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TRANSACTIONS

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TRANSACTIONS

THE CONGREGATIONAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

EDITOR : JOHN H. TAYLOR, B.D.

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Editorial

This is the last issue of *Transactions*. On the same day that the United Reformed Church comes into being, 5 October 1972, The United Reformed Church History Society will be formed. What the new Society will call its publication we do not yet know, nor do we know this side of the elections who the new Editors will be, though Professor R. Buick Knox, who teaches Church History at Westminster College, Cambridge, and is one of the Presbyterian Society's *Journal's* Editors has been asked to stand, along with the writer. As a larger Society we should be stronger and more useful but this always depends on the members and churches.

This is the moment to appeal to members to make it their concern that minute books and other records belonging to bodies such as County Unions are not lost. The Officers of the Society will help with advice on where such records may be deposited.

Our last Annual Meeting, the 73rd, held at Livingstone House on 16 May, was one of the best in memory, not only because of the excellent attendance but because of the quality of the lecture by Professor Welch. If his style was direct and matter-of-fact, the importance of his research cannot be overestimated, for he began showing us the pattern of Methodist development in the early eighteenth century and to indicate a new evaluation of John Wesley. We are glad to print it, a very important thread in our history.

A FORGOTTEN THREAD IN CONGREGATIONAL HISTORY: THE CALVINISTIC METHODISTS

Some years ago, while I was your research secretary, I was asked to provide a 1662 pedigree for a church which was first mentioned in 1745. I replied that it had a much more unusual and interesting history of which the members should be proud, being one of the churches founded as a result of George Whitefield's preaching. But I fear that my reply gave little satisfaction to the church, the members of which probably felt that I was attempting to rob them of their Congregational heritage and unite them with the modern Methodist Church. After all Whitefield's name does not appear in Albert Peel's *Congregational Two Hundred* (although he deserves to do so) while the Methodist Church is not too happy about Whitefield's status as one of its founders.

I hope to show in this lecture that Whitefield and the Calvinistic Methodists made an important contribution to the development of the Congregational Church, and also that the Methodist Movement in the eighteenth century was considerably wider in scope than the modern Methodist Church.

It is a fact unknown to most people that all the churches founded in England as a result of George Whitefield's preaching—'Societies in connexion with the Rev. Mr. Whitefield' is the eighteenth century phrase—and still surviving, are now to be found, not in the Methodist Church or in the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion, but in the Congregational Church. How many such there are is difficult to decide; nor is it possible to tell how many existing Congregational churches were equally affected by Whitefield and the early Calvinistic Methodists. It is only certain that it had had a considerable effect on the Congregational tradition.

Why this should be is a subject which has interested me for more than a decade. At first I was concerned with the lack of a parallel development in England to the Calvinistic Methodist (or Presbyterian) Church of Wales which is numerically and culturally strong. Was not the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion the equivalent? Then I discovered that none of its churches had an origin in Whitefield's preaching; indeed almost all of them were founded after his death. I then decided to trace known Whitefield churches and found that all for which later information was available were now Congregational. Sherwell church in Plymouth (named after a 1662 minister of the town) was the New Tabernacle, which had descended from the Old Tabernacle, which had been founded after Whitefield

had preached at Plymouth in 1744.¹ The group of churches round Rodborough in South Gloucestershire were now all Congregational churches, usually called 'the Tabernacle.' Whitefield Congregational Church in London was originally the London Tabernacle—Whitefield's 'cathedral' church.

Why did these churches become Congregational? Part of the answer must be sought in the origins of the Methodist Movement. This began in the early years of the eighteenth century as a vague grouping of evangelical Anglicans who were influenced by the Moravians. The Moravian Church (which still has a few congregations in England) was established in Bohemia in the fifteenth century as a result of the introduction of John Wyclif's doctrines into that part of the Holy Roman Empire. Heavily persecuted in their native land during the seventeenth century, their bishops fled and their adherents conformed nominally to the Roman Catholic faith. Early in the eighteenth century some of them fled to the estates of a sympathetic German Lutheran landowner, Count Zinzendorf. He welcomed and encouraged them, established a settlement for them at Herrnhut, and eventually became their bishop. He also inspired them with the missionary spirit so that members of the United Brethren (as they called themselves) appeared in London on their way to the boundaries of the known world.² They soon established contacts with like-minded Englishmen. John Wesley's encounter with them on his voyage to Georgia is frequently quoted. For several years he was greatly influenced by the Moravians and after his return from Georgia he even travelled to Herrnhut. Other Methodists met them in London and attended the meetings which they held there.

The Moravians refused to make converts from other Protestant churches, although they were not always successful in repulsing converts and eventually some of the leading Methodists joined them and established Moravian settlements in England. The Moravians believed in the *ecclesiola*—the group of activists within the Church whose task it was to act as missionaries to the heathen and to stimulate the general body.³ In accordance with this doctrine they encouraged the formation of the Fetter Lane Society in London where Moravians and Methodists could join together.⁴ The 'Society' permitted the converted to meet together for preaching, testimony of conversion and the Love-Feast,⁵ while remaining loyal members of the Church of

¹S. Griffin, *The Sherwell Story* (1964).

²See J. E. Hutton, *A History of the Moravian Church* (1909).

³For the *ecclesiola* see W. G. Addison, *The Renewed Church of the United Brethren* (1932).

⁴After a few years the society forced the Moravian Church to allow it to become one of their congregations. It continued to exist until the building was destroyed in World War 2.

⁵For the Love-Feast or *Agape* see F. Baker, *Methq̄l̄is̄m̄ and the Love-Feast*, (1957).

England. This Moravian expedient appealed to most Methodists, and by founding societies rather than congregations they were able to remain Anglicans and Methodists almost to the end of the eighteenth century. Lady Huntingdon was the first leading Methodist to secede in 1782.⁶ John Wesley, despite several adventures into nonconformity by holding ordinations, kept his followers inside the Anglican Church until his death in 1791. The Welsh Calvinistic Methodists did not secede until 1811.

Both the Wesleys and many other Methodists were members of the Fetter Lane Society in 1740 when P. H. Mōlther began to advocate a quietist doctrine of waiting upon God's will. Wesley objected to this and under his leadership many of the Methodists left the Society. While rebuilding Mōlther's doctrine John Wesley published a sermon on Free Grace which caused offence to George Whitefield. He in turn published a Calvinist reply from North America in December 1740 and so a further division was caused. While some Methodists had always held Arminian views and others Calvinist, there had been no division until this public quarrel of their leaders. Wesley's followers in London formed their own society at City Road, and Whitefield's followers at the Tabernacle. Between 1741 and 1746 the division spread throughout the country. At Bristol the Wesleys lost the use of the meeting house which the society there had built, and at Plymouth there was some physical violence when possession of the meeting houses was in dispute.⁷ Although the quarrel between George Whitefield and John Wesley was patched up, their societies developed separately. A contemporary account of the London Tabernacle says—

The Tabernacle Society was gathered thro' means of Mr Whitefield's Ministry in the year 1741, when he separated from Mr Wesley on their Differences about Election, Sinless Perfection, Perseverance and Universal Redemption. Then the Tabernacle was built and Brother Cennick came first to preach and, while Mr. Whitefield went to Scotland in 1741, he left the souls to be examined and settl'd by Brother Harris who Stay'd here 4 months . . . And then matters went on in Convecrion and after several hundreds were received they were settl'd in order in general, put in a Society and then some were settl'd in Bands by Mr Whitefield himself, and Love feasts, Fast days and [tickets] with a School for Children was instituted . . .⁸

Contrary to the generally accepted tradition, Selina Countess of Huntingdon was not concerned in these affairs. Although she had been converted in the summer of 1739 through her eldest son's tutor,

⁶E. Welch, 'Lady Huntingdon and Spa Fields Chapel' (*Guildhall Miscellany*, Oct. 1972).

⁷T. F. Hulme, *John Wesley and his Horse* (1933), p. 3. *Transactions of Devonshire Association*, vol. 97, pp. 220-224.

⁸National Library of Wales, Trevecka MS. 2946, p. 0.

Thomas Barnard of Leeds,⁹ her support of the Methodists until 1760 was limited to financial aid. The one exception to this was her sponsorship of a mission to the colliers on her husband's estates in North-West Leicestershire in 1739.¹⁰ This was not successful in the way she had hoped. The colliers did not respond to the preaching of her servant, David Taylor, but a little further south in the county a group of Methodist societies grew up around Barton in the Beans. They originally intended to become Moravians; then they became dissenters and by 1755 they had adopted Baptist views. In 1772 Josiah Thompson described them as Methodist even though they never had any Connection with Mr. Whitefield or Messrs Wesley.¹¹ In due course they became the nucleus of the New Connexion of General Baptists. This particular development can hardly have pleased Lady Huntingdon, and she founded no more societies for twenty years.

The Calvinistic Methodists in England, therefore, could only look to George Whitefield for guidance. For a time in the eighteenth century they seem to have been more numerous and better known than the Wesleys. For example, in the returns of dissenters made to the bishop of London in 1766 and 1790 'Methodist meeting houses' (i.e. Calvinist) are carefully distinguished from 'Wesleyan meeting houses,' and in numbers they are at least equal.¹² Other sources tell the same story, and the volume of attacks directed against Whitefield suggest that in his lifetime he was better known than the Wesleys. Lyles comments on this in his account of *Methodism Mocked*.¹³ The best known literary attack on early Methodism has even (erroneously) been claimed as an account of Whitefield's life.¹⁴ Another early critic, John Speed of Southampton, wrote an attack on Methodism without once mentioning the Wesleys!¹⁵

However George Whitefield had no desire to found a denomination or sect. He was content to go on preaching to Anglicans and Dissenters in Great Britain and the North American colonies, and, unlike John Wesley, left his converts to organise themselves as they wished. His preaching tours in North America and Scotland made it impossible for him to supervise the societies, had he wished to do so. The English societies were therefore left to themselves and it is not surprising that they turned first to the much stronger Calvinistic

⁹Although her sisters in law knew (and one eventually married) Benjamin Ingham the Methodist minister, her conversion can be traced in letters from Barnard (Leics. Record Office DE 23/1 and Leicester Archives Dept. 14D32).

¹⁰Leicester Archives Dept. 14D32.

¹¹[T. Cook], *Preacher, Pastor, Mechanic. Memoir of Samuel Deacon* (1888), pp. 3 & 4. Dr William's Library, Thompson MS, f. 44.

¹²London Guildhall Library MSS. 9557 & 9559.

¹³A. M. Lyles, *Methodism Mocked* (1960), pp. 127-138.

¹⁴Richard Graves, *The Spiritual Quixote*, edited with an introduction by C. Tracy, 1967.

¹⁵*Proceedings of the Wesley Hist. Soc.* vol. 34, pp 172-175.

Methodist movement in Wales for guidance. Howell Harris, one of the Welsh leaders, divided his time between England and Wales and usually acted as chairman of the quarterly Association which the English societies established about 1741.¹⁶ When John Cennick and other English preachers went off to join the Moravians at the end of 1745, Harris helped the Association to overcome the difficulties thus caused.¹⁷ Although Harris did not direct the Association himself, he was undoubtedly the chief figure in the organisation. In September 1749 George Whitefield decided to detach himself from all administrative cares:—

Mr Whitefield having declared his conviction to go about preaching the Gospel over the Nation at Home and Abroad as he is call'd, and not to take the Immediate Care of any place, but having committed the Care of his Labours in England to Brother Harris, and the other Brethren to Assist, each according to his Ability, he owns himself in Connexion with the Brethren in this Branch.¹⁸

It was unfortunate that at this moment Howell Harris was in dispute with his Welsh Brethren, who, amongst other causes of complaint, suspected him of wishing to join the Moravians. The result was the withdrawal of Harris to the Moravian-type settlement which he had founded at his birthplace, Trevecka in Brecknockshire. For more than a decade he ceased to take any part in the Welsh movement; in November 1749 he attended the English Association for the last time. And so the English societies were left without any leader and were obliged to struggle on as best they could. They turned, for reasons which we will see later, to the Congregational churches.

Howell Harris's withdrawal caused difficulties for modern historians as well as his contemporaries! His diaries and letters are by far the best source for early Calvinistic Methodism in Wales and England, but for the rest of the century it is difficult to discover what happened to the English societies. It may be that the Association struggled on. There are a few references to an 'Association' in letters to Lady Huntingdon which may refer to England rather than Wales, but they are not clear.¹⁹ It seems likely that its scope became limited to the South-West, because in 1781 it was the Gloucestershire Association which was in dispute with the Welsh Association about societies in Wales.²⁰ It is also probable that the societies moved even closer to Congregationalism in the decade after Howell Harris's withdrawal. In 1763 he emerged from Trevecka to take up his contacts with

¹⁶It should be noted that the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist originated separately from and slightly earlier than, the English Methodists.

¹⁷National Library of Wales, Trevecka MS. 2946, pp. 9 & 10.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 71.

¹⁹E.g. Cheshunt College Archives, Fl/890, 908, 939.

²⁰*Transactions of Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Hist. Soc.*, vol. 52, pp. 40 & 41. [A. C. H. Seymour], *Life and Times of Countess of Huntingdon* (1844), vol. 2, p. 387.

Methodism once more. He preached to the English societies and had long discussions with their preachers,²¹ but he was no longer accepted as their leader or attended their meetings. If they were now nonconformists this would explain his reluctance. In 1761 the Countess of Huntingdon, freed from the cares of husband and children, began her career of founding chapels,²² but her contacts with the earlier Calvinistic Methodists were few and confined mainly to financial aid.²³ Once again she would be unwilling to take control of nonconformist chapels and the societies may have been suspicious of her intentions. When she seceded in 1782 the societies still stayed apart.

Why did the societies choose Congregationalism? In Southern England where most of them were to be found there was then no alternative for Calvinists. Most of the southern Presbyterian churches had already become either Unitarian or Congregational by this time. While some of these 1662 churches do not always seem to have welcomed the newcomers, in the absence of a central Congregational organisation they could do nothing to stop them describing themselves as Independent or Congregational. In addition, some of the 1622 churches had themselves come under strong Calvinistic Methodist influence. At Southampton, Above Bar church accepted their views in 1764 when William Kingsbury became their minister. At Plymouth, Batter Street church was re-established by a Welsh Calvinistic Methodist, Christopher Mends.²⁴ There is also the possibility in the Gloucestershire societies at least of a long standing sympathy with Congregationalism, which had led these societies to register themselves as Protestant Dissenters from the beginning.

However, the change to Congregationalism was slow. Some Gloucestershire churches were still describing themselves as Calvinistic Methodist as late as 1837,²⁵ though one had called itself Congregational as early as 1750. Devonport church called itself Independent in 1797. It seems possible that the use of the earlier title was revived at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and surveys of the different denominations made in 1815 and 1848 include the Calvinistic or Whitefield Methodists as a distinct group. In 1815 they are even said to have formed a 'Union of the Calvinistic Methodists' to regulate their affairs.²⁶ But by the end of the century the churches described

²¹T. Beynon, *Howell Harris, Reformer and Soldier* (1958), pp. 85-135, 169.

²²Her husband died in 1746, but their children occupied her attention until about 1760. She founded her first chapel at Brighton in 1761.

²³E.g. Cheshunt College Archives, F1/700 & E4/2, 37.

²⁴J. S. Davies, *A History of Southampton* (1883), p. 429. Above Bar church archives. *Transactions of Devonshire Association*, vol. 94, p. 584 & vol. 97, pp. 227 & 228.

²⁵*General Register Office, List of Non-Parochial Registers* (List & Index Soc., 1969).

²⁶W. Jones, *A Dictionary of Religious Opinions* (1815), pp. 44-51. J. S. C. de Radius, *Historical Account of Every Sect* (1848), pp. 91 & 92.

themselves as Congregational and references retained by lawyers in the trust deeds to 'Calvinistic Methodism' had become an embarrassment to them.²⁷

Since the records of the early Calvinistic Methodists are not plentiful, I am particularly indebted to Gomer Roberts of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Historical Society for bringing a small volume amongst Howell Harris's archives to my attention.²⁸ Trevecka Manuscript 2946 contains minutes of the meetings of the London Tabernacle Society from 1744 to 1748 and the minutes of the English Associations from 1745 to 1749.²⁹ The committee of the Tabernacle Society seems to have acted as an executive for the Association between its quarterly meetings,³⁰ so that entries of national importance can be found in both halves of the volume.

These minutes show that the organisation of the Calvinistic Methodists was more democratic than the Wesleyans. The Association admitted the 'exhorters' who went about preaching, and the Association assigned them to a circuit for each quarter. It settled points of doctrine and administration, appointed fast days and approved the opening of new meeting houses. It published its own religious magazine, known at various times as the *Weekly History*, the *Christian's Amusement* and the *Monthly History*.³¹ The societies in the Association were organised in bands and classes, and membership was controlled by the issue of quarterly tickets. There is an illuminating entry for 22 January 1746/7 when the Association meeting at Bristol invited John Wesley to attend and discuss several matters which had led to disagreement. After a discussion it was decided that they should not attempt to establish rival societies at the same time and that 'we shou'd be careful to deffend each others Characters.'³² The minutes then add:—

3 of the Clock

After Brother Westley and his Helpmeets went away the Association continued.

²⁷I am indebted to Rev G. R. Chapman, formerly minister of Rodborough Tabernacle (Gloucs.) for this point.

²⁸Harris's archives are now those of the Welsh Church and deposited in the National Library of Wales.

²⁹The minutes of the Association of societies in England should not be confused with those of the English-speaking organisation of the Welsh Church. The latter have recently been used by Dr Buick Knox in *Voices from the Past* (1969).

³⁰It is interesting to note that Spa Fields chapel committee acted in the same way for the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion (Cheshunt College Archives D1/1).

³¹The National Library of Wales has a file from 15 Mar. 1741 to 13 Nov. 1742 (*Weekly History*) and 84 undated numbers of the *Christian's Amusement* which succeeded it. I have not been able to trace copies of the later *Monthly History*.

³²National Library of Wales, Trevecka MS. 2946, pp. 20-22.

This is a very different picture to the commonly accepted one that 'George Whitefield inspired the Methodists and John Wesley organised them.'

While it is unfortunate that the minutes do not cover the first years of the Association or the years after 1749, they do provide the only list of the early societies. In November 1747 a list was presented to the Association at Gloucester.³³ There were then 31 societies 'in Connexion together under the care of the Reverend Mr Whitefield' and at least 26 places (probably more, but the list is vague) where there was preaching without a society being formed. Of the societies 13 were in an area approximately bounded by Bristol, Bath, Swindon and Gloucester. Three were in London, five in South Devon, and the rest were scattered across Southern England. If we add the preaching places to the map then small districts can be seen round Braintree in Essex, between Birmingham and Shrewsbury, and round Portsmouth. The area of influence round London was chiefly on the south bank of the lower reaches of the Thames and stretched as far as Chatham.³⁴

With the aid of this list it is possible to trace some of these societies before 1747. The early Calvinistic Methodists were unusual in registering their meeting houses in order to obtain the benefit of the Toleration Act.³⁵ At an Association in June 1745 (the minutes of which are not in the Trevecka volume) the societies had debated the advantages of registration and of licensing the teachers and exhorters. They decided to do both where necessary.³⁶ In the areas where Calvinistic Methodism was strongest the registration of meeting houses was not always well organised. For this period there is no record of licences in the diocese of London (which included Essex), and those for the dioceses of Exeter and Winchester are incomplete.³⁷ Although it was also possible to register with the local court of quarter sessions this was rarely done. It is fortunate that there is a full series for the diocese of Gloucester,³⁸ which give much extra information about the societies in Gloucestershire.

There are a large number of registrations for the area between Gloucester and Bristol during the period in which we are interested. Most of them are concentrated in the valley of the Frome about nine miles south of Gloucester—where incidentally there was con-

³³*Ibid.*, p. 47.

³⁴Since Chatham, Portsmouth and Plymouth all had naval dockyards, there is a possible link between these three widely separated societies.

³⁵See E. Welch, 'The Registration of Meeting Houses' in *Society of Archivists' Journal*, vol. 3, pp. 116-120.

³⁶G. M. Roberts, *Selected Trevecka Letters 1742-1747* (1956), p. 174.

³⁷The Winchester licences (now in the Hampshire Record Office) have been printed by A. J. Willis in *A Hampshire Miscellany III* (1965). The Exeter licences are in the Devon Record Office.

³⁸These are in the Gloucester City Library—GDR 284 & 292A.

siderable industrial development at the time. The names of those owning or registering the meeting houses are sufficient to identify some of them as Calvinistic Methodist even though they were described merely as Protestant Dissenters. For example Thomas Adams, lastmaker and preacher, who appears frequently in the minute book, registered his house at Minchinhampton on 11 Nov. 1742.³⁹ William Hogg, another preacher who appears in the minute book, registered his house at Pitchcomb on 10 Sept. 1742.⁴⁰ Later, on 15 Mar. 1756, Thomas Adams, Andrew Whitefield and others registered the 'Greenhouse' at Thornbury.⁴¹ Because most registrations bear the signatures of at least four or five persons it is possible to identify other local supporters of Calvinistic Methodism and to use this to identify further societies which were only described as Protestant Dissenters. Until 1743 this description was always used, later the licences are sometimes more informative. On 18 June 1750, for example, the society at Chedworth was described as 'Protestant Dissenters of the Congregational Perswasion but commonly called Independent.' Even this early some of the societies had adopted the Congregational standpoint.

However, difficulties arise in interpreting this evidence, because the most frequent name amongst those registering the societies was that of Martin Lloyd who is otherwise unknown. His name cannot be traced in the minute book, or in Whitefield's journals, or amongst the Trevecka letters.⁴² Furthermore Lloyd registered a meeting house at Stroud in the centre of the area with which we are concerned as early as 2 June 1732, which is before George Whitefield went to Oxford and met the Wesleys and before he was converted.⁴³ The answer to the problem lies, I think, in a sentence printed by Whitefield in the first edition of his journal, but omitted in 1756. Speaking of the period in 1735 when sickness detained him in Gloucester and he formed 'a little Society' there, he adds 'I likewise visited two other little Societies besides my own.'⁴⁴ These two societies which already existed cannot be definitely linked with any of the six Gloucester licences issued in the preceding five years. This suggests that there was already an evangelistic movement of a Methodist type in South Gloucestershire at the time of Whitefield's conversion, which was probably Congregational in origin.

The hypothesis does fit the known facts. At Gloucester before his conversion Whitefield was obviously exposed to evangelical

³⁹For Adams see *Transactions of Devonshire Association*, vol. 97, pp. 215 & 216.

⁴⁰For Hogg see Trevecka MS. 2946, p. 3 *et seq.*

⁴¹According to A. Dallimore, *George Whitefield* (1970), p. 39 George Whitefield's brother Andrew died in 1730.

⁴²*George Whitefield's Journals* (1960). M. H. Jones, *The Trevecka Letters* (1932).

⁴³He was only seventeen in June 1732.

⁴⁴*George Whitefield's Journals* (1960), pp. 60 & 61. Editor's italics.

preaching and burdened with a sense of his sinfulness. Contact with these local societies would not only explain this, but also the fact that he was more friendly towards dissenters than any of the other members. It would explain his Calvinism if these societies were Congregational in origin. The absence of almost all reference to this in his journals can be explained by its brevity and by a typical Methodist practice of attributing conversion to the direct intervention of God. It is unlikely to have been a deliberate suppression of the facts by Whitefield. If we had his later journals or a good edition of his letters it might have been possible to find later references to Martin Lloyd. He or his son⁴⁵ continued to register meeting houses at Gloucester until 1780. He also makes a single appearance in the letters addressed to Lady Huntingdon. In a letter giving neither date nor place he appealed to her for help in rebuilding a Methodist meeting house badly damaged by a mob.⁴⁶

This supposition, for it can be little more until further evidence has been found to support it, would help to explain a difficult problem in early Methodist history. The Welsh Methodist movement is earlier in date than the English. Howell Harris began his career as an evangelist six years before Whitefield and long before the Wesleys went to Georgia. Yet attempts to trace the origins of the English movement in Wales have been as unsuccessful as attempts to attribute the Welsh movement to English influences.⁴⁷ If we can envisage a popular movement earlier than the conversions of the Wesleys, or Whitefield, then we can see that Howell Harris and his colleagues, George Whitefield and the Wesleys are not the founders of Methodism, but its embodiment. We can also see why Methodism is as much part of the heritage of the Congregational as it is of the modern Methodist Church.⁴⁸

EDWIN WELCH

⁴⁵In 1740 & 1741 'Martin Lloyd junior' signed certificates.

⁴⁶Cheshunt College Archives, A1/13, 34.

⁴⁷See R. R. Williams, *Flames from the Altar* (1962).

⁴⁸I am indebted for assistance in gathering the material for this lecture to Rev Gomer M. Roberts and Miss Monica Davies of the Welsh Church, Mr Brian Smith, County Archivist of Gloucs., and his staff, Rev G. R. Chapman and Dr M. H. Daniels of Rodborough, and many others.

CAVENDISH THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE (1860-63)

Joseph Parker's Experiment in Ministerial Training

The following account is based upon materials in the archives of Paton College, now at The Congregational College, Manchester. Cavendish Theological College was the child of Joseph Parker and the antecedent of Paton College, Nottingham.

In 1858 Parker settled at Cavendish Chapel, Manchester. He was deeply concerned about many things in both public and church affairs, and made his views known in speech and writing. One of these concerns was the provision of ministers for Congregational churches in sufficient numbers. There were many men in the churches who were attracted to the ministry and showed promise, but because of their circumstances were unable to face the academic requirements of the entrance examinations of the recognised colleges and the subsequent training. The output from these colleges was far short of providing ministers for all churches, let alone the opportunities overseas. Many churches in rural districts and in the developing working-class areas of towns and cities had as their ministers men with no training at all.

Parker's feelings on the subject were no doubt related to his own experience. As a youth he had been a Wesleyan local preacher. The Rev. John Campbell of Moorfields Tabernacle had given him private tuition, including 'sermon drill', for some nine months, during which time he had also attended a course of lectures on Philosophy and Logic at University College, London, given by John Hoppus. Then he had been called to the pastorate of Banbury Congregational Church and ordained there.

In Manchester he was soon giving private tuition to a few potential ministers in his own study, but becoming aware of the need for something better for them, and others like them. Among a series of pamphlets he was writing on 'Questions of the Day' he included one entitled, 'The Operative College'. Existing theological colleges, although well supported and adequately staffed and housed, had 'a comparatively small number of students under training'. The chief reason, he wrote, 'is the want of adaptation in our college arrangements to the peculiar circumstances in which many young men are placed.' Therefore he set out a Prospectus for his 'Operative College' as an experiment over three years. It was intended to meet cases not provided for in existing colleges.

The supreme aim, under the Divine blessing, will be to produce earnest and powerful *Preachers*. While proper attention will be paid to classical and scientific literature, all studies will be sub-

servient to the development of *Ministerial and Pastoral Efficiency*. The great Class Book will be the Word of God, and the continual object to furnish the Churches with eloquent men, mighty in the Scriptures.

Provision was proposed for resident and non-resident students, the former to be maintained by the College so far as funds allowed if unable to find their own support; the latter to pursue their usual business during the day but to be subject to College rules.

Emphasis was placed on the acquisition of practical skills by attending Church meetings, visiting the sick, preaching 'on the high-ways', conducting Bible classes and organizing systems of district visitation.

The course of study was to embrace Theology, Biblical Literature, Philosophy, Logic, Ecclesiastical History, Greek and Latin. There would also be 'earnest attention given to the analysis and discussion of the great principles of Nonconformity'.

The period of study was to be determined by the competency of the student, with a maximum of three years. For those pursuing 'their secular avocations' endeavour would be made to 'permit them to devote the entire of the last year' to preparation for the ministry.

'Applications from any part of the country' would be 'entertained, provided that the applicant gives decided proof of pulpit ability.' There was no mention in the Prospectus of any requirement of a 'Divine Calling'. Finally, donations and annual subscriptions were requested. All letters of inquiry and contributions were to be sent to the Rev. Joseph Parker, Old Trafford, Manchester.

To the Prospectus Parker added a lengthy commentary with some illustrations of the particular needs the College was designed to meet. Parker sought to justify the scheme for combining studies with secular employment and also the fact that he had no 'test of literary attainments' for his candidates. He criticised the kind of test involving Virgil, Xenophon, Euclid and Algebra. He justified the variation in the length of courses: 'the King's business requireth haste'.

Parker disclaimed any suggestion that he aimed at 'collision with the other Nonconformist Colleges'. He wished the 'Operative College' to be an ally but not a rival. Nor had he any wish 'to lower the standard of ministerial learning'. Here he stated his intention that students should 'attend Owen's College (Manchester) for their general learning'. Both day and evening classes would there be available. However, the emphasis on preaching and practical work was reaffirmed:

While the highest intellectual superiority will be assiduously cultivated, the students will be taught the dignity of *labour*; and will be so trained as to develop a manly, aggressive and enterprising spirit in regard to the moral conquest of British heathendom and the evangelisation of the Colonies and Pagan countries.

Certain modifications to the plan and the literature were soon made. The word 'Operative' was dropped because of its ambiguity. The Prospectus was issued separately under the heading, 'Cavendish Theological College. Manchester'. In the opening statement it was emphasised that the College was 'intended *exclusively* to meet cases which are unprovided for in other Nonconformist Colleges.' On the back of the leaflet there was added in heavy type:

SPECIAL

Though Cavendish Theological College is fundamentally an *Independent* institution yet, by special arrangement, Baptists, Wesleyans, Presbyterians, and others, may be admitted to that section of the course of Study which comprises Theology; Scriptural Criticism, Homiletics, Philosophy, Logic, and Elocution.

The session was announced to 'commence (D.V.) on Monday, 1st October, 1860.'

The records also show two other leaflets. One is a form, 'Enquiries to be answered by Applicants for Admission'. It contains 12 questions together with 'Instructions to Applicants'. Testimonials from the Pastor and Church are required; also a written statement of views on the chief Doctrines and Institutions of Christianity, particularly on the Trinity, the Deity of Jesus Christ, the Personality and Godhead of the Holy Spirit, the Atonement and Mediatorship of Jesus, the Nature of Repentance, Faith and Regeneration, the Constitution of a Christian Church, and the Ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. He had also to give 'a written statement of the reasons which induce him to seek admission into the Christian Ministry and in particular into that Ministry as exercised in the *Independent* body' and 'a written sermon on a subject of his own selection'.

The other leaflet, '*Money Arrangement*', says,

Each Student, who cannot support himself, will be required to contribute towards the amount which may be expended upon him during his connection with the College. The amount chargeable upon each Student shall not exceed £35 per annum, for which he will receive Board, Lodging, and Education. The repayment is to commence *after a Student is settled in the Ministry*, and is to be continued in annual instalments of not less than £10.

Parker went on to say that this scheme did not pauperise the student but made him party to an 'equitable contract'; it would secure an income for the College; and it was to be hoped that the churches students settled in would make annual collections for the College which would relieve men of most if not all of their indebtedness to the College. This hope, indeed this scheme, failed to operate.

Parker secured as fellow-tutors, J. B. Paton, M.A., the active young minister of Wicker Church, Sheffield and J. Radford Thomson, M.A., of Heywood. The first report tells us that the former was concerned

with Doctrinal Theology, Philosophy and Christian Evidences, and, after the first session, Logic and Old Testament as well, while the latter dealt with English Language, the Greek Testament and Ecclesiastical History. Parker was responsible for Homiletics and Elocution.

A Committee was formed with James Sidebottom as Chairman and Joseph Spencer as Treasurer. Both came from Manchester. The Rev. Ernest C. Jay of Stockport was Minute Secretary and Edwin Woollard was Corresponding Secretary. An appeal leaflet issued under the names of these officers and the tutors stated that 'upward of a hundred applications for admission have been received.' The leaflet concluded with a list of subscribers. Most are from Manchester but others are from London, Leeds, Burnley, Stockport and a number of other places. Here we read names such as Sir. E. Armitage and Sons, George Hadfield, M.P., Abraham Haworth, Henry Lee, John Rylands, Samuel Morley, Thomas E. Plint of Leeds and John Crossley of Halifax.

The College opened in the autumn of 1860 with eight students, the number rising to twenty before the end of the first session, by which time nearly 200 applications had been received. Seven of the students came from Cavendish Street, two of whom attended evenings only. The others came, eight from various places in England, one from Wales, one from Scotland, two from Northern Ireland and one from Demerara.

A Monday afternoon service, open to the public, was conducted by the students in turn and formed part of the Homiletics course. Sermons were delivered from brief notes after careful preparation. The area around Cavendish Street was divided into five districts and the students assigned in pairs to work in these. They kept records in 'Journals' and the first Annual Report devotes a good deal of space to summarising what had been done, numbers of visits made, tracts distributed, sick persons visited, cottage meetings held, sermons preached and open-air addresses delivered.

But before the first Annual Report was presented Joseph Parker had resigned, although he remained on the Committee for some months and the Chapel remained the College's home. The reason was an unfortunate clash between him personally and the Deacons of Park Chapel, Blackburn, over a student whom the Committee had expelled. He felt obliged to resign and his position in the College dwindled to that of an ordinary Committee member and even this terminated before the end of 1862. The College continued for the remainder of its experimental period under Paton and Radford Thomson, who managed to combine their duties with those of their pastorates.

The expelled student may have been Robert West Pearson, expelled towards the end of 1861. The first Annual Report states,

The Committee cannot conclude without briefly adverting to a

case which has occasioned them great pain, and therefore present the following resolution, which will sufficiently explain their meaning without going into details, which would excite the most distressing feelings:

Moved by the Rev. J. B. Paton, M. A.; seconded by Henry Lee, Esq., and carried unanimously:

That the Committee, in reviewing the communications which have passed between the Deacons of the church at Park Chapel, Blackburn, and the Rev. Joseph Parker, one of the Tutors of Cavendish Theological College, in relation to Mr. Robert West Pearson, a Student whom they have recently expelled, whilst they feel themselves called upon to disclaim all participation in the views and measures which he adopted and recommended, hereby express their fullest confidence in the integrity of his motives, and rejoice to know that he has informed the Deacons that all he has done has been done solely in his individual capacity, and further, that he has urged Mr. Pearson to abandon the pastorate of that church and the office of the Christian ministry.

At the public meeting at which this Report was adopted, the following resolution was also adopted:

That this Meeting cannot separate without expressing its sincere and deep gratitude to the Rev. Joseph Parker, for the noble and magnanimous manner in which he has voluntarily resigned his office as one of the Tutors of Cavendish Theological College, in order to promote its prosperity and harmonious working, especially remembering that he is the father and founder of the College. They also gratefully acknowledge their entire satisfaction with, and appreciation of, the abounding and self-denying labour with which he has devoted himself to the discharge of his arduous duties, in the classes of the college over which he has presided.

Heavier responsibilities fell upon Radford Thomson, who dealt with candidates and supervised the Monday services, and Paton, who did the rest of the Homiletics, the Sermon Class, and Old Testament.

At the end of the second session examinations were held and the marking done by examiners outside the College. Paton's subjects were marked by Robert Bruce of Huddersfield; Greek N. T., by G. D. Macgregor (of Farnworth?) and Church History and English by G. W. Conder of Manchester, who also conducted *viva voce* tests in English Grammar and reading aloud Holy Scripture. The examiners' reports were printed in the second Annual Report.

Financially the College operated successfully the first year: subscriptions of £777 and students' contributions, £60, more than covered the preliminary expenses, £29, the Tutors' salaries, £300, students' board, etc. £386, and Tutors' travelling, £23. There was a credit balance of £90 on the year to 31 October 1861. But the following year the account was not so good. The circulated appeal brought

little fruit and many initial subscriptions were not renewed. Subscriptions fell to £639 in spite of two generous increases and two notable new gifts. Students contributed £173 and a collection at Cavendish Street produced £31. On the other side, although Tutors' salaries took under £285 and J. B. Paton only £10 for travelling, the item for students' board was up to £702. The credit balance of £90 was transformed into a debit of £93.

The Officers were at the time James Sidebottom (Chairman), Joseph Spencer (Treasurer), J. J. Howell (Treasurer for Liverpool), E. Woollard (Secretary) William Roberts, M.D. (Hon. Medical Advisor), and as Committee members in addition to the Tutors, E. A. Bowker, G. B. Crickett, Samuel Dewhurst, J. C. Jones, W. K. Job, Henry Lee, Thomas Moffat, the Rev. Dr. McKerrow, J. S. Paterson, Joseph Pope, and R. C. Richards.

Cavendish College now came to the third and last of its planned years. Officers, Tutors and Committee began to look to the future. There were some changes in the Committee: Messrs Bowker, Crickett, Moffat and Parker no longer appear; instead there are added Mr. Councillor Murray, Jas. Sidebottom Jun., and Samuel Watts Jun. Early in 1863 definite plans were taking shape and a first draft of an invitation to a Conference was prepared for circulation in April:

THE CAVENDISH THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE

Manchester

May 26th, 1863

Dear Sir,

This College was founded in the Autumn of 1860, for an experimental period of three years. As this period is advancing to a close, the Committee have reviewed, so far as was practicable, the results of the experiment, with the intention of considering whether its success is such as to warrant its promoters in taking further action. After due deliberation, they have unanimously passed the following Resolution:—

That this Committee being convinced of the soundness of the principle upon which the College was founded, and being thoroughly satisfied with the success which has attended the experimental period, is of opinion that it is desirable that such a College should be established as a permanent institution upon a broader basis of support and operation.

In accordance with this Resolution, the Committee have resolved to call a Conference at Derby, in the Reading or School Room of Victoria Street Chapel, on the evening of Wednesday, the 10th of June, at five o'clock. If necessary the Conference will be continued on the following day and Dinner provided at Three o'clock.

The Committee beg your attention to the following brief summary

of facts. If an institution such as that of whose operations an outline is herewith given commends itself to your judgment, we shall be glad of your presence and your voice in the deliberations of the forthcoming Conference.

This invitation was signed by the Chairman, Treasurer and Tutors. There was a footnote: 'We, the undersigned, concur in the propriety of calling this Conference, and purpose ourselves to attend.' It was signed by H. Tarrant of Sheffield, H. Ollard of Derby, S. Morley and G. Smith (Secretary of the C.U.E.W.).

J. Lewis Paton says the delay in calling the Conference was probably due to 'a serious and protracted period of illness' which befell Paton, and 'brought about by . . . adding to all his Sheffield work the duties of a London editor and Theological Tutor at Manchester' (*John Brown Paton*, p.48).

He used to come over on Tuesday, take three classes, and get in essays and papers from the men. He took a night's rest on the couch in the vestry, and taught further classes the next morning, beginning at seven o'clock (*Op. cit.* p. 76).

Another factor in the delay may have been that Radford Thomson was in negotiation with the Church at Tunbridge Wells where he settled sometime during the year.

All that has survived of the final Report of the College in the Paton College archives is Thomson's report on his subjects.

With regard to the students, an address was presented by them to their Tutors on 27 August 1863, from which an extract is quoted in J. B. Paton's biography, p.78.

On 26 August 1863, under the heading, 'Cavendish College, Manchester', a leaflet was published containing 'A Table Showing the Present Condition of all the Students Educated Therein'. This contains 30 names.

John Gibson (2nd Annual Report: member of Cavendish St., settled at Street, 1861) moved to South Australia.

John Armitage Farrar of Wicker, Sheffield, to work in Canada.

John Green Wilson of Aspatria, to Victoria, Australia.

Joseph Nicholas Levi of Demerara (2nd Annual Report: transferred to L.M.S., College, Weston-super-Mare (R. C. Pritchett)) returning home.

Settled in England:—

Edward George Barnes of Argyle, Bath, at Charlestown.

Matthew Braithwaite, a Cavendish St., evening student, at Theddingworth.

John Kay Chappell, a Particular Baptist from Newark-on-Trent, at Boston.

Lawrence Dewhirst, of Cavendish St., at Pately Bridge.

Andrew Hall of Collyhurst, Manchester (not a 'full student') at City Road.

Robert Kerr of Kilmarnock, at Caister.

Frederick Vaughan of Argyle, Bath, at Street.

Joseph Thomas Woodhouse of Cavendish St., at Stockport.

Richard Pugh Jones of Dolgelly was reported to have settled at Towyn, and two other men were said to be likely to settle: *Thomas Chambers*, a Primitive Methodist from Leintwardine, to Gorton, and *Benjamin Wilkinson*, of Bethesda, Burnley, to Partington.

Transferred to other colleges:—

George Buchanan Ryley (Ryleigh in 1860-1 list) of Cavendish St to Cheshunt.

Thomas William Scott, a Presbyterian of Lochmaben, to New. (The 2nd Annual Report mentions that *Robert Davies Smith*, 'Presbyterian Baptist' of Greenwich had been transferred to Spurgeon's College).

Waiting to be transferred to 'the New College' were:—

Moncton Carey Creagh, Church of England, Tarbert.

James Irvine, Presbyterian, Ballyroley.

John Farquhar, Hull.

William Walker Jubb, 'Wesley', Dalkeith.

John Mitchell, Wesley Reform, Elland.

Christopher John Switzer, Limerick.

John Wilson, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

There was also *William Burgess* of Handsworth, Birmingham. His name does not appear in the Institute records in Nottingham, as do the other seven.

Four other students were at the time uncertain about the future: *James Stirling* of Antrim (against whose name is pencilled, 'settled in Ireland'), *Joseph Mitchell*, Wesley Reform, Elland; *Eli Leach* (Leech in earlier lists) of Cavendish St.; and *Gordon* (*sic.*), the only new name, 'not a full student', A footnote to the list adds 'Deceased 1; Expelled 1; Left or dismissed during probation 6; Occasional Students 3.'

Whilst *Pearson* must be the expelled student, 'left or dismissed' might refer to *Edward Apperley* of Cavendish St., an evening student; *Frederick Collis* of Whitby; *Samuel Kydd* of Coleraine; and *John Douglas*, a Presbyterian from Loughaghie, who subsequently became minister at Portadown and subscribed to the Nottingham Institute.

YOUNG MEN IN THE CHURCH

What picture have most of us of young men in the Church a century or so ago? Probably we see them as Sunday School teachers and modest occupants of the rear pews as in the Bursley Methodist Chapel of Arnold Bennett's *Anna of the Five Towns*. But do we think of them as taking a lively interest in the social, economic and political issues of the times and meeting in the Church to discuss these issues?

Through the courtesy of Mr. Scott Graves of Ardingly, the writer has been able to read some of the records of young men's societies in the Clifton Road Congregational Church, Brighton, which have recently come to light. These are the Minute Books of the Young Men's Improvement Society and its successors the Young Men's Society and the Junior Literary Society.¹ These records give vivid glimpses of the range and topicality of the discussions of these groups of young Congregationalists in an age when so many of them were dependent on their own effort for educational improvement and recreation.

The Young Men's Improvement Society was formed in 1875. The first of a series of weekly meetings was held in December when 40 members were present; it took the form of a lecture which the Secretary described as 'very ably given' but he omitted to record the subject! The next meeting was a debate on Capital Punishment and it is noteworthy that as long ago as 1875 a meeting of young men decided by 14 votes to 9 to reject capital punishment. After two meetings at which the members gave readings and recitations, there was another debate with the subject of Total Abstinence:

After a very lively and instructive meeting, it was found that time would not allow it to be concluded.

But the debate was resumed at the next meeting when the majority supported an amendment that 'Temperance and not Total Abstinence should be received as beneficial to Society.' Another subject debated during 1876 was 'Is England rising or falling as a nation?' The outcome was reassuring with the majority 'in favour of her rise.'

Extempore speeches of five or ten minutes provided the programme for several meetings with a strange assortment of topics; at one

¹ The Clifton Road Congregational Church was formed in 1867-68 with much support from senior members of the Queen's Square Church and generous financial assistance by Samuel Morley. The first building was the *Iron Chapel* bought from Anglicans in Eastbourne and re-erected at Brighton; the *Brighton Times* tactfully described it as 'Very unpretending in style.' The permanent building was opened in August 1871. The first Minister was the Rev. Henry Quick who began his stated ministry on 10 January 1869; his successors were the Rev. John Graham (1876-79) and the Rev. William Crossbie (1880-90).

meeting, the members' subjects included Duelling, the Mental Capacities of the Sexes, Slavery, Cremation and Rewards and Punishments. One can only regret that the Society's first Secretary was inclined to brevity in his minutes because he provided no details of the discussion on the subject 'Can the personality of Satan be Established from the Scriptures?'

The first session of 1875-76 was brought to a close on 27 April and there had been by then a severe falling-off in the attendances; five members only were present at this meeting. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the Improvement Society did not resume in the following winter. However, on 6 November 1877 a meeting was held at the Church to discuss the formation of a new young men's society. Perhaps the word *Improvement* was becoming socially invidious because the meeting decided on the name 'Clifton Road Young Men's Society.' It was decided also to have a set of rules and this included the following:

5th. That Election to Membership is by ballot, one-fourth adverse votes to exclude . . .

7th. That no Member be allowed to speak twice (except in explanation or by permission of the Chairman) but the introducer of a motion has the privilege to reply.

9th. That a Subscription of One Shilling per annum be payable by each Member.

11th. That the Evenings shall be devoted to Readings, Recitations, Essays, Debates, Prepared and Impromptu Speeches, Biblical Papers, Devotional and Public Meetings, according to a Programme prepared by the Committee and approved by the Members.

12th. That all Meetings be opened and closed with Prayer.

An outline programme was quickly prepared for 1877-78 (and printed on stiff card). Attendances settled down to around fifteen to twenty members at the regular fortnightly meetings, but at a Public Meeting held on 8 January 1878 about 100 members and friends were present:

On the several tables were Microscopes, Galvanic Batteries, Books and other objects of interest lent by friends for the occasion . . .

After the tea was an entertainment of Readings, Recitations, Songs and Music by the members and their friends.

At the meeting on 2 April four members read Biblical Papers on Job, the Life of Jacob, the Life of Elijah and the Feasts of the Jews.

The popularity of debates was still evident in the next session for 1878-79. One subject was 'Are Strikes beneficial?' but the debate ended without a vote being taken. The influence of the Congress of Berlin and of *Pax Britannica* may be surmised in the defeat by a large majority of the motion 'That a Federation of all the Nations offers the best solution to when will Wars cease.'

What happened in the society between 1879 and 1883 is uncertain, but the indications are that it foundered through a falling off of attendances and the removal of some of its keener members — a familiar experience to most of us. In 1883 there was a fresh start with the formation of the Clifton Road Junior Literary Society and this was far better-supported than its predecessors had been with a regular attendance of around thirty members. Once again, the programmes featured several debates each session. During 1884-85, the subjects were The Lords and the Franchise, The Salvation Army and Co-operative Stores; in the 1885-86 session the subjects were Municipal Entertainment, Home Rule and Imperial Federation and in 1886-87 they were Disestablishment of the Church, Free Education and Free Trade versus Fair Trade.

The Junior Literary Society conducted its debates with formality closely modelled on the procedure of the House of Commons. The debate on the House of Lords and the Franchise held on 26 September 1884 was on the motion:

That in the opinion of this meeting, the arbitrary decision of the House of Lords with regard to the Franchise Bill is unwise, opposed to all principles of freedom, and insulting to the English people; and that the House of Lords, as at present constituted being most unsatisfactory, and obstructive to progressive legislation, ought to be abolished.

An amendment was moved in defence of the Lords, but after a keen debate the meeting voted for abolition of the House of Lords.²

The weight of conventionality pressing on Congregationalism by the 1880s was reflected in the society's debate on the Salvation Army.

The motion was:

That the Salvation Army merits the sympathy of all who desire the extension of Christ's kingdom

but an amendment was moved:

That in the opinion of this meeting the Salvation Army though possibly doing some social good in causing a few drunkards to become sober, is yet from the irreverence of its preachers, and the blasphemies contained in its publications, unworthy of our countenance and support.

The debate was so vigorous that it had to be continued at the next meeting when 37 members were present. The above amendment was defeated and a further amendment put:

² The Society was right up-to-date with this debate because the position of the House of Lords over the extension of the Franchise was a big political issue that year.

That although in perfect sympathy with the avowed objects of the Salvation Army, this meeting is of the opinion that the unfortunate practices to which it resorts more than nullify the good which it would otherwise accomplish.

The members most friendly towards the Salvation Army made another attempt to secure a more sympathetic expression of the meeting's views and finally the following amendment was put:

That this Association while sympathising with the avowed objects of the Salvation Army and recognising the devotion and courage of its members strongly disapprove of many of the methods adopted by them.

This amendment was carried and on being put as the substantive motion was 'carried almost unanimously.' The Secretary concluded his minutes 'One of the best meetings of the Junior Literary Society³.

The Junior Literary Society continued to attract good support and the Committee's second annual report reflected their satisfaction:

The meetings have usually been well attended, and the subjects discussed of interest and importance, including as they do, questions, social, political, and religious; and their discussion, it may well be hoped has tended, not only to instruct, but also to assist in forming and moulding the opinions of members and to lead them to take broader and higher and better views of the various questions.

The Minutes end with the Committee's report for the 1886-87 session, but all the evidence is that the Society was still doing well. The Committee's report was couched in language that makes it seem almost a caricature of the high-flown Victorian confidence in Progress:

We have completed the review of the past year's labours, and we may say with all confidence that the end of another year has found us one rung higher on the ladder of prosperity. What of the future of the Clifton Road Junior Literary Society? Shall we stop short here or shall 'Excelsior' be our New Year's motto? Shall we rest content with what has been accomplished or shall ours be an even soaring endeavour to attain as near as possible to Perfection? . . . they can have no better watchword than 'Now' let them look forward to the shadowy future with brave and manly hearts, and increased prosperity will be the Reward.

N. CAPLAN

³ Although William Booth had begun his Christian Mission in the East End in 1865, it was not until 1878 that it was called the Salvation Army with a much wider geographical field of work.

THE AGONIES OF AN ELECTION OF DEACONS AT ABOVE BAR, SOUTHAMPTON, (1805)

The Church Book of Above Bar Church, Southampton, contains an extended account of the process by which new deacons were chosen and set apart to their office. The record is full enough to cast many sidelights upon contemporary church life.

In 1805 the church had but one deacon, Mr. Lobb, and was in need of more. A select committee which was looking into various aspects of the church's work made their report to the church:

1. That it be recommended to the Church that the Ministers, and the Deacon, be appointed to nominate a certain Number of Members, out of which the Number of Deacons be chosen.

2. That the Church determine how many are to be nominated; and also that the Church determine the Number of Deacons, out of those nominated, which is to be chosen to that Office.

3. That three fourths of the Members of the Church be a necessary majority for each.

How this report was received is recorded in the next minute:

At a Meeting of the church convened by public notice, begun with Singing and solemn Prayer, the aforementioned Recommendations of the Resolutions adopted by the select Committee, after much Discussion, was moved, that there be One additional Deacon chosen, for the present, the motion was supported by Three Votes.

Resolved by a Vote of Thirteen, within 3/4ths of all the Members present that there be Three additional Deacons chosen.

It was further resolved that the pastors and deacon should nominate Candidates for the office and that they should nominate no less than four and no more than six. The meeting then adjourned to the next day, 15 October, 'but the Number convened being very small' the meeting was postponed for six days to the following week. However, that day nothing more than the confirmation of the resolutions already made was transacted.

By the end of the month the ministers and deacon had prepared their list of nominations and sent them, printed on a card, 'so as each Name might be easily taken off, in a short printed letter,' to each member.

Novr. 4. Monday the Church met, after Prayer, and confirming the Nomination, proceeded to ballot for Three out of the four nominated, when it appeared that Mr. Isaac Fletcher, Mr. Wm. Randall, and Mr. Edward Toomer were made eligible by a majority of all the members present. They were afterwards chosen to the Office, and the Ministers and Mr. Lobb were appointed to announce the same to them. Concluded with Prayer.

H. LACEY

But the agony was only just beginning.

Novr. 10. The Church met, after Prayer and Mr. Fletcher declared by letter his Acceptance of the Office of Deacon; But Mr. Randall and Mr. Toomer deferred giving their Answer. The meeting was therefore adjourned to Monday Dec. 2. Concluded with Prayer. W. Kingsbury.

Decr. 2. The Church met. After Prayer, Mr. Randall sent in his answer refusing the Office on certain grounds stated in his letter, on which it was Resolved that further Steps be taken respecting Mr. Randall.

Resolved that a Committee of four Members wait on every Member of the Church to obtain their Opinion of the Choice of Mr. Randall.

Perhaps this was not as large a task as it might sound, for there were about fifty members — the large body of subscribers had no say in the choice of deacons although they put the pressure on when it came to the choice of a minister, e.g. in Mr. Lacey, the assistant's call — and the visitors reported to the next meeting that they had encountered no one against Mr. Randall, though there were five 'neutrals'. Meanwhile another deputation appointed by the meeting had waited on Mr. Toomer 'to request an explanation of the difficulties' he faced. They succeeded in removing many of these. Hence, at the meeting on 9 December, it was resolved to put the facts before Mr. Randall and to approach Mr. Toomer once more, because he had not yet said if he now accepted the office now that many of his difficulties were overcome.

Mr. Randall accepted on 23 December, but Mr. Toomer proposed that he gave it a trial of six or twelve months, a suggestion the church decided 'cannot be complied with'. He capitulated by 30 December.

There was still the 'Separation of new Deacons to be Solemnized'. This was to be Thursday 13 February, but when the church met on the 11th the attendance was too poor. 'The Deacons and only a few Members assembled among whom were Mr. Barker, Mr. Adams, Mr. Bond and Mr. Kingsley.' The solemnization was postponed to the 20th. Now follows the description of this event.

After Singing and prayer in the pulpit, Mr. Kingsbury delivered a Discourse on the I Timy 3rd ch. We sung a Hymn. Mr. K. then went into the Table Pew, where the Deacons sat — He offered up prayer for them we sung. (*Sic.*), Mr. K. returned to the Pulpit stated the Duties of the Office and concluded with Prayer. After this Service, held a Church Meeting in the Vestry and Mr. Fothergill was suspended from the Church Communion for Inebriety. Concluded with Prayer.

Here the story comes to an end.

The Church Book does not help us to put this election in context. We do not know how deacons were chosen previously. What ten-

sions may have existed between people remain hidden. There are no copies of Mr. Randall's or Mr. Toomer's letters. Above Bar was going along with the fashion in having a larger diaconate. The organization of the ballot may have been the work of the young assistant minister, but it is before Bentham was popular. In any event, the tale of woefully attended meetings will sound familiar and so will the difficulty in getting deacons who would stay in office for life, but the amusing fact is that the original selection committee and the new diaconate were virtually the same.

JOHN H. TAYLOR

OUR CONTEMPORARIES

The Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society of England (XIV. 5. May 1972) carries two articles on Edward Irving whose Pentecostalism took him from Presbyterianism into his Apostolic Church, one by Gordon Strachan and the other by Brian Gould. Tributes to two outstanding fathers of our generation, Carnegie Simpson of Westminster College, Cambridge, and Wheeler Robinson, Principal of Regent's Park College, which moved from London to Oxford under his guidance, have appeared, the first in the *Presbyterian Journal*, contributed by Prof. F. G. Healey, and the second, contributed by nine writers in a special number of *The Baptist Quarterly* (XXIV. 6 April 1972).

Among a large number of articles in the four issues of *The Baptist Quarterly* recently received perhaps we may draw attention to C. B. Jewson's 'Norwich Baptists and the French Revolution', an unusual and interesting study, and Keith Clements's 'compare and contrast' article on the modern secular theologians and the liberals of the early century (XXIV. Nos. 5 and 7 respectively). Church discipline among Baptists in the 17th century is examined by T. Dowley in No. 4, and in *The Journal of the Friends Historical Society* (52.4) discipline among Quakers in Somerset is painstakingly presented by Stephen Morland. A. B. Sackett continues his long article entitled 'John Wesley and the Greek Orthodox Bishop' in *The Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* (XXXVIII. 4 May 1972).

REVIEWS

The Pilgrim Way, by Robert M. Bartlett, Philadelphia, (Pilgrim Press, 1971. 12 dollars.)

One thinks of coffee-table books as dealing with stately homes or garden flowers rather than theologians, but Dr. Bartlett's account of John Robinson is eminently suitable for leaving around for visitors to browse through.

Is it really possible to write over 360 pages about Robinson, with not more than a page or two of quotation from his writings?

Despite the learning which has gone into it, this is not a major work of scholarship. It makes no attempt at a balanced judgment of Robinson and his colleagues. At times it is evidence for the defence, and at others undeniably belongs to the field of hagiography. One is not surprised that the author was chosen to be 'Mr. Pilgrim' for the 350th anniversary of the landing at Plymouth and is portrayed on the jacket in seventeenth-century costume.

An example of Dr. Bartlett's attitude and style not at their best is: 'Together (Robinson and other Puritans) form one of the most unique groups in Western literature, noteworthy because of the intellectual caliber of their books. These Puritans marshalled a mighty Brain Trust. Their movement was one of the intellectually best equipped in history . . .'

Sometimes a novelettish style takes over, as in the lush description of John's courtship of Bridget amid the daffodils and hawthorne, the 'harvests of the good earth' and the 'chimney pots spiralling their smoke against a gray sky.' When the pilgrims reached Plymouth: 'It was all theirs: the virgin forest, the soft pine trails, the pure air, the glorious, unpolluted sea.' Their own writers were more down-to-earth in their comments.

It seems a mistake to carry the story on beyond Robinson's death, and to devote so much space to the America he never reached. The story of Plymouth Plantation was told long ago by Governor Bradford, and better.

And yet this book is worth possessing and reading, for two reasons. First for the illustrations. Not all are strictly relevant, but all are excellent. Secondly, because this is a work of love and enthusiasm, and Dr. Bartlett's affection and admiration for Robinson eventually become infectious. He needs to be taken with a pinch of salt, or laid alongside sober historians steadily deflating the legends. But Robinson is one of the easiest of Puritans to like, and this author likes him so much that his account of him, if not impartial, is interesting and enjoyable throughout; a great virtue, even in theological biography.

STEPHEN MAYOR

The Fifth Monarchy Men. A Study in Seventeenth Century English Millenarianism, by B. S. Capp. (Faber and Faber. £5.25).

Oliver Cromwell disbanded the Republican Rump of the Long Parliament by force in April 1653 partly at the instigation of a leading member of the Fifth Monarchist Movement, Major-General Harrison, who complained on behalf of "the Saints" that the government was not reforming church and society. Acting again almost certainly on Fifth Monarchist initiative, Cromwell decided to have a nominated Parliament of Saints.

The Fifth Monarchists were jubilant. The day was at hand to usher in the Fifth Monarchy prophesied by Daniel, and interpreted as the kingdom of Christ that would endure for ever, following the 'four kingdoms' of Babylon, Assyria, Greece and Rome. Their 'heartly, high and heavenly' leader in Wales, Vavasor Powell, foresaw that 'law would stream down like a river freely'. There would be reform of law, clergy, and all society.

The Fifth Monarchists were only a small group within the 'Barebones Parliament' of Saints, but their disciplined sense of purpose gave them considerable power. They went close to abolishing tithes and the court of chancery, and eventually so frightened the conservatives that Cromwell terminated the Parliament.

Dr. Capp has given a splendid guide to this extraordinary movement in a careful and fully documented study. He insists that we must not judge the movement by what we would think of it now. To people at the time it did not seem insignificant nor its ideas deranged. Many prominent men, both lay and clerical, such as Cromwell, Sir Henry Vane, Thomas Goodwin and Jeremiah Burroughs, had sympathy with a millenarian interpretation of the Bible, and took the books of *Daniel* and *Revelation* as prophecies of the Second Coming, with predictions in some sense of how Christ would rule His People. The Fifth Monarchists applied these views very literally to their present age, and identified particular people in it. Charles I and later Cromwell were seen at the little Horn of *Daniel*. It is possible, however, that Capp overstates the influence of millenarians on the theological writers of the seventeenth century generally. The ministers of the time read very widely, and one cannot assume a millenarian leaning simply because their writings included comments of *Revelation* or *Daniel*, or quoted from the works of Thomas Brightman.

A chapter analysing membership and numbers confirms what most historians of the Puritans may surmise. It was an urban lower-class but not destitute movement, with about twenty known supporters from the gentry, and a number of professional men, including thirty four ministers. The total number can only be conjectured, as both friend and foe alike inflated the figures, but probably they were numerically as many as the Levellers or the Republicans.

A fascinating section of the book is the analysis of spiritual autobiographies, gathered from two congregations and published by a Fifth Monarchist John Rogers, and an Independent, Henry Walker, who more fittingly called them 'experiences of grace'. According to Capp, many described fear of hell, or sorrow through suffering, as the initial impulse towards their conversions, while the gathered church was a home for the lonely.

There is a surprisingly brief chapter on the actual Parliament of Saints, and a much fuller account of what happened to the Fifth Monarchists after 1653, when they plotted against the Protectorate, and of their last tribulations with the Restoration. The discussion of the fight with Cromwell's Protectorate is particularly informative.

Three chapters describe their programme for society — their political, social, religious and economic ideas — and here their concern about poverty, their desire to set up the judicial law of Moses, their lack of equalitarianism or democracy, and their strong attachment to experiential Christianity, Separatism, and the gathered-Church principle come out. In all, a very satisfying book.

GEORGE YULE

Digest of Minutes of Meetings of the General Council of the Congregational Christian Churches of the United States 1931-1965 (New York, 1971).

In 1905 and 1930 the National Council of Congregational Churches of the United States published digests of the minutes of its meetings. This volume continues the story over the period in which the Congregational Churches united with the Christian Church, which union had the distinction of being the first indigenous church group formed in the United States (1931), and this new denomination united with the Evangelical and Reformed Churches to form the present United Church of Christ (1957).

The references are arranged by subject and there is a separate 'alphabetical listing' which includes additional material on subjects not dealt with in earlier chapters. In some cases there is no more than a reference to the date and page number of the relevant minute, but for the most part there is either a short note or the minute is quoted in full. The volume also includes some material relating to the National Council of the Congregational Churches and the General Convention of the Christian Church, as well as a brief history of the Christian Church which is likely to be of particular interest to readers in this country.

This digest gives a fascinating glimpse of some aspects of the church life of our American cousins over a critical period and should provide a useful tool for those undertaking research in this field. One wonders how far some of the pronouncements of the Councils

were accepted by individual churches. For example, as early as 1871 the National Council expressed the wish (to remove, so far as in lies, all causes of suspicion and alienation, and to promote the growing unity of counsel and of effort among the followers of Christ,' and went on to say, 'We believe in the "holy catholic church"'. And in 1931 the General Council issued a statement on birth control in which it favoured 'the principle of voluntary child bearing, believing that it sacramentalizes physical union and safeguards the well being of the family and society'.

Equally advanced views were expressed on race relations in 1931 when the General Council decided that official meetings would be held only in towns where an assurance had been given by major hotels that all members of its fellowship, regardless of race or colour, would be received on equal terms.

One of the valuable features in this digest is the clear summary of the steps in the creation of the United Church of Christ and also details of the law suits which individual churches in several States brought, seeking to have the Basis of Union declared invalid on the grounds that it deprived the local church of its autonomy. It is to be hoped that an account of the steps leading to the formation of the United Reformed Church in this country will be written. Will it be possible to say, as the General Council did of the United Church of Christ in 1958, 'The over-all impression one gets from this first year of the life of the United Church . . . is one not so much of a new church as one of the church being made new' ?

D. L. SKIDMORE

The Correspondence of John Owen (1616-1683) With an account of his life and work. Ed. Peter Toon (James Clarke, Cambridge, 1970, pp. 205, £1.50) *The Oxford Oration of Dr. John Owen.* Ed. Peter Toon (Gospel Communication, Linkinhorne Ho., Linkinhorne, Callington, Cornwall, 1971, pp. 48.60p.)

Too long Owen has remained a great power in Congregational history without being much of a person. The merit of these books is that he begins to come alive. In the *Preface* of the first the author says how difficult it has been to get beneath the views of the great theologian to the human being himself. Yet he has got further than anyone else has done. 67 items belong to his years as Vice-Chancellor of Oxford; twelve letters are from Oliver Cromwell and four to him. A further 31 come from 1662-83. A number of the letters are over several signatories. Some — e.g. Baxter's — are long by modern standards. Some of the asides are interesting: 'The surgeons are honest men' (to Lord Wharton); on another occasion he sends information to Wharton on a young lady 'not yet twenty years of

age', 'Expectation is good and sure', dowry 'but £3,000'. The Oration is six, dealing with University life and affairs. The author has appended many notes to help identify the references. Owen's troubles with students who were not always as 'pious, sober and modest' as he desired helps us to see another side of him. But the volubility which characterises his writings — he is never short and to the point — appears in his speeches too.

JOHN H. TAYLOR

Also received:—

John Woolman in England (1772) by Henry J. Cadbury (Friends Hist. Soc. 1971, pp. 142, £1.25); *John Perrot — Early Quaker Schismatic* by Kenneth L. Carroll (Friends Hist. Soc. 1971, pp. 111, £1).

Stamford Hill Congregational Church (1871-1971) by James Bristow (10p.)

Congregationalism at Worpleson (1822-1972) by A. P. F. Sell (n.p.)

A Century of Service, The Yorkshire Cons., Union by K. W. Wadsworth.

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OF THE CONGREGATIONAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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