long abandoned this aspect, and were already moving in a quite different direction. A more important influence was the Churches' original plea for a restoration of primitive, New Testament Christianity. This "other worldly" perspective linked naturally to the more widespread Christian pacifist interest in the pacifist traditions of the church before Constantine.⁷⁴ Hence, while attention to scriptural support was important to the Churches, as to other bible Christians, the letters and manifestoes quoted above appeal to a more general early Christian ethic of absolute non-violence.

Critics of the objectors voiced suspicions of a "selective pacifism". Was their objection to just this war, rather than to all war, and did the Labour atmosphere and strong collier representation in these chapels exercise an influence? The question is hypothetical, since people had to confront the war they were faced with, not some abstract problem. However, there is circumstantial evidence to suggest that political objections may have exercised a greater influence than is immediately apparent. Religious and political considerations were inseparable for many objectors, and the sources I have used would tend to encourage religious rationalisations, as would the primacy of the religious test at tribunals. At Platt Bridge chapel the "two W.T.s", a coalmining trade union official and a Labour councillor, were related to many objectors and in close contact with others. There were similar figures at Albert Street, and it would be surprising if the coalfield antipathy to conscription,⁷⁵ especially after the "clean cut" of 1918, was not a factor.

Finally, it seems likely that the experience of these Churches of Christ objectors was harsher than that of most others. They were mainly young working men from back-street chapels in a northern mining town. They were not high-profile pacifist intellectuals, nor could they look to Bloomsbury for character witnesses.⁷⁶ To compound this, they were members of a relatively little-known sect with a deliberately weak sectarian identity, who often described themselves simply as "Christians". They lacked the corporate identity of the Quaker or even the Christadelphian,⁷⁷ whose ideas were more likely to be understood by the tribunal, and this must have encouraged suspicion about their true religious commitments. In addition, their own Churches' hierarchy, which in Wigan was very well connected, tended to support the war. Furthermore, they seem to have been isolated from the two main middle-class national objector movements, the political No-Conscription Fellowship and the Christian Fellowship of Reconciliation. After the war, while others rose to political and religious prominence, they simply faded away, and there is a

74. Ceadel, p. 19.

75. Rae, p. 69.

76. Rae, p. 82.

77. Rae, p. 72-3.

suggestion that some, such as Robert Price, may have suffered in consequence.

This question of the links between the Churches of Christ objectors and the wider religious and socialist conscientious objection movement is an intriguing one. Even though it was well-organised, and concentrated in working-class chapels, attended by Labour and trade union activists, the anti-war movement appears insular and characterised by a withdrawal from the "world". The language of fundamental pacifist values and universal brotherhood has a wider Christian and Socialist resonance, but I have little evidence that, as a group, they forged wider links. It seems to have been the stubborn, primitive Christian attitudes of these "back street Bethels" that fuelled their sub-culture of resistance to the war.

PETER ACKERS

REVIEWS

Church and State: The English Experience. By Adrian Hastings. University of Exeter Press, 1991. Pp. 84. £7.95

Church-State relations in England have usually been discussed either by Anglicans seeking to justify establishment, or by Free Church writers criticizing it. In the Prideaux Lectures at the University of Exeter for 1990 Professor Hastings, who has written important works on Christianity in Africa and on British Christianity in the twentieth century, offers a distinctive commentary on this theme from a Roman Catholic perspective.

Significantly the book opens with the words "Passus sub Pontio Pilato". The starting point of the gospel story is the execution of a criminal. That epitomises the dilemma facing the Christian in relating to the state. From an interesting contrast between Christianity in the latter Roman Empire and the experience of Islam, Professor Hastings takes the story into the usually neglected middle ages, pointing out that between Theodore of Tarsus, Archbishop of Canterbury in the late seventh century, and Stephen Langton who occupied the same see in the thirteenth century, the English Church maintained its distance from both Pope and Crown.

The Reformation in England placed the Church under the control of the Crown by removing papal jurisdiction. Professor Hastings points out that only the Genevan Reformation maintained the dualism characteristic of the middle ages, represented in these islands by Scotland. He quotes Forsyth effectively on the Reformation settlement: "If you resented the royal supremacy you could realise the freedom of the Church only in a Catholic form, and between Henry and More our heart is all with More". Hence, it is not really the surprise it seems that his chapter on "A Tradition of Dissent" is about the Roman Catholic Church in England since the Reformation. This is valuable reading for this perspective on English history has been sadly neglected. The final lecture considers twentieth-century problems and concludes, possibly surprisingly, that the Church of England is sufficiently distant from the state today for disestablishment as traditionally conceived to be unnecessary and undesirable.

An epilogue, considering the appointment of the present Archbishop of Canterbury, was added for the published version of the lectures.

This book is well worth reading for its fresh approach to a familiar topic, though at nearly 10p per page, it is relatively expensive. A Free Church reader may ponder with profit Professor Hastings's observations that a church with an other-worldly religion is most likely to fall captive to the state, and that a state with a strong ideological commitment, of whatever kind, will always be anxious to see that reflected in the teaching of any religion it approves. By these criteria the Free Churches may sometimes have suffered illusions about their freedom.

DAVID M. THOMPSON

A Reformed, Evangelical, Catholic Theology: The Contribution of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, 1875-1982. By Alan F. Sell. Pp. xi, 304. Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1991. Np. (paperback)

It is significant that those to whom Alan Sell offers thanks for reading drafts of this book are all ecumenically-committed systematic theologians. This is not a history of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches; Marcel Pradervand, former General Secretary, provided that (up to 1975) in his book *A Century of Service*. Professor Sell engages in a "critical dialogue with the corpus" of Alliance theological publications "to evaluate it rather than simply to describe its growth and contents". It is, nevertheless, appropriate that the book be reviewed in this journal, since "a broadly chronological approach" is taken to each theme selected and reference is made to the circumstances of the times to illustrate the shifts of emphasis in Alliance programmes. The book fulfils its aim of providing "building blocks" for a future comparative study of the theological contributions of the various Christian World Communions and the World Council of Churches over the period of the modern ecumenical movement. The analysis ends in 1982 partly because some programmes begun since then are still uncompleted and partly to avoid personal references to those still active in the Alliance during the period when Alan Sell was himself its theological secretary. The comprehensive reading of Alliance publications (probably a unique accomplishment) was a self-imposed task of the newly appointed secretary in 1983.

So much the reviewer could have written without progressing beyond the Preface. That he went further is due to the interesting way in which the dialogue with the texts is thematically conducted. After a short historical overview of the Alliance's theological programmes, Professor Sell surveys the literature in five chapters - "The Faith of the Ages", "The Evangelical-Catholic Heritage", "The Ecumenical Vision", "The Philosophical-Apologetic Climate", and "The Ethical Witness". He wisely points out that an Alliance whose member churches are diverse within the broad bounds of a Reformed ethos is not likely to produce an Alliance dogmatics; indeed the constitution precludes any attempt at establishing a teaching *magisterium* for Reformed churches. Yet there is much of interest to be found in the shared thinking of a worldwide family of churches,

more than half of which are products of the modern missionary movement and whose membership (with all the acknowledged uncertainty of church statistics) certainly exceeds fifty million.

Professor Sell does not pull his theological punches. In comparing contributions by P.T. Forsyth and W.L. Walker at the third Congregational Council in 1908 he lauds Forsyth's "Forgiveness through Atonement" but describes Walker's address, "The Holy Spirit", as "the voice of liberal Arminianism" - and Professor Sell is by no means one for seeing the great debate between Calvinists and Arminians as outdated. In his view there is too little recent Alliance work which deals with the doctrines of atonement and regeneration.

Reading between the lines of conference reports is an art rather than a science. Professor Sell argues that to refer to the Holy Spirit in defining the role of Holy Scripture rules out "a crude biblical literalism"; but Dr. Krafft's consensus of the Reformed confessions could at this point be accepted by conservatives who precisely emphasise such texts as *II Peter* 1.21, concerning those who "moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God". This book is a valuable introduction to the Alliance literature, but, as Professor Sell would be the first to agree, is not a substitute for careful checking of its references in the actual reports.

Again and again it is the comparison of one report with another which brings insight: the inter-relation of the dialogue reports from Reformed contact with Roman Catholics, Baptists, Anglicans and Lutherans; the recognition of the uneven response given over the years to the philosophical-apologetic climate; the identifying of the perennial ethical concerns of the Alliance. On a wider front the Alliance concerns and suggestions for its future agenda are set in the context of those matters which it is better to address in the ecumenical setting of the World Council of Churches. "The Alliance's utterances and publications" do indeed "reveal a communion which is catholic, evangelical, and Reformed. Its view of catholicity derives from its understanding of the gospel, and, at its best, the communion is ever open to reformation by the Spirit, through the Word received in fellowship" - and how right that we should "by no means suggest that an agenda for the future should be derived exclusively from the lacunae of the past".

Three appendices fill lacunae of a review of individual reports by enumerating the Alliance councils, by providing biographical notes on those who made significant theological contributions to the work of the Alliance, and by listing the main works referred to in the book. With gratitude for this useful volume the Principal of Westminster College is in duty bound to his predecessor James Oswald Dykes, who moved with the College to Cambridge, to point out that during Professor Dykes's principalship from 1888 to 1907 the College belonged to the Presbyterian Church of England, formed in 1876 by the union of the Presbyterian Church in England and the English Synod of the United Presbyterian Church.

MARTIN CRESSEY

The Religious Census of Hampshire, 1851. Edited by John A. Vickers. (Vol. 12 in the Hampshire Record Series). Pp. xlv, 248. Obtainable from Hampshire Record Office, 20 Southgate Street, Winchester. £15.00 plus £2.00 postage and packing

It is not altogether easy to review this book : it is an edition of a section of the famous and unique religious census carried out in 1851; it consists therefore almost entirely of statistics, and to review it is a little like reviewing a grocery list. The reviewer can hardly be expected to find errors in the statistics; in any case enough effort has been devoted to that task, starting the moment the census was carried out; though no-one can deny that some useful information, very broadly speaking accurate, can be deduced from it.

Let it be said that the volume itself is a model work, greatly to the credit of editor and publisher. The former contributes a very helpful and readable introduction, discussing the census generally and the contents of this volume in particular. It is adapted from his similar work on the Sussex census, and one can only admire a scholar who is not exhausted by the laborious task of working through all the figures for one county and is ready to start on the next. It is a pity that a note in the Introduction turns the Compton census of 1676 into the "Crompton census", but the reference itself suggests the thought that a careful collation of the figures for 1676 and 1851 would be interesting, though of course they represent quite different bases of calculation.

The detailed statistics relate in principle to every place of worship within the county of Hampshire, to a total of 818, though a few failed to submit a return. The editor has examined every figure given in respect of every entry. One's immediate impression is that he has found something wrong in every case; this is an exaggeration, but a high proportion of the respondents - mostly clergy and ministers - lacked numeracy: if there is an addition involved they were quite likely to get it wrong. For example, afternoon attendance at Chawton parish church was 112 adults, 50 children, total 171. The Bible Christians at Landport added 79 and 72 and got 149. The Independents at Martin West made 150 and 12 add up to 277. But perhaps on the whole the errors cancel out.

The Anglican clergy (as one might expect?) took full advantage of the space for comment. The Rector of Monxton relieved his feelings with the comment: "Monxton Church is a miserable edifice." At St. Lawrence and St. John, Southampton, the complaint was different: "The Parish is overwhelmed with Dissent". The Rector of Meon Stoke was driven to add his comment to the return from the Primitive Methodists refuting their claim to seat 60 with standing room for 20, on the grounds that their accommodation was nothing more than a room in a house measuring 13 feet square : did he break and enter in the night to do the measuring? The Rector of Ashmansworth thought there was some gerrymandering: "Many who usually attend Church were *this day* misled by the Dissenters." But the Rector of Baughurst has an unexpected comment : after describing his own church as "intolerably cold" he mentions that the Primitive Methodists (generally called "Ranters") "have long been established in the Parish, & are doing good", adding evidence of improved

public behaviour. The Vicar of Holy Rood, Southampton is content to declare his lack of confidence in the figures for his own church, submitted by the churchwardens.

Nonconformist ministers were less given to comment, but Joseph Notting, Independent minister at Longham, realised that he had spent £3,000 of his own money on the church, prayed for the Royal Family, and asked for good books to defend our Glorious Constitution against the Pope and the Devil.

Readers of this *Journal* will be particularly interested in the record of the URC's tributary streams in Hampshire. Presbyterians (as distinct from Unitarians) and the Churches of Christ were absent, but Independents prolific. After the Established Church they provided the largest number of sittings – nearly twice as many as the Wesleyans, who came next. They were equally dominant in terms of attendance. Horace Mann's formula for calculating total attendance on the census day (admittedly pretty questionable) by adding the morning congregation, half the afternoon, and one-third of the evening, produces a figure of 27,484. It is instructive to compare this with the average attendance in the Southampton and Portsmouth Districts as shown in the 1993 URC Yearbook, a total of 3,092. If these districts are taken as very roughly covering Hampshire and if one believes not only Mann's formula but (also requiring some degree of faith) the accuracy of current estimates we arrive at an attendance to-day equivalent to 11.25% of that for 1851, with of course a much steeper decline than that suggests when population increase is taken into account.

Such a suggestion is unlikely to cause surprise, but does give some idea of the missionary challenge facing the URC to-day.

Comparison of 1851 attendance and that noted in the 1993 URC yearbook for individual churches is difficult to assess. If Mann's formula is questionable current estimates may be less than precise too. Many churches have disappeared, some united; in other cases it is not easy to be certain that the existing church is the one in the census. If the Mann formula is used most churches appear to have an attendance one-tenth or less of that in 1851; but the current figure is for the "main service" only. If the 1851 largest congregation alone is compared with the current figure the decline is in some cases less dramatic: Havant, Ringwood and Basingstoke, for example, average over 50% of what they had in 1851. At the other extreme the main congregation at Ryde has shrunk to 7%: but what is remarkable is that in 1851 it is claimed to have totalled 850, with 500 in the afternoon and a further 800 in the evening.

Some books make good overall reading despite lacking striking details; this volume in contrast is unlikely to win breathless attention from many readers but contains fascinating and informative items of information for those who look for them.

STEPHEN MAYOR

Victorian Values. The Life and Times of Dr. Edwin Lankester MD FRS. By Mary P. English. Pp. 187. Biopress, Clanage Road, Bristol. 1990.

This book is designed for people interested in public health history. Its interest for Nonconformists lies in the fact that Edwin Lankester held the Chair of Natural Science at the newly-founded New College, London, from 1851 to 1872. It was very much a part-time appointment. Lankester's energies were widespread. In 1856, for example, when he became Medical Officer of Health for St. James's, Westminster, he had to terminate his appointment at the Royal Pimlico Dispensary, "but he was still lecturing at the Grosvenor Place School (*of Medicine and Anatomy*) and at New College, was Medical Officer to the English Widows' Fund, and had at least some private practice." In addition he was in the thick of the struggle for the Medical Reform Bill, nor did he give up his interest in research. Later he was to become Coroner for Central Middlesex.

At New College he gave a two-year course. In the first year men studied chemistry, mineralogy and geology and in the second, botany, physiology, zoology and comparative anatomy. At the outset he was given £50 to purchase specimens and apparatus. Relics of these existed at the later New College building higher up Finchley Road within living memory.

In his introductory lecture Lankester explained that theologians needed knowledge of natural science so as to defend religion from attack. What he was getting at is made plain when he expresses his belief about creation in terms of "Progress". Darwin's *The Origin of Species* was not to be published for another twelve years. That Lankester was lecturing theological students like this in the 1850s is not, however, extraordinary. In a way it was a tribute to Dr. John Pye Smith FRS, the Principal of Homerton College, one of the constituent colleges of New College, who had but recently died, and who had done notable work relating geology and its time-scale to the doctrine of creation.

The book reminds us that Lankester was a practical Christian of the Dickensian era. Incidentally there is an illustration from *Punch* showing Dickens and Lankester taking "military" action against wasps at a family picnic on the Isle of Wight. Lankester advocated the use of earth closets for houses without running water; he argued that "it was a Divine injunction on the Jew to bury the refuse of his household in the earth."

Unhappily we do not know what the students made of Lankester but he was a popular lecturer. For example, his public lectures on food given in 1861, six for a shilling a head, attracted an average of 284 persons per session. Was he too popular with the men? Or was he neglecting his duties? At any rate, he was dismissed by the College Board in 1872 in acrimonious circumstances.

It would be interesting to know more about his church affiliations. Mary English says he was buried in the Hampstead Parish Church cemetery but says nothing of the funeral service. He came from Woodbridge in Suffolk. His father died when he was only four and lies buried in Quay Street Congregational Chapel graveyard. He attended its school and at twelve became apprentice to the local surgeon. His mother kept the Royal Oak. And his wife was widely connected in Baptist and Congregational circles, although Mary English does not explore these.

Mary English's book is an enthralling story of a pioneer's struggle to bring medicine, indeed science itself, into the modern world. He beavered away at medical training and registration, at cleansing the water supply, at preventing cholera, at establishing the natural History Museum, at getting accurate figures for births and deaths, and more besides.

Lankester's wife, Phebe, wrote extensively on botany and health in a popular style as well as writing a weekly women's column for some provincial newspapers for twenty years, an innovation in those days. Of the eleven children she and Edwin had, seven lived to make solid contributions in various fields of life, the best-known being Sir Ray Lankester who was Professor of Zoology at University College, London and later Director of the Natural History Museum, Kensington.

JOHN H. TAYLOR

A Northumbrian Methodist Childhood. By A. Victor Murray, edited by Geoffrey E. Milburn. Northumberland County Library, 1992. £5.95

Victor Murray was for fourteen years (1945-1959) President of Cheshunt College : head of a predominantly Congregational theological college though himself a Methodist layman. His appointment produced rather over-familiar allusions to Caligula's horse, and at times (to mix metaphors) Victor seemed something of a fish out of water. He was sensitive and uneasy in some personal relationships; but he is remembered also as conscientious and invariably kind in his dealings with students.

The Methodist historian Geoffrey Milburn has been fortunate in having access to Victor's childhood memoirs, now deposited with Northumberland County Library, and has edited them with scholarly care but appropriate unobtrusiveness.

Victor wrote these memoirs in his Cheshunt days, but they cover his childhood in Choppington, Northumberland, and Berwick on Tweed (Northumberland also, or Scotland, or perhaps just Berwick) around the beginning of the century. They are full of his gentle humour and a streak of ingenuousness which gives them a peculiar charm. Mr. Milburn has provided an interesting introduction and a family tree, which shows Victor to have been related to Sir William (more familiarly Will) Lawther, the miners' leader.

What emerges is the vivid picture of the clever boy in a family on the fringe of the lower-middle and upper-working classes - the C2 class which wins elections, perhaps. His father was a shopkeeper for the Co-op who set up as producer of mineral waters such as Murray's Botanic Beer. He moved from Choppington to Berwick for business reasons, then briefly to Skegness, where he went bankrupt. Victor moved up through grammar school to Oxford and academic and literary success.

Much of the story is occupied by vignettes of life among the Primitive Methodists, to whom in principle Victor was always faithful; one suspects that working chiefly with Congregationalists at Cheshunt was acceptable because they were so unlike Wesleyans. He does not take Northumbrian Primitive

Methodists entirely at their own valuation, and is quite capable of poking good-natured fun at their foibles – even at their prayers; but the humour never conceals the admiration.

The book's value is enhanced by excellently chosen photographs, some from library sources, some from Victor's son, and some taken specifically by Mr. Milburn.

The world we meet in these pages seem strangely remote from that of our own days. The Primitive Methodists of the 1890s were far distant from the Cambridge of the 1950s, and doubly distant from the world of 1992; and the picture we are proffered here has the same charm as the now fashionable Victorian genre paintings.

STEPHEN MAYOR

A History of Pype Hayes United Reformed Church (and Minworth). By John Rammell. Pp. 180. 49 Hardware St., West Bromwich, West Midlands, B70 8SU. 1992. £6.50 incl. postage.

It is rare to come across so detailed an account of a congregation's life as we have here. The period covered is 1928-1990 and anyone wanting to know what the average church experienced in that turbulent period would find that John Rammell tells them. For example, in 1928 a house to house visitation resulted in five hundred children turning up for Sunday School; sixty years later the church is valiantly struggling to hold twenty or so children. During the war the church was burnt by an incendiary bomb and a wedding took place under umbrellas. The social concern of the church is well documented as are its ecumenical relationships and evangelistic endeavours. Few years have gone by without building problems and financial crises and on this aspect of church life alone I imagine few such detailed accounts of troubles and transactions exist. Whereas a great many chapel histories consist of the reigns of ministers this one does not. Instead we have a balanced presentation, the congregation has a life of its own to which the minister contributes. Moreover the author deserves congratulation for attempting to portray both ministers and lay people with their debit and credit sides. There is a splendid tribute to a faithful caretaker who seems to have intimidated younger members of the congregation. How right Rammell is when he says, "While not seeking to disparage the gallant efforts of the Men's Forum, it was the women of the Church who maintained the social fabric of the fellowship".

Where is the book disappointing? The first thing one notices is the vile illustrations, on a par with the poorest ones in *Reform*. Next, the author seems to have an antipathy towards statistics. He does not tell us that Pype Hayes had 97 members and 420 scholars in 1936, 176 members and 170 children in 1961, or that it returned again to 97 in another twenty years, with 28 children. These figures tell us a great deal. It is also noticeable that there is no discussion of the theology held by the church or its ministers. Was it unimportant?

JOHN H. TAYLOR

A History of St. George's Church, Morpeth. By Eric B. Ross, 1993. Pp. 48. No price given. Obtainable from St. George's United Reformed Church, Morpeth

This is the first work to come to the *Journal's* attention to express a debt to Dr. Orchard's course at the Windermere Centre on writing a church history. On the evidence presented here the Windermere Centre, Dr. Orchard, Dr. Ross and St. George's Morpeth are gently to be congratulated. Here is a brief tercentenary history which breeds confidence. Dr. Ross is a medical man (as one expects elders of such churches to be) and this informs the context of his narrative. He allows himself enough space for the illustrative detail, the snapshot of the sort of people who composed the congregation, and the larger regional and national contexts to allow the reader who does not know Morpeth to get a sense of the standing of its Presbyterians in their community. Since their ministers included John Horsley ("Divinity was his job, science his hobby and archaeology his obsession"), A.H. Drysdale the historian, and James Anderson who was Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in England in 1847 and of the Presbyterian Church of England in 1876, and their members included Robert Morrison, the pioneer missionary to China, this is very much to the point. So is the relationship to English Dissent (an early nineteenth-century minister, like one of his neighbours, was Wymondley trained) and to the Scottish Established and Free Churches (the Wymondley minister's successor returned to Scotland in 1843 to minister in the Church of Scotland; but *his* successor came from Scotland since he was no longer prepared so to minister). And it is interesting to see Morpeth's Congregationalism emerge as a secession (in 1829) from an entirely orthodox local Presbyterianism. Relations between the two communities seem to have been friendly although the Congregationalists did not enter the United Reformed Church and, though once "lively and extremely active", have since closed.

I suspect that Dr. Ross intends his history to be for local consumption, but it fuels some interesting and pertinent questions about English Presbyterianism in its British as well as its local context.

JCGB

The Revd. Ian Wallace, an indefatigable author of local church histories, has added another to his list: *A History of Eccles Pendleton Bright Road Presbyterian Church.* The church had a life roughly spanning the first three-quarters of the twentieth century, merging in 1972 with the author's own Congregational church to form Patricroft United Reformed Church.

The history is available from the author at 5 Priory Court, Abbey Grove, Eccles, M30 9QN at a price of £2.00.

STEPHEN MAYOR

SOME CONTEMPORARIES

The Baptist Quarterly (XXXIV, 1-4, 1991)

No. 1: P.R. Dekar, "Baptist peacemakers in nineteenth-century peace societies"; D.W. Bebbington, "The Baptist conscience in the nineteenth-century". No. 2: S.F. Winter, "Michael Sattler and the Schleithem Articles: A Study in the background to the first Anabaptist Confession of Faith"; K.E. Smith, "Beyond public and private spheres: Another look at women in Baptist history and historiography". No. 3: J.H.Y. Briggs, "Evangelical ecumenism: The amalgamation of General and Particular Baptists in 1891, pt. I"; D.D. Morgan, "Christmas Evans (1766-1838) and the birth of Nonconformist Wales"; D.H. Matthews, "The Glass House or Glaziers' Hall : Two seventeenth-century Baptist meeting houses - or one?" G.F. Nuttall, "Letters from Robert Hall to John Ryland 1791-1824"; D. Aitken, "Benjamin Keach: 'The Glorious Lover' - An Analogue for 'Paradise Lost?'" F.M.W. Harrison, "The historical chapel at Monksthorpe". No. 4: A.W. Wardin, "The Baptists in Bulgaria"; J.H.Y. Briggs, "Evangelical ecumenism..., Pt. II"; S.H. Mayor, "James II and the Dissenters"; M.J. Collis, "Ebenezer Particular Baptist church., Hertford, and the Eastern Association of Baptist Churches".

Business History (XXXII no. 1, 1990)

S. Ville, "Shipping in the port of Sunderland 1815-45: A counter-cyclical trend".

Church History (LX no. 1, March 1991)

M. Valeri, "The economic thought of Jonathan Edwards"; J.C. English, "John Wesley's indebtedness to John Norris".

Enlightenment and Dissent (IX, 1990)

J. Graham, "Revolutionary philosopher: The political ideas of Joseph Priestley (1733-1804). Pt. II"; A.P.F. Sell, "In the wake of the Enlightenment: The adjustments of James Martineau and Alexander Campbell Fraser"; J. Dybikowski and M. Fitzpatrick, "David Williams, John Jebb and liturgical reform".

Harvard Theological Review (LXXXIII no. 3, July 1990)

N.B. Gibbs and L.W. Gibbs, "Charles Chauncy: A theology in two portraits"; R.E. Brantley, "The common ground of Wesley and Edwards"; M. Granquist, "The role of 'common sense' in the hermeneutics of Moses Stuart".

The Historical Journal (XXXIV no. 3, 1991)

H. Horie, "The Lutheran influence on the Elizabethan Settlement".

History (LXXV no. 1, 1990)

D.L. Wykes, "Religious Dissent and the penal laws: an explanation of business success?"

Irish Biblical Studies (XIII, January 1991)
R.B. Knox, "Presbyterianism".

Journal of British Studies (XXX, 1991)

No. 1: D. MacCulloch, "The myth of the English Reformation". No. 4: S.J.D. Green, "The religion of the child in Edwardian Methodism; Institutional reform and pedagogical reappraisal in the West Riding of Yorkshire".

The Journal of Ecclesiastical History (XLII, 1991)

No. 1: G.M. Ditchfield, "Anti-trinitarianism and toleration in late eighteenth-century British politics: The Unitarian petition of 1792". No. 4: S.J. Brown, "A victory for God: The Scottish Presbyterian churches and the general strike of 1926".

Journal of Ecumenical Studies (XXVII no. 4, 1990)

J.C. Meyer, "Philip Schaff: An ecumenical pioneer".

The Journal of the Friends' Historical Society (LVI no.2, 1991)

H.L. Ingle and J. Ingle, "The excommunication of George Fox, 1678"; E.B. Bronner, "George Fox and William Penn, unlikely yokefellows and friends"; R.S. Harrison, "Irish Quaker perspectives on the Anti-Slavery Movement"; H. Hewison, "Human progress and the inward light".

The Journal of Pacific History (XXVI no. 1, 1991)

A.P.F. Sell, "The Samoan White Sunday : A conjecture".

The Journal of Religious History (XVI no. 3, 1990)

R.G. Kyle, "The Christian Commonwealth: John Knox's vision for Scotland".

The New Mercersburg Review (1991)

No. 9: J.W. Van Hoesen, "Mercersburg underground in the Dutch Reformed Church"; F.R. Mitman, Jr., "The implications for Christian unity in the theology of John Williamson Nevin"; D.R. Clemens, "Principles of anatagonism or the mystical nuisance"; idem, "Nineteenth-century periodicals dealing with the Mercersburg theology". No. 10: D.R. Clemens, "With all the saints: Ecumenical liturgics and Mercersburg theology"; R.A. Schneider, "Mercersburg and Old First".

Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society

XLVII, 1990, pt. 6: E.A. Rose, "The Methodist New Connexion 1797-1907". XLVIII, 1991, pt. 1: S.A. Bell, "Reception into full membership (pt. I)". Pt. 2: idem, art. cit., pt. II; G. Potts, "Methodist chapels and the Gothic revival". Pt. 3: J.C. English, "John Wesley and Isaac Newton's 'System of the World' "; E. Hart, "Bibliography of Frank Baker"; C.C. Short, "The Bible Christians in Scotland".

Restoration Quarterly (XXXIII, 1991)

No. 1: T.H. Holbricht, "Alexander Campbell in the context of American biblical studies 1810-1874". No. 4: F. Terry *et al.* "Alexander Campbell: A case study in representative metaphors of the restoration".

Scottish Journal of Theology (XLIV no. 4, 1991)

S.J. Brown, "Reform, reconstruction, reaction: The social vision of Scottish Presbyterianism c. 1830 - c.1930".

Transactions of the Royal Historical Society (5th ser. XXXIX, 1989)

R. Rex, "The English campaign against Luther in the 1520s".
(6th ser. I, 1991) R.G. Davies, "Lollardy and locality".

Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society (XIX, no. 4, 1990)

J. Goring, "Unitarianism: history, myth or make-believe"; D. Tantem, "Samuel Gaskell, distinguished psychiatrist, and his family"; A. Ruston, "Unitarianism in Northampton - Rev. John Horsey to Sir Philip Manfield"; J. McLachlan, "Joseph Priestley and the study of history".

Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society (XX no. 1, 1991)

G.M. Ditchfield, "Priestley riots in historical perspective"; D.L. Wykes, "The spirit of persecutors exemplified' : The Priestley riots and the victims of the Church and King mobs"; I. Sellars, "Spanning Victoria and Edward: Two urban ministries around 1900"; O. Stinchcombe, "Elizabethan Malleeson (1828-1916) and Unitarianism"; A. Ruston, "Clementina Taylor (1810-1908)".

The Westminster Theological Journal (LIII no. 1, 1991)

R. White, "An early Reformed document on the mission to the Jews"; D.B. McWilliams, "The Covenant theology of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and recent criticism".

Transactions of the Worcestershire Archaeological Society (XI, 1988)

C.D. Gilbert, "Kidderminster at the outbreak of the English Civil War".

ALAN P.F. SELL