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The Nottinghamshire Baptists

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Inter-Church Relations

The relationship between the General and Particular Baptists in Nottinghamshire was always very cordial. Members and, by the middle of the 19th century, ministers were freely transferred between churches of either section of the denomination and before the end of the century General and Particular Baptists had become one body, including, in Nottingham, the Scotch Baptists. Only the Chaucer Street Gospel Standard Strict Baptists remained outside the main stream of Baptist life, but they had never been in any way associated with the other Baptist churches in the town. Relations with other nonconformist churches were also very cordial. In many villages Baptist and Methodist churches respectively would suspend their own services on the occasion of the Sunday School Anniversary of the other denomination. In one case, Kirkby Woodhouse, the two bodies united to form a Sunday School in Kirkby-in-Ashfield in 1916.

Contact with the few Roman Catholic churches which existed in Nottinghamshire was virtually non-existent and any notice taken of Roman Catholicism was a protest against something or other. Many Nottinghamshire Baptists protested at public money being used to support Maynooth Theological College in Ireland in 1845¹ and a great public meeting of protest was held in Stoney Street Chapel at which Alderman Vickers, a Baptist, stated that the opposition was not due to "hostility to our Roman Catholic brethren" but to disapproval of the principle on endowments altogether. In 1857² all the ministers of the town signed a petition against supporting the college. In the middle of the century when Roman Catholic bishops with territorial titles were appointed, there was a great outcry in the country; even Nottingham Corporation sent a petition of protest to the Queen.³ On 13th December 1850, the Rev. G. A. Syme of Mansfield Road Baptist Church gave a lecture which was later published⁴ and which was remarkable for its moderation. Other churches, he said, had their own methods of church government and only those who wished need submit themselves to a Roman bishop. Persecution would not put down Romanism. "Let us meet its errors with reason". No other local main stream Baptist church seems to have petitioned government about "papal aggression" thereafter; evidently Syme's lecture had a moderating effect.

Relations with Anglicanism varied. In the earlier part of the century as far as co-operation in religious work was concerned, the Anglican Church might not have existed, and no doubt the same attitude prevailed on the Anglican side. Much of this was due to memories of old

antagonisms but there were also deeply felt doctrinal differences which at that time seemed insuperable. For Baptists the most obvious issue was the question of baptism, and from time to time members of Baptist churches were reprimanded for having their children "sprinkled" at church. Examples are William Clarke at East Leake in 1805 and, sixty years later, John Collingham at Wymeswold in 1864. In 1860 two deacons at Kirkby Woodhouse were deputed to "visit" Rebecca Davenport for merely having been present at a christening.

Church rates were a major grievance of dissenters, felt particularly about the period 1830-1840. Meetings of protest were frequently held. One such was held in the Wesleyan Chapel in Basford in 1834,⁵ attended by representatives of various nonconformist churches. It was claimed that out of 7,000 inhabitants of Basford, 1,140 attended nonconformist churches (Baptists claimed 510 of these), while only 120 attended Anglican churches: church rates for the latter were therefore unfair. A favourite manoeuvre of dissenters was to pack vestry meetings when a church rate was to be proposed. When the resolution was brought forward, one of them would propose an amendment to postpone the meeting for a year, which would, of course, be passed as nonconformists were present in a majority. Sometimes, as in Beeston in 1845,⁶ the vicar, in the chair, would refuse to put the amendment to the meeting and would attempt to force through the original motion. On this occasion, the prominent Nottingham Baptist, William Felkin, rose to protest, but the vicar was adamant and declared the original motion passed. At the 78th anniversary of the Broad Street Baptist Church in 1895, J. T. Mallett claimed that his father and ten others had been imprisoned for refusing to pay a church rate.

Opposition to the principle of an Established Church appears frequently and, within a year or two of the first Anti-State Church Conference in 1844, delegates from Nottingham were appointed to this movement. In February 1851⁷ there was a great Anti-State Church meeting in the Exchange Hall when G. A. Syme and J. M. Baynes, ministers of the leading General and Particular Baptist churches, proposed and seconded a motion condemning the principle of an Established Church.

In spite of the above, there are a few examples of Baptist and Anglican co-operation, though in relatively small matters. Anglican clergy in certain South Nottinghamshire villages supported the General Baptist Missionary Society. At Wymeswold in 1840 the curate, Mr. Noble, "pleaded the missionary cause" alongside Baptist missionaries.⁸ The vicar of Dalby gave a sovereign to the missionary collection at Broughton in 1847, while the curate at East Leake lent the village school for the Baptist missionary meetings in 1843.⁹ In 1846 the Rev. J. Butler gave up the service in the parish church so that his congregation could attend the Wesleyan Sunday School anniversary, conducted by the Rev. Hugh Hunter of Stoney Street Baptist Church, Nottingham—quite an ecumenical occasion. In Nottingham the Bible Society provided a platform on which Anglican and Nonconformists could

meet, and another such platform was the Evangelical Alliance when evangelical Anglicans and free churchmen met in friendship. In the latter half of the century Anglican clergy were sometimes seen on Free Church platforms on special occasions but much less frequently than today. The *Baptist Reporter* 1855¹¹ says that an Anglican clergyman had written a small memoir of the Rev. W. Fogg, minister of the Retford Baptist Church, though no copy of this has been traced. In 1886¹² there was a proposal that Anglicans and Nonconformists should unite in a mission to the town. The Derby Road Church was hesitant, they would consider a definite scheme if such were proposed but were not prepared to move first in the matter. The mission was never held.

On most issues Anglicans and Nonconformists went their separate ways; one important exception was in the sphere of education, a subject which will be discussed later.

Union between General and Particular Baptists

Union between the two sections of Baptists was discussed for over fifty years before it was achieved. In 1840 a writer (most probably from the Midlands) wrote to the *Repository*¹³ suggesting union, but what he suggested was a union in name only. The separate Associations would continue as before, as would the Missionary Societies, and churches would continue to choose ministers of their own tradition. In 1857 the Baptist Union meetings were held in Nottingham in an attempt to bring General and Particular Baptists together but little was either expected or accomplished. In 1870 the churches of both traditions were brought together in the Midland Baptist Union which remained in existence side by side with the separate General and Particular Baptist Associations. These Associations continued their former functions which made the Midland Union superfluous, and it lasted only ten years. John Clifford, whose counsel carried weight in Nottinghamshire, consistently advocated union, not only among the Baptists but with the Congregationalists too.¹⁴ The Derby Road church book in 1889 records an occasion when the minister, the Rev. Edward Medley, spoke of progress being made toward union but the church still felt that union was impossible, though only two years later union actually came about. In December 1889 the Nottingham Baptist Union was formed which included churches of both traditions and Derby Road was one of the first churches to join that union. When, in 1891, the proposal for complete union was placed before each church individually, every church in the county without exception agreed to come into unity, the relevant minute in the books of church after church recording the strong approval of the church meeting. In the East Midlands, where the General Baptists were especially strong, a new Association was formed, the East Midland Baptist Association, whereas in other parts of the country the local General Baptist churches, which had belonged to the nation-wide General Baptist Association, were distributed among the local Particular Baptist Associations which then became simply "Baptist" Associations. A

generation later many Baptists were completely unaware that there had ever been two Baptist groups.

The National Free Church Council

In 1893, shortly after the Congress of Freechurchmen in Manchester which gave rise to local Free Church councils, the Nottingham Baptists approached the executive bodies of the other free churches in the town with proposals to form a Free Church Council,¹⁵ with the result that Baptists, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Friends and Methodists met in the Sunday School Institution in Shakespeare Street to form such a council. In 1896 the Free Church Congress met in Nottingham and the title *National Council of Free Churches* was adopted. In the years that followed Free Church Councils were formed in many towns in the county and local Baptist churches were represented on most of them.

The Social Composition of the Nottinghamshire Baptists

As far as the evidence is available, the early Baptist leaders in Nottinghamshire were men of education and social standing. Thomas Helwys was one of a wealthy county family, while John Smyth had been educated at Cambridge. Later in the 17th century some Baptist conventicles were led by men above the average in education and position. The large conventicle at Rempstone was led by Elias Boyer, described as "gentleman", who lived in a house large enough to accommodate the 200 who met there. At Normanton Ralph Pearson is mentioned in the Compton Returns along with Boyer as leader, but the rest of the members are described as "mechanics and poore women". At Kneesall the leaders were two former Anglican clergymen, Thomas Casse, ejected from St. Mary Magdalene, Fleet Street, London, and James Jackson, ejected from Bleasby. Flintham and Gamston were both led by farmers but the leaders of other conventicles were in humbler circumstances. The few indications we have of the social standing of the Nottinghamshire Baptists of the 18th century suggest that their position had deteriorated, which is not surprising as the disabilities under which they laboured prevented them from obtaining an academic education. In Nottingham itself some of the Baptists were richer. George Eaton, trustee of the Friar Lane Meeting House in 1724, was a hosier, though other trustees were manual workers, a carpenter, a tailor and a shoemaker.¹⁶ In 1758 the Friar Lane trustees included four in retail business, a schoolmaster, a "gentleman" and a stocking trimmer.

Toward the end of the 18th century and in the 19th century the position becomes clearer; some Baptists were advancing in prosperity. The Particular Baptists as a body were wealthier than the General Baptists of the New Connexion. They were able to spend sums in the neighbourhood of £6,000 on their main chapels in 1815 and in 1849 respectively, two or three times as much as the General Baptists spent on their main chapels. Throughout the century the Particular Baptists

numbered among their members some of the most prominent business men in the town. At the beginning of the 19th century many were the owners of prosperous retail businesses and, as the century advanced, each successive generation increased its wealth and social standing. John Wells, born in 1748, was a draper. He was sheriff in 1822 and mayor in 1838. His sons were educated at good schools and both became hosiery manufacturers. J. H. Barber, who was also sheriff and twice mayor, was a grocer and Chandler. One of his sons was colliery manager at Babington, another was a solicitor, and four of his grandsons were educated on the the Continent. Joseph Oldknow, mayor in 1792 and 1799, was a grocer. His son, O. T. Oldknow, was a draper, and of his grandsons, one was a draper, another a hosiery manufacturer, another was a solicitor and another was educated at Cambridge, became a clergyman and received the degree of D.D. In the next generation James Oldknow was three times mayor of Nottingham and was knighted in 1878. By this time, however, the family no longer appears in Baptist records. Other Baptist families engaged in lace or hosiery manufacture were the Rogers, Heard, Vickers, Frearsons and Leavers. The Vickers and Frearsons formed a partnership and their firm had world-wide connections. William Felkin, of whom more will be said later, was a lace manufacturer. The Bayleys came to Nottingham at the end of the 18th century and founded a leather factory in Lenton which is still a substantial business. Thomas Bayley of the next generation extended the family business interests to tanneries in Giltbrook and Newark. He founded the Digby colliery, was a director of the Nottingham Joint Stock Bank and a founder of the Lenton Co-operative Society (now the Greater Nottingham Co-operative Society). He purchased Lenton Abbey and Giltbrook Hall estates. His son added Manvers Colliery and the Daimler Motor Company to his directorships and possessed three residences, Peveril House in the Park, Lenton Abbey and Langar Hall, and became M.P. for Chesterfield. The first four Bayleys were active Baptist preachers, two of them serving as pastors of the Scotch Baptist Church. The Birkin family grew rich in lace manufacture. The founder of their family fortunes was Richard Birkin, 1805-1870, who was a deacon of the Palm Street Baptist Church. His residence was Aspley Hall. His grandson, Thomas Isaac Birkin, became the first baronet in 1905. The grandson of Edmund Renals of the Friar Lane Church became Sir Joseph Renals, Bart., Lord Mayor of London. The Beresfords, the Barbers and the Rogers, all Friar Lane families, acquired armorial bearings. Joseph Bright, solicitor, became Sir Joseph in 1906. With certain exceptions, for example the Brights, the Bayleys and the Oldknows, none of these prosperous families retained their connection with the Baptists in later generations, they either moved into the Church of England or out of church life altogether.

Much of what has been said might suggest that the Particular Baptists were a predominantly middle or upper middle class community. This is not so. Although these classes were strongly represented in some

of the churches, all the Nottingham Baptist churches included a much greater proportion of working class people among their members than all the other classes put together. Both Derby Road and George Street lost many members by emigration in the 1850s, an indication of the working class constituency in their membership. The addresses of the emigrants were practically all in the working class districts of Radford, St. Anne's and the Meadows, with a few from lower middle class areas. The Derby Road Church Manuals for 1884 and 1911 have been examined and the members classified according to the districts in which they lived. Class 1 represents those who lived in the exclusively upper middle class districts. Class 4 comprises those who lived in areas since demolished under slum clearance projects, while the other classes fall in between. The figures are as follows:

| | <i>1884</i> | <i>1911</i> |
|----------------------|--|--|
| Class 1 | 28 | 27 (11 families in both instances) |
| Class 2 | 12 | 40 |
| Class 3 | 106 | 114 |
| Class 4 | 253 | 110 |
| Away from Nottingham | 24 | 33 |
| | <hr style="width: 50px; margin: 0 auto;"/> | <hr style="width: 50px; margin: 0 auto;"/> |
| | 423 | 324 |

In 1884 about 7 per cent of the members were of the upper middle class while about 90 per cent were working or lower middle class, over 60 per cent being in Class 4. In 1911 over 80 per cent were in Classes 3 and 4, though the proportion in Class 4 had sunk to about 40 per cent. Between 1884 and 1911 the loss in church membership at Derby Road was almost entirely from Classes 3 and 4. The fact that membership in Class 2 increased and the losses were almost entirely in Class 4 may indicate that the poorer families tended to improve their economic position after they became church members, perhaps as a result of developing habits of temperance and thrift, but it also means that the church was not recruiting members among Class 4 as rapidly as before.

The Manual of the George Street Particular Baptist Church for 1889 is available. The upper middle classes formed only 2½ per cent of the membership at this late period of the century while the working classes formed at least 60 per cent. A generation earlier George Street had included a strong bourgeois element in its membership. Of the trustees in 1852, five were in retail business, four were merchants or manufacturers and the fifth, Richard Gresham Barber, had extensive mining and other interests. Not one is a manual worker, though it will be remembered that a church would naturally choose its trustees from among those with most business experience.

With regard to the leadership of the churches, in 1884, out of nine Derby Road deacons, seven were in residential Class 1, while in 1911, out of eleven deacons only two appear to be of the upper middle class. In 1889 George Street had nine deacons with only one in Class 1. This is a substantial change from the position in the middle of the century

and it may be partly explained by the tendency already mentioned for later generations of the richer families to move out of Baptist church life, or, in the case of members of the central churches, to move to pleasanter suburbs.

In the villages neither Particular Baptist churches nor New Connexion General Baptist churches included any really well-to-do people. In the agricultural villages members were farm workers or tradesmen and in the industrial villages they were lace-makers, stockings or miners. Ministers often followed a secular occupation as well as occupying the pastorate. Clement Nott, who became minister at Sutton-in-Ashfield in 1822 after academic training at Stepney College, tried to live on his stipend, but in 1827 was compelled to open a school. The only member of any profession mentioned in the Sutton church records is Thomas Kitelee, a surgeon, who joined the church in 1836, was elected deacon two years later but left the district in 1843. White's *Directory of Nottinghamshire* of 1832 includes the names of several of the members of the Beeston Church. They include bobbin net makers, nurserymen, a needle maker, a painter, a gardener, a shoemaker, a joiner and a tailor. It is highly probable that the many members not mentioned were in humbler walks of life. The Kirkby-in-Ashfield membership registers of 1841-1871 include 190 names of whom the fate of 120 is given. Of these 86 died. In many cases the cause of death is given and the greatest single cause of death is "consumption", a disease of poverty. In an agricultural village like East Leake whose congregation was linked with that of Wymeswold, out of about 300 members in 1848 the occupations of ten are listed in the directory. Two were farmers, three were blacksmiths, four were shopkeepers and one a joiner. Several are listed as "cottagers". These and most of the others would be farm labourers or framework knitters or the wives of men of these occupations.

In the 19th century the General Baptists in Nottingham itself had distinctly fewer of the bourgeoisie among their members than the Particular Baptists. Their deacons were more likely to have engaged in retail trade than in manufacturing. When trustees for Broad Street were appointed in 1833, out of thirteen, five were in retail trade, two were commercial employees and two were skilled workmen. No General Baptist family achieved business interests comparable with those of the Bayleys or the Vickers. No knighthoods came the way of the General Baptists and the few exclusions for bankruptcies at Broad Street involved relatively small sums, from £40 to £230,¹⁷ and the addresses of the General Baptist lay preachers suggest the courts and alleys of inner Nottingham rather than the middle class residential suburbs.

Financial Arrangements of the Nottinghamshire Baptists

In the year 1857 the *Baptist Reporter* published an article¹⁸ in which it claimed that Baptist ministers were the lowest paid of all "independents". Most of them received less than £80 a year and some

less than £40. About 120 Baptist churches paid their minister £200, 60 paid £300 and about twenty exceeded that sum. In 1870 the *General Baptist Magazine* contained an article by the Rev. Wallis Chapman of Louth¹⁹ entitled "The Ideal Chapel". According to Mr. Chapman the ideal chapel would have 600-700 sittings, a membership of 300 and an average congregation of 450. The church would pay its minister £230 a year, its caretaker £60 and it would devote £80 to soup kitchens, £60 to almshouses, £52 to foreign missions, £12 to "struggling churches" and £10 to the college. Its total budget would be £650. Only four Nottinghamshire churches came anywhere near to this ideal, Broad Street, Mansfield Road, Derby Road and George Street, all, of course, in Nottingham itself. In the whole denomination only 20 per cent of the churches had over 200 members and these churches accounted for 50 per cent of the denomination. The same situation held in Nottinghamshire.

Various methods were used at different times to find the money required to maintain the work of the churches. At the beginning of the century the main method was the quarterly collection. This subsequently became a monthly collection and eventually a weekly one. Sometimes the quarterly collection was for the minister's stipend and the monthly one was for the other church expenses. Usually, a plate was passed round for the quarterly offering, each member having promised a certain sum. At least one church, Beeston, had to make other arrangements when it was found (in 1830) that some members were avoiding the meeting when "quarterage" was due. Quarterage was considered a primary obligation of a church member and when schism occurred at George Street in 1847 one of the complaints was that the seceders (who formed the Derby Road Church) had not paid their quarterage.

Fairly early in the nineteenth century pew rents were introduced and about a third of the way through the century they took the place of the quarterly collection as a means of raising the minister's salary. At George Street pew rents were introduced when the chapel was opened in 1818. For about fifty years they were a major source of church income, though by the end of that period their relative importance was rapidly diminishing. In 1879 Derby Road pew rents brought in £88, but in 1880 only £21 out of a total for the year of £700. In 1867 Mansfield Road received only £7-10-0 in pew rents against £277 from the weekly offering. For a minister to be dependent on a variable income such as pew rents or the weekly offering might be satisfactory in a large and growing church, but it could be very much the reverse if such a situation did not exist. The Friar Lane accounts, the oldest surviving Baptist account book in the county, show that the quarterly offerings, therefore the minister's salary, in the 1770s was about £50 a year. By the end of the century it had risen to £70 and in the 1820s it was £190. At the much smaller church at Retford the quarterly collections in 1798 were between £5 and £6 a quarter, but the church had income from rents and the minister's salary was made

up to £8-15-0 a quarter. In 1864 George Street offered the Rev. Stacey Chapman £200 a year; he felt that this was too little and eventually it was agreed that he be paid the pew rents less 20 per cent with a guaranteed minimum income of £200.

Pews were let on the basis of sittings—a seat per person. The charge for a sitting varied with the position of the pew, something like the seats in a theatre. In 1810 Beeston charged sixpence a quarter for a seat in the back row of the gallery and 1/6 for a seat in a middle pew downstairs. In 1836 the rates ranged from 3/- to 5/-. At Broad Street the range was from 1/6 to 3/- and “to avoid unpleasant competition” the highest subscriber to the chapel building fund was to have first choice and so on—a system as open to objection as any other, and which does not seem to have been adopted again. At Kirkby Woodhouse seats were cheaper, ranging from fourpence to eightpence. In August 1868 the Broad Street rents were reduced to between twopence and fourpence a seat and two months later they were abolished entirely, members being expected to give “as the Lord had prospered them”. Other churches at this period were beginning to abolish pew rents. Derby Road had already done so in 1861, when they were bringing in £170 a year, on the grounds that they deterred working people from attending the services. Still it must be remembered that churches with a wholly working class membership saw no reason why they should not levy pew rents. Some seats were always kept free, though they were few in number and tended to be in the least attractive positions. At Beeston the only free seats were the two front pews downstairs. The system had its advantages; it provided the church with a fairly reliable source of income and it is unlikely that renting a pew in a nonconformist chapel conferred sole right of occupancy—merely a prior claim to an accustomed pew, but the system did mean that the more wealthy members would tend to occupy the best seats and it was no welcome to a stranger to be conducted to one of the worst situated pews in the building.

In the early days of Nottinghamshire Baptist life few ministers were salaried, or at best they received only a small honorarium. They were chosen from among the local congregation and continued to follow their secular occupation. For example, Joshua Burton served the Sutton-in-Ashfield Church as pastor from 1778 to 1801 when he reverted to the office of deacon and John Whitehead, another deacon, succeeded as pastor. About the middle of the nineteenth century Nottinghamshire country Baptist churches paid their pastors between £40 and £60 a year. Newark paid £50 in 1833 but in 1851 tried to obtain a minister for £40 without success. Retford paid £100 in 1877 with a house provided at 10/- a year, and Southwell paid about the same. Beeston paid its minister £150 in 1909 and reduced the amount in 1913 to £140 when the Rev. R. C. Ford commenced his ministry.

The large Nottingham churches, of course, paid more. Broad Street paid Robert Smith £100 in 1819 and continued to pay its ministers sums of that order for over thirty years. In the 1860s the Rev. W. R.

Stevenson received £180 from Broad Street and £120 as tutor at the Chilwell College. When he relinquished his college duties in 1873 the church maintained his income at £300. Mansfield Road paid salaries ranging from £150 in 1850 to £300 at the end of the century and when in the early years of the twentieth century Mansfield Road and Broad Street united, the minister was paid £450.

The wealthier Particular Baptist churches usually paid more. Derby Road paid its first minister £200 in 1849. In 1869 the church paid £250, rising to £300 two years later and probably to £400 in 1874. In 1883 "pulpit expenses" amounted to £553 which suggests that the minister's salary was £500, giving the minister an income comparable with that of many professional men. This was the highest figure achieved by any Nottinghamshire Baptist minister before the 1940s and Derby Road gradually decreased the salary paid to its minister until, in 1916, the Rev. A. J. Stuart received only £250.²⁰

In comparison with these salaries, the middle range of income among the Anglican clergy in the county was about £300. Eastwood rectory was worth £350 and Bulwell a little more. Ruddington was valued at £150 and Ratcliffe on Soar at £100. The wages of artisans in 1803 were just over a pound a week on the average while industrial workers earned between 15/- and 16/-, rising about 25 per cent during the century, though during the first half of the century the earnings of Nottingham stockingers sank to something like 6/- in times of industrial depression.

Some Miscellaneous Expenses

A few miscellaneous items which occur in the accounts of some Nottinghamshire churches are now given. They are not of great financial importance but they shed some light on the life and customs of an earlier generation. In 1773 an entry occurs in the Friar Lane book: "Lord Howe being the successful candidate at the County contested Election, on application gave three guineas towards liquidating the debt on the Meeting". An indication of the charitable work done is provided by the entry in 1801 "paid Mr. Maddock ye Apothecary for Mr. Pilkington 8s-3d, also 2s-3d for Betty Wood and 18s-6d for Mr. Coulstaffe". In May 1792 an entry appears relating to the meetings of the Northamptonshire Association at which Carey preached the sermon which led to the formation of the Baptist Missionary Society. The collections amounted to £4-7-10, out of which £1-3-6 was paid "for wining and dining Mr. Hopper and family and sundry ministers" (Hopper was the Friar Lane minister). Another 3s-0d went to the waiters. An entry "rum for baptizing" occasionally appears—a teaspoonful being given to each candidate after baptism, which of course took place out of doors. The unused part of the burial ground was often let as a garden and in 1820 Mr. Hedderley paid Friar Lane £8-8-0 "for grazing the burial ground". East Leake and Hucknall both had a curious source of income in the middle of the 19th century, the sale of soft water from the baptistry—evidently

rain water collected from the church roof and fed into the open-air baptistry. The price at Hucknall was a halfpenny a bucket or three bucketfuls for a penny. An unusual expediency for raising money was adopted by the Carrington Church in 1869. A small shop was opened where drapery, haberdashery and stationery were sold and agencies for coal and bookbinding operated.

A few churches possessed endowments. Retford was endowed with a house and land under the will of Richard Brownlow in 1691, but the endowment was lost in the 18th century, probably through the negligence of trustees. The Collingham Church was endowed by Mary Harte a few years later for the establishment of a school. The endowment still exists but is in danger of being lost to the church. In 1705 Robert Milnes bequeathed a former grain store to Collingham as a meeting house, also cottages in a near-by village. The old meeting house was demolished a few years ago and the cottages were lost in the 19th century through the church using the whole of the proceeds for current expenses and providing nothing for depreciation of the property. The East Leake Church received an endowment of £700 from John Litherland who had been apprenticed to a joiner in the village, an endowment which was considerably increased in the 20th century. On the other hand, the wealthy Nottingham merchants provided no endowments for their churches, though they were liberal givers during their lives. This may have been due to the fact that most businesses were family businesses or partnerships from which large sums could not have been withdrawn without prejudicing the stability of the undertaking. It is more likely that the principle of endowment was somewhat contrary to Baptist ethos which expected each church to support its own work. State support of churches was certainly contrary to Baptist principles and few Nottinghamshire Baptists accepted even the "Regium Donum"—although among the Collingham papers is a letter from the administrators of that fund enclosing four pounds. The *Baptist Manual* of 1846²¹ speaks strongly against it and the General Baptist Association refused to recognise any minister who did accept it.

The Theology of the Nottinghamshire Baptists

The 17th century Nottinghamshire Baptists were General Baptists of the Old Connexion holding an Arminian theology. They were all members of the Lincolnshire Association and until early in the 18th century when Friar Lane became Calvinist, there is no reference to a Particular Baptist church in the county. Later in the 18th century Particular Baptist churches at Sutton-in-Ashfield and Collingham appeared, the latter certainly and the former possibly originally General Baptist churches.

Two Nottinghamshire Particular Baptist Confessions are available, that of the Friar Lane Church, dated 1769, which is printed in full by Godfrey and Ward²² and the "Collingham Covenant" which appears to date from the 1790s. The Friar Lane Confession is a typical

Calvinistic confession and includes the doctrine of Election. The Collingham document is also similarly Calvinistic, and includes the doctrine of the "Decrees of God". This doctrine is expanded as follows: "By His decree (God) fixed a Remnant of Mankind as the object of his familiar love, to receive Grace in Time and Glory in Eternity . . . and he left others in that state in which they were considered fallen so that in consequence of their . . . continuing in sin, they will become Monuments for the Glory of his Justice". On "Justification" the document says "We believe that . . . all the Elect in due Time are brought to believe in Christ as Lord". It may be mentioned here that the Article on the "Decrees of God" is compatible with that modification of extreme Calvinism known as "Fullerism" which by then was becoming widely accepted among Particular Baptists and which will be mentioned again.

The reason why the surviving ancient General Baptist churches of Nottinghamshire moved into the Particular Baptist fold was probably because of the growing Socinianism of the Old Connexion. The movement was not, of course, confined to the General Baptists. It was widespread among several denominations, chiefly the Presbyterian. Two Presbyterian churches very near to, but not actually in Nottinghamshire, became Baptist churches at this period, probably also to escape Socinianism; they were Loscoe, Derbyshire, which became a Particular Baptist Church, and Mountsorrel, Leicestershire, where the Presbyterian church, surrounded by vigorous New Connexion churches, became a General Baptist church. A large number of the churches of the Lincolnshire Association, with which Nottinghamshire Baptists were linked, moved into Unitarianism, and by 1771 only seven churches remained out of an Association which had once included between 30 and 40 churches. Six churches had moved into the New Connexion and all except one of the seven remaining churches were to follow suit. The rest had become extinct. There is no evidence that any Nottinghamshire Baptist church became Unitarian except perhaps Rempstone. The General Baptist Church at Nottingham, Friar Lane, moved into the Particular Baptist stream in the second decade of the century and it would seem that Sutton-in-Ashfield moved into Calvinism nearer the middle of the century when the Arianising trends were stronger. The Collingham Church became Calvinistic later when neighbouring churches, including its own daughter church at Gamston, were moving into the New Connexion. Gamston however had strong links with the New Connexion leader, Dan Taylor, and this would influence the decision of that church.

Doctrinal Shifts among the Particular Baptists

The main doctrinal shift among the Nottinghamshire Particular Baptists toward the end of the 18th century was a movement towards "Fullerism". At that period there were extreme Calvinists who considered that it was wrong even to pray for the salvation of their neighbours, parents, children or hearers in case they should prove

not to be among the elect.²³ An extravagant interpretation of the imputation to the believer of the righteousness of Christ was adopted, even to the extent of asserting a transfer of character. Christ himself was said to be "guilty" and was "the greatest of sinners", while the believer was made "righteous" and "a fulfiller of the law". The Calvinistic emphasis on the sovereignty of God caused churches to refrain from even the mildest of evangelism, and the story of Ryland brushing aside Carey's proposal to establish a foreign mission with the words "when God pleases to convert the heathen he'll do it without consulting you or me" is consistent with this outlook.

This extreme Calvinism among the Particular Baptists was challenged by Andrew Fuller of Kettering. Fuller's book *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*, published in 1785, is described by E. F. Cliphsham as "an epoch-making, life-giving book as far as the Baptists were concerned, clearing the way for evangelism both at home and abroad". Fuller argued that "it is the duty of ministers not only to exhort their carnal auditors to believe in Jesus Christ . . . but it is at our peril to exhort them to do anything short of it". On Election, Fuller said that it "no otherwise secures our salvation than as it secures our coming to Christ for it" and "no sinner while going on in his trespass, is warranted to consider himself elected to salvation". Fuller distinguished between non-election and condemnation. "Salvation", he said, "is wholly the gift of God, yet the destruction of the lost is of themselves—eternal death is the proper wages of sin".

Fuller was highly respected in Nottinghamshire. It was to Fuller that the Friar Lane Church appealed at a critical time in 1803 when their minister resigned. It was Fuller who supported Carey in his plan to form a foreign mission and it is not too much to claim that Fullerism contributed to the upsurge of evangelism which occurred among the Particular Baptists about the end of the 18th century. The theology of the Nottinghamshire Particular Baptists was never of the extreme Calvinistic type. The fact that they were probably all former General Baptist churches would be some check on that. The Confession of Faith of Friar Lane, though compiled in 1769 before Fullerism could have had any effect, is not incompatible with Fullerism (like that of Collingham, compiled a generation later). The Sutton-in-Ashfield Church seems to have been rather more Calvinistic than the other churches. In 1826 its minister, Clement Nott, prepared a document which is preserved in the church book defining a Christian church, its function and order. One of the functions of the church, it says, is "diffusing around it the light of the knowledge of Christ". There is much more emphasis, however, on the internal life of the church than on evangelism, and there is no indication of the influence of Fuller, or, at this stage, of the Evangelical Revival.

The Theology of the New Connexion

The New Connexion of General Baptists was formed on June 7, 1770, at the Meeting House in Church Lane, London, when it

became clear that the new evangelical churches could no longer continue in association with churches which had become avowedly Unitarian. Six Articles of Faith were adopted, emphasising the chief points of difference between the Old Connexion and the New. The Fourth Article "On Salvation by Faith" is completely Arminian in theology, ". . . we ought . . . to invite all, without exception, to look to Christ by faith, without any regard to anything in, or done by themselves: that they may, in this way alone, that is, by faith, be possessed of this salvation".

The theology of the New Connexion was a theology of evangelical Arminianism. When an Old Connexion church moved into the New Connexion it had made its decision on the doctrinal issues involved and the matter was settled for that church. In one part of Nottinghamshire, however, a New Connexion church was established among the ruins of an Old Connexion Church. This was the East Leake-Wymeswold Church which extended over a number of villages including Rempstone, the area occupied by a flourishing Old Connexion church a century earlier. Individuals who had belonged to the old church would gravitate towards the new active communities which were springing up and which also called themselves "General Baptists". Some of these individuals seem to have retained Socinian views and the East Leake minutes from May to August 1813 record a serious disagreement in the Wymeswold branch of the church. Three men were disseminating Socinianism among the members. Such dissension was caused with regard to doctrines "held by the church to be indispensably necessary to salvation", that no reconciliation appeared possible and three men were excluded. The following year six or seven others withdrew having adopted Socinian views. At this period the Wymeswold congregation had about fifty members and for ten to withdraw meant that a strong minority was involved. A dozen years later one or two others "embraced Socinianism"²⁴ but thereafter nothing more is heard of this matter. At Mansfield the minister, the Rev. J. Austin, adopted Socinian views and "his addresses had a cold, withering effect on the congregation".²⁵ Austin came from near Wymeswold and may have been influenced before he came to Mansfield, but it must also be remembered that there was a strong Unitarian community in Mansfield whose meeting house was only a few yards from the Baptist chapel and that Austin and two other members of the Baptist church were received into membership of that community shortly afterwards.

In an article in the *General Baptist Magazine*, 1871, ostensibly an obituary of the Rev. Hugh Hunter, but really an essay on early 19th century Nottingham Baptist life, Frederick Stevenson, a retired medical practitioner, says of the ministers of those days: "Broad and liberal exegesis of Scripture was almost unknown. Matthew Henry prescribed the limits of orthodoxy . . . All good people from Creation were Christians. The prophets were all evangelical. The patriarchs, Abraham especially, distinctly foresaw the new and better Covenant.

The personality of the Spirit, the new birth, the redeeming agony, the intermediate state, the judgement day, the glories of heaven and the horrors of hell, were described with a materialistic particularity which reminded you of an appraiser rather than of a divine."

Such ministers were comparatively isolated from new trends of theological thought, as indeed were most of the clergy of any denomination in early 19th century England. About the middle of the century, however, a new generation of more highly educated Baptist ministers arose who could not remain indefinitely aloof from new thought and especially from German thought and research which was beginning to reach England. Occasionally at this period accusations of unorthodoxy arose, though it is not possible to say whether German theology had anything to do with it. For example, during the controversy in the Stoney Street Church which resulted in the formation of Mansfield Road in 1849, the senior minister, Hugh Hunter, accused the junior minister, George Syme, of unorthodoxy, and indeed, Frederick Stevenson says of Syme that his "turn for bold speculation . . . alarmed the more timid members of the church".²⁶ By the middle of the century the hypotheses of the German scholars as to the documentary sources of the Scriptures were becoming known, including the views of Eichhorn and Michaelis on the composite origin of Genesis and, in due course, the documentary studies of Lachmann and Weisse and of Holzmann on the Gospels. Interpretations of the life of Christ, such as those of Reimarus and Strauss, which assumed the impossibility of miracles and the existence of a large mythological element in the gospel accounts, also appeared. In 1859 Darwin's *Origin of Species* was published and the following year *Essays and Reviews* by a group of Anglicans, expressing critical views; also the commentaries of Bishop Colenso on Romans and the Pentateuch, which opposed traditional views on Inspiration, appeared. The influence of these trends of thought may be seen in varying degree in certain Nottinghamshire ministers of whom a few will be mentioned.

William Underwood, Principal of the General Baptist College at Chilwell, 1857-1873, admitted a very moderate biblical criticism. Though he argued that the bible was not designed to teach science, he recommended books based on the older outlook such as Butler's *Analogy* and Mozley's Bampton Lecture on the *Credibility of Miracles* (1865) which argues that miracles supply the proof of revelation. He spent some time in Germany but he disagreed with the extreme theories of the Tübingen school and with Strauss's *Life of Christ*, but he maintained that the question of the authorship of various books of the Bible, whose traditional authorship was denied by the Tübingen theologians, was not vital to the Christian faith. These views would represent a moderate position in 1868, not very advanced, yet not obscurantist.

James Martin took his London B.A. in 1844 and thereafter spent two or three years studying theology and metaphysics in Germany. This caused some misgivings among the English Particular Baptists,

but they were not widespread nor did they last long. Martin was minister of Charlotte Chapel, Edinburgh, 1855-1857, and while there began translating the works of certain German theologians for T. and T. Clark, work which continued after he became minister at Derby Road, Nottingham in 1857. Altogether he translated about twenty books, the works of Keil, Delitzsch, Bertheau, Kurtz, Ebrard and Hengstenberg. These writers, though critical, were on the whole moderate in their opinions. They accepted a composite documentary theory of the origin of the Pentateuch. In a lecture to the Nottingham Sunday School Union in 1867, which was published under the title *The Written Word*, Martin places the Epistles in the following chronological order: Thessalonians, Galatians, Corinthians, Romans, Philemon, Ephesians, Philippians, Titus, Timothy, and Hebrews substantially the order in which they would be placed today. There is no hint that he accepted the extreme opinions of the Tübingen critics who ascribed Pauline authorship only to Galatians, Corinthians and Romans and attributed the rest of the New Testament to the second century. He places the Gospels in the order: Luke, Mark, Matthew and John, but says nothing about the hypothetical document later called "Q", though Holzmann had placed the "two document" theory of the origin of Matthew and Luke on a reasonably firm basis in 1863. Martin uses the argument that Clement and Ignatius, who were martyred early in the second century, quoted from almost all the New Testament books, therefore the New Testament writings date from the first century. Baur had claimed that the Clementine and Ignatian writings were spurious. Evidently Martin does not accept Baur's view, though it was not until 1889 that J. B. Lightfoot clearly demonstrated the writings in question to be genuine. It was said of Martin that he brought to his studies "a mind liberalised by German criticism and philosophy, yet steadfastly true to evangelical truth".

Samuel Cox, minister at Mansfield Road 1863-1888, was the best-known theologian among the Nottinghamshire Baptists. He was the first editor of the *Expositor*, 1875-1884, and thereafter he published annually for many years a volume of his own writings entitled *Expositions*. He also published a fair number of other expository and theological books. In the preface to the first bound edition of the *Expositor*, Cox says that he and his contributors "heartily and unfeignedly believe in the supernatural character of the bible" and Spurgeon, quoted in Cox's obituary in the *Baptist Handbook* 1894, said that the *Expositor* was "sometimes a little too broad to be quite to our mind" but was "glad to see Mr. Cox is encouraged to continue". Cox's views on the Pentateuch were quite conservative, though they developed as further material was brought forward. In a review of Grove's *Commentary on Genesis* in the *Freeman*, July 10, 1861, he quotes Grove as arguing for the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch and recommends the *Commentary*. Twenty-five years later in an article "Enoch's Gospel" in the *Expositor* he refers to

Genesis incorporating documents already ancient when Moses wrote, such as the "Book of the Generations of Man" (Gen. 5:22), all of which is quite conservative. The article, however, refers to Gen. 5:22, "Enoch walked with God", and compares it with the rendering in Hebrews 11:5-6, "Enoch pleased God", which is the Septuagint rendering. The writer of Hebrews thus based his argument on an erroneous rendering, "a terrible fact for those who believe in the verbal inspiration of the bible, but one which has no terrors for many of us who read the book after the Spirit".

On such doctrines as the existence of the devil, the Atonement and the Divinity of Christ, Cox was quite orthodox as his articles and sermons show.²⁷ Where he departed from traditional orthodoxy was in his belief in Universal Restoration. Cox gives his reasons for holding this view in his book *Salvator Mundi*, published in 1877, which is based on a series of lectures given to his bible class at Mansfield Road. Cox's book did not receive a very favourable reception from the Baptist publications, though it achieved a wide sale. Fletcher of the Lenton Baptist Church, co-editor of the *General Baptist Magazine*, strongly disagreed with Cox and said that Farrar's *Eternal Hope* and Cox's *Salvator Mundi* were more widely read than endorsed.

Thomas Goadby was Principal of the Midland College 1873-1889. He spent his college vacations studying in Germany at Halle or Leipzig. He, like James Martin, translated from the German for T. and T. Clark, though by no means so extensively. In 1884 and 1888 were published respectively Ewald's *Revelation—Its Nature and Truth* and *Old and New Testament Theology*. Although there were some aspects of Ewald's thought with which Goadby did not agree, he was certainly attracted by Ewald's methods of historical enquiry. B. and L. Goadby²⁸ say that a few in the denomination looked upon Thomas Goadby at this period with a certain amount of distrust, but they go on to say, "He was a welcome adviser to young men, who in their search for truth, often leave the beaten tracks". Goadby's presidential address to the General Baptist Association in 1879 attracted much favourable attention and indicates his attitude to the new challenges to faith. It is entitled *Christian Theology and the Modern Spirit*. The modern spirit, says Goadby, a spirit of enquiry and research, has entered many spheres including theology. Obstinate resistance would imply that we do not distinguish between theology and revelation itself. To abandon positions won after centuries of thought would be no better. We are asked to relegate religion to the unknowable but this would make theology impossible. The scientific method is that of observation based on facts. Speculative ideas are not acceptable as a basis for theology, yet the facts on which our religion is based will not have the characteristics of those of physical science: every science, including theology, has its own set of phenomena. For theology Christ is the great fact, his life is an authenticated historical fact and on this history are based all doctrines of vital importance. Verification by further appeal will be demanded. In any science this is not always possible, even natural

science takes many of the principles by which it works for granted. The verification of theological teaching must be looked for in the sphere of life and experience.

Goadby was unable to disregard the new scientific and critical thought. He was more ready to accept the conclusions of biblical criticism than Cox but he was firmly convinced that the essential tenets of Christianity would remain unrefuted.

On the other hand, one or two less prominent Nottingham ministers proceeded some way in the direction of liberal theology toward the end of the nineteenth century. *Charles Ford* of the Hyson Green Church wrote from time to time in the *General Baptist Magazine* and an article in 1880 indicates his theological outlook. He rejects the theory of Verbal Inspiration and regards the atonement as conferring a righteous relation with God through the faith it inspires. Total Depravity is rejected in favour of Germinal Depravity which can be arrested by divine grace. He rejects eternal punishment in favour of ultimate restoration. He considers that there have been changes in the doctrines of the Divinity of Christ and Work of the Spirit, while the Humanity of Christ has come into greater prominence. Stevenson and Fletcher, the editors, add a footnote to say that it must not be inferred that they agreed with the views expressed. In another article in 1886 Ford claims his position to be that of "Liberal Orthodoxy" which, he says, holds on to such fundamental doctrines as the Divinity of Christ, the Trinity and the objective reality of the Atonement. Articles from other ministers are conservative; for example, one by Robert Silby of Retford in 1872 on the Resurrection deals with the subject in a simple, devotional way. E. J. Silverton, the first minister of the Tabernacle, has left a volume of sermons published in 1879 entitled *Sermons Preached to the Masses*. The sermons are directed to a very unsophisticated audience. They are orthodox and conservative, though doctrinally rather thin.

The Downgrade Controversy and the Nottinghamshire Baptists

This controversy, as is well known, involved one of the greatest of Victorian preachers, C. H. Spurgeon. It gave rise to a serious crisis within the denomination whose effects are still felt. It will be discussed here only as far as the Nottinghamshire churches are involved.

The controversy began with an anonymous article in 1887 in Spurgeon's periodical, the *Sword and Trowel*, which argued that Arminianism was likely to lead to Arianism as it had done, the writer claimed, in the 18th century. Shortly after Spurgeon himself took up the cudgels and claimed that certain Baptist ministers were departing from the fundamental doctrines of Christianity and urged the Baptist Union Council to adopt an elaborated doctrinal statement. The Council disclaimed the right to formulate a system of doctrines for the individual independent churches which formed its membership but issued a "Declaratory Statement" of the doctrines "commonly believed by the Churches of the Union": the Divine Inspiration and Authority

of the Holy Scriptures, the Fallen State of Man, the Deity, Incarnation and Resurrection of Christ, his Sacrificial and Mediatorial Work, Justification by Faith, the Work of the Holy Spirit and the Resurrection and Judgement according to Matthew 5:46. A "historical note" was added to the effect that there had been brethren in the Union who, reverently bowing to the authority of the Scriptures and rejecting the dogmas of Purgatory and Universalism, had not held to the common interpretation of Matthew 5:46.

Fletcher and Stevenson of Nottingham, editors of the *General Baptist Magazine*, published two articles on the controversy.²⁹ The first article disagreed with Spurgeon when he maintained that the rejection of Calvinism was the first step to Arianism. They had challenged Spurgeon with the case of the Methodists who were certainly not on the downgrade. Spurgeon agreed but still maintained that Arminianism had led to Arianism in the 18th century. In the second article Fletcher and Stevenson claimed that Spurgeon had surrendered the position regarding Arianism. The main issue now was the conflict between the gospel and modern thought. "We cannot hold the Inspiration of the Word and yet reject it; we cannot believe in the Atonement and deny it; we cannot hold the doctrine of the Fall and yet talk of the evolution of the spiritual life; we cannot recognise the punishment of the impenitent and yet indulge in the 'larger hope'", Spurgeon had written in the latest issue of the *Sword and Trowel*. Fletcher and Stevenson say "Mr. Spurgeon is wrong in speaking of those who do not accept his view of the Atonement . . . as going off in the direction of infidelity . . . Mr. Spurgeon's theory of the Atonement as a satisfaction to justice for the sins of the elect is certainly different from that prevalent among the General Baptists. And we think our view more scriptural than his and less 'modern'. As to the fall of man, we believe in it, but we are glad that the mischievous notion of the imputation of Adam's guilt to his posterity is being rejected . . . Neither of the editors accepts the doctrine of Universal Restoration . . . Still it is unjust of Mr. Spurgeon to represent those who reject the idea of unending punishment as not believing in future punishment at all . . .". With regard to Inspiration, where the influence of "modern thought" was perhaps most felt, the editors were glad that the doctrine commonly held for the past two centuries had been modified, but they had not ceased to believe in Inspiration. The Holy Spirit gave to the prophets "those large and true views of the character and will of God" which they preached, and when the apostles expounded Christian doctrine, they were so taught by the Holy Spirit and their statements were authoritative, but this was different from the doctrine of verbal inspiration held by Mr. Spurgeon.

The reasons which Spurgeon himself gave for resigning from the Baptist Union³⁰ were that believers in the Atonement met with those who made light of it; believers in Holy Scripture met with those who denied plenary inspiration, those who held evangelical doctrines with those who held the Fall to be a fable; there were those who denied the

personality of the Holy Spirit; there were those who held justification by faith to be immoral and those who held that there was another probation after death.

How did this controversy affect the Nottinghamshire Baptists and were Spurgeon's accusations true of any of them? Four-fifths of the Nottinghamshire Baptists were General Baptists, Arminian in doctrine. Their Arminianism, however, was the Arminianism of the Methodists and of the Evangelical Revival, not the cold intellectual Arminianism of the 18th century from which many had moved into Arianism. The controversy had begun on the issue of Arminianism and Calvinism and later on Spurgeon moved to other grounds, yet it may be that he feared the effects of a closer union with the General Baptists which was getting nearer. The General Baptists on the whole displayed a freer intellectual outlook than did the Particular Baptists. On the other hand, John Clifford, in his account of the interview which he and other representatives of the Baptist Union had with Spurgeon in 1888, wrote: "Mr. Spurgeon did say that he was not referring to me or to the General Baptists. Then he added 'As you know, we differ, but we hold vital evangelical truths in common.'"⁸¹ As far as the Nottingham Particular Baptists were concerned, their Calvinism had certainly been considerably modified, yet Spurgeon's own Calvinism was also a modified version. He preached a gospel available to all as freely as any Arminian.

Spurgeon would certainly have disagreed with the views expressed by Charles Ford, which have already been mentioned. He would have disagreed with Cox on his views expressed in *Salvator Mundi* and would have felt that the preaching of another minister, J. F. Makepeace, for a time assistant minister at Mansfield Road, fell short of positive evangelicalism. Makepeace was co-minister with Cox 1882-1886 and was minister at Carrington 1886-1889 and 1892-1905. Speaking of his first pastorate, at Liverpool, Makepeace says⁸² that his preaching was rarely doctrinal, never dogmatic, but that he was disturbed when he found that the Unitarians from Hope Chapel liked his sermons. When he came to Mansfield Road he found that his preaching "differed in some points of doctrine from that of my learned and eloquent chief who preached in the morning, for I tended more and more to extreme orthodoxy". Later, at Carrington, the deacons objected to his preaching on the Fatherhood of God, and when he preached on Universal Redemption, they requested him to preach of hell. Of this he says, "I had never before realised the power of Calvinism in all its ugliness on the human mind". Makepeace goes on to say that his sermons at Carrington "became attenuated, anaemic, boneless and finally resolved themselves into vain rhetoric. More than ever I had to line my preaching to what my audience liked: viz: to vivid historical sermons, word pictures with patches of colour, of character analyses with now and then a lively moral essay. There was not much nourishing food given to those poor starving creatures in those days". He also speaks of a

fellow-minister arguing against doctrinal preaching on the grounds that Christianity was not a dogma but a life to be lived.

Only part of Makepeace's ministry at Carrington coincided with the Downgrade Controversy, but his own remarks suggest that he, and perhaps one or two other ministers, laid little emphasis on some of the specific doctrines of Christianity. It is, however, unlikely that Spurgeon knew much about these men. Makepeace became a Roman Catholic in 1912.

There is little to show what individual churches felt about the controversy, though there is one important exception to this, the Derby Road Church. The resignation of Spurgeon from the Baptist Union took place in December 1887 and at the Council meeting in January 1888 his resignation was regretfully accepted. A resolution was passed recognising the gravity of the charges made, but as Spurgeon declined to say to whom the charges applied, or to produce evidence to support them, the Council felt that the charges ought not to have been made. The seconder of this resolution was Edward Medley, the minister of Derby Road, who was a member of the Council. Medley said on this occasion that the resolution was not "a contemptuous looking down on one who was so much nobler in many things than themselves . . . If they said 'Brother, it is wrong' they said it because they loved him and Christ most of all".⁸⁸ The resolution was deeply resented by Spurgeon.

The minute of the Derby Road Church Book, 21st March 1888, records Medley's report of the January Council Meeting. Medley pointed out "how alien the imposition of a creed was to the best traditions of nonconformity" and "the clear position made out by the pastor met with the sympathetic approval of the members present". A letter to Spurgeon from the officers of the church was read, in which it was stated that the church "sorrowfully feels" that Spurgeon was in the wrong, that he had "sown dissension where none existed and caused bitter suspicion where there was active co-operation in truth and goodness . . . without in any way advancing the interests of the faith". The deacons understood that an effort was to be made, with Spurgeon's approval, to reverse the decision not to impose a creed. They considered this would be disastrous whether the decision were ratified or not and begged him not to proceed. Spurgeon's reply was read out at the next meeting, but unfortunately his letter has disappeared from the records and no copy was kept. The attempt to reverse the decision was made at the next Council meeting.

Derby Road was a Particular Baptist Church, yet its members felt that Spurgeon had acted wrongly. It might have been expected that, as the controversy had commenced with a criticism of Arminianism, some of the other Particular Baptist churches in Nottinghamshire would have actively supported Spurgeon's action. None in fact did. The Rev. H. E. Stone, minister of the Tabernacle (a church it is difficult to claim was either Arminian or Calvinistic), was trained at Spurgeon's College, and wrote a letter to the *Freeman* in 1887 in

sympathy with Spurgeon's attitude. He said he had always considered the Baptist Union an association of churches holding evangelical beliefs, now it appeared a Unitarian would join. The minute books of the Tabernacle of this period have not survived and there is no record of any discussion which may have taken place within the church. In 1888 however the Tabernacle left the Baptist Union. There were four other ministers in the County who had been trained at Spurgeon's College; Plumbridge of Southwell was minister of a Particular Baptist church, but the other three were ministers of General Baptist churches. No indication has been found that the Downgrade Controversy was discussed at their church meetings. What they thought about it we do not know, but no other Nottinghamshire church, General or Particular Baptist, felt strongly enough about the issue to resign from the Union. Even the Tabernacle rejoined in 1891 with the arrival of another minister, James Clarke, also a Spurgeon's College man.

NOTES

- ¹ *Nottingham Review*, April 11th, 1845.
- ² *Ibid.*, February 13th, 1857.
- ³ *Ibid.*, November 22nd, 1850.
- ⁴ G. A. Syme, *The Papal Controversy and the Position of Dissenters*, London 1852.
- ⁵ *Nottingham Review*, March 7th, 1834.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, October 3rd, 1845.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, February 14th, 1851.
- ⁸ *Baptist Repository*, 1840, p. 219.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, 1843, p. 31.
- ¹⁰ Note deleted.
- ¹¹ *Baptist Reporter*, 1855, p. 57.
- ¹² Derby Road Church Book, July 18th and September 15th, 1886.
- ¹³ *Baptist Repository*, 1840, p. 205.
- ¹⁴ *General Baptist Magazine*, 1887, p. 103.
- ¹⁵ *East Midland Baptist Magazine*, 1896, p. 19.
- ¹⁶ J. T. Godfrey and J. Ward, *History of Friar Lane Baptist Church*, Nottingham, 1903, p. 279.
- ¹⁷ Broad Street Church Book, August 1st, 1832, March 1st, November 1st, 1843.
- ¹⁸ *Baptist Reporter*, 1857, p. 354.
- ¹⁹ *General Baptist Magazine*, 1870, p. 241.
- ²⁰ Minute books of the churches mentioned.
- ²¹ *Baptist Manual*, 1846, p. 50.
- ²² Godfrey and Ward, *History of Friar Lane Baptist Church*, p. 7.
- ²³ E. F. Clipsham, "Andrew Fuller and Fullerism", *Bapt. Quart.*, July 1963, p. 100.
- ²⁴ *Baptist Repository*, 1827, p. 129.
- ²⁵ Henry Williams, *Our Baptist Record*, 1874. Reprinted in the *Mansfield and North Notts. Advertiser*, July 25th, 1930.
- ²⁶ *General Baptist Magazine*, 1871, p. 234.
- ²⁷ *Expositor*, 1882, p. 434; 1875, p. 226. Also Manuscript Sermon Books (Archives, Nottingham University).
- ²⁸ B. and L. Goadby, *Not Saints but Men*, London 1906, p. 243.
- ²⁹ *General Baptist Magazine*, 1887, pp. 187, 387.
- ³⁰ *General Baptist Magazine*, 1888, p. 143.
- ³¹ *Freeman*, 1888, pp. 305, 317.
- ³² J. F. Makepeace, *All I could Ever Be*, Oxford 1924, p. 17.
- ³³ *Freeman*, January 10th, 1888, p. 37.