

THE JOURNAL  
of the  
UNITED REFORMED CHURCH HISTORY SOCIETY

(incorporating the Congregational Historical Society, founded in 1899, and the  
Presbyterian Historical Society of England, founded in 1913)

EDITORS: Revd. Dr. R. BUICK KNOX and  
Dr. CLYDE BINFIELD, M.A.

Volume 2, No. 10 October 1982

CONTENTS

Editorial . . . . .	321
Some Eighteenth-Century Welsh Hymnwriters by <i>Pennar Davies, B.Litt., Ph.D.</i> . . . . .	322
Henry Barrowe's "A True Description..." 1589; A copy found at Cheshunt College by <i>Stephen C. Orchard, M.A., Ph.D.</i> . . . . .	330
Peter Sterry, the Millennium and Oliver Cromwell by <i>Nabil I. Matar, M.A., Ph.D.</i> . . . . .	334
George Gilbert's Preaching Diary for 1784 and 1785 by <i>Neil S. Caplan, M.A., M.Litt.</i> . . . . .	343
Thomas Gasquoine and the Origins of the Leicester Conference by <i>Mark D. Johnson, B.A., Ph.D.</i> . . . . .	345
Reviews by <i>F.G. Healey and P. Buick Knox</i> . . . . .	354

EDITORIAL

Dr. Pennar Davies's paper was delivered at Bristol on 17 May 1982 as the Society's annual lecture. We are delighted to remedy in this way what might in recent issues have appeared to be a Welsh-shaped gap. Further remedy came later in the year with the weekend school held at Trevecca from 17 to 19 September. Future issues will benefit from this. We welcome as a contributor Dr. Johnson of the University of Toronto whose paper reminds us that the Leicester Conference was not just a minor doctrinal rumble or a denominational local difficulty, and we welcome further contributions from Mr. Caplan and from Dr. Matar of the American University, Beirut. The contributions of Mr. Caplan and Dr. Johnson are useful reminders of the role of archive collections. George Gilbert's diary is now lodged with the East Sussex Record Office and Thomas Gasquoine's reminiscence is now at Dr. Williams's Library, with the Congregational Library collection. County Record Offices also welcome evidence of another kind. One of our members, Mr. M. Allinson, has deposited two volumes of photographs with the West Yorkshire Record Office at Wakefield. These illustrate twenty-three churches (all of them formerly Congregational) in the Huddersfield and Halifax District of the Yorkshire Province of the United Reformed Church: eight of these churches are now closed. No district can afford to take its chapel interiors, exteriors or fittings for granted and it is to be hoped that Mr. Allinson's example is followed elsewhere.

## SOME EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY WELSH HYMNWRITERS

What is sometimes called the earliest hymn in the Welsh language, that is, the earliest extant original hymn, is, if I may thus render its first line, "Hail, Glorious Lord"<sup>1</sup>, an invitation to all things in earth and in heaven, in nature and in culture, to bless God. It is preserved in a thirteenth-century manuscript, the Black Book of Carmarthen. There is, of course, an abundance of religious verse in the Welsh Middle Ages, but the contents of this particular piece suggest that it was meant for church use. From the fourteenth century on the poetry that enjoyed most prestige was written in the strict metres, but in Reformation times the riming metres current in Europe came to be accepted as appropriate for religious communication and worship. Richard Gwyn or White<sup>2</sup>, the Elizabethan Roman Catholic martyr, and Morgan Llwyd<sup>3</sup>, the mystical Puritan of Commonwealth times, both made modest use of these "free metres" to convey their beliefs, but it was Rhys Prichard<sup>4</sup>, the "Vicar" Prichard, Anglican and Royalist but puritanically inclined in his views of the Sabbath and Christian morals, who made prodigious use of riming verses to reach the people. Protestantism brought a demand for metrical psalms. Attempts to supply the demand by rendering the Psalms in the strict metres - notably that of the gentleman bard William Middleton<sup>5</sup>, soldier and sea-dog - were doomed to failure. Notable and permanent success in the free metres was the lot of the Welsh poet and humanist Edmwnd Prys<sup>6</sup> using mainly a sweet and very Welsh stanza (since known as "Mesur Salm", Psalm Metre), with feminine rimes eked out with internal rimes. His Psalms have been frequently reprinted since their first publication in 1621.

Early in the eighteenth century there were some who felt the need to supplement the Psalms with doctrinal or devotional hymns. Thomas Baddy<sup>7</sup> of Wrexham, an Independent minister at Denbigh, published a few hymns in 1703, but they have not appealed to the compilers of hymn books, partly because of a certain quaintness and partly because his way of expressing a doctrine no longer seems quite dignified, as when in using juridical symbolism to proclaim the Atonement he speaks of Christ as our lawyer. Hymns by James Owen<sup>8</sup> were published in 1705, and among them was an exquisite communion hymn which is still used. In 1710 a new edition of the Welsh Book of Common Prayer was

- 
1. Thomas Parry (ed.), *The Oxford Book of Welsh Verse* Oxford, 1962, pp17-18.
  2. Richard Gwyn or White (martyred 1584): T.H. Parry-Williams, *Carolau Richard White* Cardiff, 1931.
  3. Morgan Llwyd (1619-59): *Gweithiau*, ed. T.E. Ellis and J.H. Davies, Bangor, 1899 and 1908; E. Lewis Evans, *Morgan Llwyd* Liverpool, 1930; Hugh Bevan, *Morgan Llwyd y Llenor* Cardiff, 1954; Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *The Welsh Saints 1640-1660* Cardiff, 1957.
  4. Rhys Prichard (1579?-1644): D.J. Gwenallt Jones, *Y Fficer Prichard* Caernarfon, 1946.
  5. William Middleton (c.1550-1600): G.J. Williams (ed.) *Barddoniaeth neu Brydyddiaeth gan William Middleton* Cardiff, 1930.
  6. Edmwnd (Edmund) Prys (1544-1623): A. Owen Evans, *The Life and Work of Edmwnd Prys* Carmarthen, 1923.
  7. Thomas Baddy (d.1729): *D.W.B.*, s.n. Baddy, Thomas.
  8. James Owen (1654-1706): *D.W.B.*, s.n. Owen, James.

edited by the cleric Ellis Wynne,<sup>9</sup> author of the mordantly satirical prose classic *Gweledigaethu y Bardd Cwsc* ("Visions of the Sleeping Bard"), and he added a fine hymn on Christ as the Resurrection and the Life. Together with a few other hymns he wrote also two Christmas morning carols.

It was of course the Evangelical Revival that made the eighteenth century the golden age of the hymn (though in England it had been preceded by Isaac Watts). In Wales the supreme figure in this aspect of its influence was William Williams of Pantycelyn, but the pioneer was Daniel Rowland,<sup>10</sup> one of the two Welsh great awakeners. The other, Howel Harris,<sup>11</sup> may well have lacked the patience to be a committed hymnwriter, though he certainly wrote some hymns and is credited with the Welsh version of Thomas Ken's famous doxology, "Praise God from Whom all blessings flow". Rowland began publishing hymns in 1740 but eventually yielded the palm to Williams. His own hymns, though not suitable for congregational use, have their value in private meditation and devotion (as those which reflect on the prophets and the apostles and dwell on Christ's sufferings on the Cross). Although as a hymnwriter he in one sense failed, his hymns and his other writings have a theological importance which has never been fully recognised, for, rejecting Harris's tendency to patristicism, he insists on the reality of Christ's sufferings and temptations "from the manger to the Cross" and both contrasts and connects the Cry of Dereliction with the desperate condition of the sinner whose alienation from God is so extreme that he does not cry to Him at all.

"Pantycelyn", as Williams<sup>12</sup> is, more frequently than not, called in Wales, would have been, quite apart from his hymns, a considerable literary figure. He has been called by Saunders Lewis "the first Romantic poet in Europe" - a view which would depend, of course, on one's definition of Romanticism and on the degree of significance which one would attach to the affinity between the Evangelical Revival and the Romantic in respect of emphasis on feeling and imagination and soul. In addition to the hymns he wrote a history of religion throughout the world, works of spiritual counselling which make him with Rousseau a pioneer of modern psychology, and two long poems which have sometimes been inappropriately called "epics". Of these, one, *Golwg ar Deyrnas Crist* (A View of Christ's Kingdom) is an attempt to capture the Newtonian universe for the Crucified; the other, *Theomemphus*, presents a spiritual pilgrimage, largely Williams's own, and partakes of the nature both of an allegory and of a novel in verse. As evangelist and organiser he did much to establish the tradition of the *seiat*, the confessional or experiential meeting of the converted. But for most Welshmen he is above all a hymnwriter. He wrote over

- 
9. Ellis Wynne (1671-1734): Gwyn Thomas, *Y Bardd Cwsc a'i Gefndir* Cardiff, 1971.
  10. Daniel Rowland (1713-90): D.J. Odwyn Jones, *Daniel Rowland, Llangeitho* Llandysul, 1938.
  11. Howel Harris (1714-73): Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *Howel Harris: The Last Enthusiast* Cardiff, 1965; Gomer M. Roberts, *Portread o Ddiwygiwr* Caernarfon, 1969.
  12. William Williams (1717-91), Pantycelyn: Saunders Lewis, *Williams Pantycelyn* 1927; Gomer M. Roberts, *Y Pêr Ganiedydd* Aberystwyth, 1949 and 1958.

eight hundred hymns in Welsh and over a hundred and twenty in English. They came out in parts and collections bearing the titles *Aleluia* (Alleluia), 1744-7, *Hosanna i Fab Dafydd* (Hosanna to the Son of David), 1751-4, *Caniadau y Rhai sydd ar y Môr o Wydr* (Songs of Those who are on the Sea of Glass), 1762 - a collection which contains much that expresses the joy and comfort of the Methodist movement after the healing of the rift between Rowland and Harris — *Ffarwel Weledig, Groesaw Anweledig Bethau* (Farewell, Things Seen, Welcome those Unseen), 1763-9 and *Gloria in Excelsis*, 1771-2.

It is difficult to convey the power and splendour of the best of Pantycelyn's Welsh hymns. The English version of one of them, "Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah", makes a dramatic hymn — though the too lusty tune *Cwm Rhondda* obscures its words and images — but it differs greatly from the original — for which we may both blame and thank the translators, Peter Williams and Pantycelyn himself or his son John. The missionary hymn associated with the launching of the London Missionary Society, "O'er the gloomy hills of darkness", was originally written in English. Despite their virtues these give little indication of the riches and the range of Pantycelyn's work. It should be remembered too that whereas both Watts and Wesley were masters of the English poetic diction of the age of Pope and Johnson, Williams had virtually to create his own Welsh diction, for the banning of the language from public use and the transference of patronage from one culture to another had, despite the boon of an admirable Welsh Bible and the work of scholars and poets and some prose writers of genius, inevitably impoverished the tradition. The eighteenth century brought the beginnings of a neo-classical movement to rescue the heritage of Welsh poetry in the strict metres, but this gave Williams no help. He it was, therefore, who fashioned the style of Welsh hymnography and he was almost too successful, for his followers tended to use his phrases and mannerisms. He had his obvious faults. He was by no means fastidious as artist or as theologian. He shared with other leaders of the Evangelical Revival an otherworldly emphasis on eschatology, only partly modified by the missionary hope, a much poorer eschatology than that of some of the Reformation Radicals or Commonwealth Puritans. He could picture the Christian as a "pilgrim" in a "barren land" while he enjoyed comparative comfort in his home and took an active interest in the sales of his hymn collections. But all this does not detract from the inestimable worth of what he gave us.

We cannot but respond to the variety and intensity of the words and imagery by which he shows forth the glory of heaven and the fervour of the saints' longing for it. He has to use earthly terms, sky and sea, height and depth, minutes and ages, and yet he gives a certainty that the Unseen transcends all the symbols he can muster. He vividly expresses the evangelical experience and the sense of the nearness of the Immeasurable to the lowly soul. He communicates rapture and wonderment. The love of Christ is central for him, and some of the most beautiful of his hymns are love-poems to Jesus. Here we have the same Christ-mysticism as we find in the followers of Bernard of Clairvaux. He uses

words like “anwylyd” and “priod” which happen to be usable in a way that their English equivalents “darling” and “spouse” no longer are. One of his loveliest hymns delights in the gently, soothing, winning voice of Jesus, the voice which is yet mighty enough to reduce to silence all the sounds of the universe. In another he pictures Jesus as the mounted Knight, the Conqueror of the creation, liberating the unnumbered captives whose rejoicing hosts pour forth like the tide of the sea. And in all this his psychological discernment comes to light in verses which speak of covering his sins from the sight not only of God but of the people and pray that his passions may become like harpists making music to the name of Jesus.

Not among Methodists and Anglicans alone is Morgan Rhys<sup>13</sup> often regarded as second only to Williams, and it has been argued by the Archbishop of Wales<sup>14</sup> that his best known hymns are more frequently and consistently sung than any others. He was one of the teachers in the “circulating schools” of Gruffydd Jones, Llanddowror, and one of the most successful. This was a remarkable literacy campaign which aroused the interest of Catherine the Great of Russia who appointed a commissioner to report on it — and did nothing to improve the prospects of the Russian serfs. For Rhys as for Gruffydd Jones the main purpose of the enterprise was to promote Christian faith and service. Morgan Rhys published hymns in a small volume in 1755, and even slimmer booklets followed. In him again we find a great love for Jesus Christ — Friend, Brother, Redeemer, Beloved, Spouse, Son of man, Saviour of the lost, Physician to the sick, King of Eternity. The longing for heaven is counter-balanced by something more than a missionary hope for saving souls for joy in the hereafter, by an eager desire for the conquest of evil on earth and the descent of the New Jerusalem to gladden the hearts of its inhabitants — the Jubilee, he says, of God’s chosen who are co-heirs with the Lamb. In his best verses there is an unsurpassed joining together of strength, grace and dignity.

The word “dignity” is less appropriate in speaking of the two Dafydds, Dafydd Jones<sup>15</sup> of Caeo and Dafydd William<sup>16</sup> of Llandeilo Fach. In some sense they were two inspired simpletons who could both reach splendid heights and who may be instructively compared and contrasted.

In some ways Dafydd Jones may be said to have belonged to the class of the *bardd gwlad*, the country poetry or folk poet, a vigorous species which has flourished in Welsh-speaking Wales and is even now far from being extinct. He regarded even the buying of a pair of boots as an occasion for rimed verse, and he could take his muse with him on his honeymoon. A farmer and a drover, he made successful journeys into England. Once, on a return journey, he heard

- 
13. Morgan Rhys (1716-79): Gomer M. Roberts, *Morgan Rhys, Llanfynydd Caernarfon*, 1951.
  14. G.O. Williams, “Morgan Rhys”, in *Gwŷr Llên y Ddeunawfed Ganrif* ed. Dyfnallt Morgan, Swansea, 1966.
  15. Dafydd Jones (1711-77): Gomer M. Roberts, *Dafydd Jones o Gaeo* Aberystwyth, 1948
  16. Dafydd William (1720-94): Gomer M. Roberts, *Dafydd William, Llandeilo Fach Llandysul*, 1954.

the sound of singing as he came near the Independent chapel at Troedrhwdalar. He entered the service and experienced his conversion. Soon he became a well-known character in the Independent chapel at Crug-y-bar. A good sermon could move him to tears of pity or of penitence or to holy laughter. Visiting ministers begged him to undertake the translation of the hymns of Isaac Watts, and he did so creditably. He does not always match the quality of his original. His rendering of "There is a land of pure delight" makes a good hymn but does not capture the loveliness of one of Watts's triumphs. On the other hand, he does ample justice to "Jesus shall reign" and "Sweet is the work, my God and King". Versions of ten hymns by Philip Doddridge are included with the three hundred and thirteen renderings from Watts in the collection published in 1775. In the meantime Dafydd Jones had been inspired to write his own hymns and these were published in parts under the general title *Difyrrwch i'r Pererinion* (The Pilgrims' Delight). In the best of these we have his own distinctive and cherished contribution. The proclamation of the Gospel is for him an invitation to a feast, and this is why his hymn of welcome to the poor and the lame and the blind in the marriage feast of the King's Son is particularly felicitous. His emphasis, despite all affliction and temptation, is upon the joy and indeed the merriment of fellowship in the Good News. His simplicity is wedded to a delicate artistry, as in his winsome Christmas song "Dewch, frodyr, un fryd" (Come, brethren of one accord) and his praise of the heavenly City, "Caersalem, dinas hedd" (Salem, city of peace). In an age when Welsh enthusiasm was not averse to piling symbols and images one on top of another Dafydd Jones had an artist's eye and ear and conscience.

Dafydd William of Llandeilo Fach is very different. In spite of the fact that his collection is entitled *Gorfoledd ym Mhebyll Seion* (Joy in the Tents of Zion) his own troubles become apparent. His wife, who kept a tavern, had no use for her husband's Methodist piety; and he found himself rejected by his fellow-Methodists on the grounds of his sinful failure to keep her in order. He joined the Baptists. The Welsh Baptists honoured him in 1910 by erecting a monument in his native village. Despite his marital misfortunes, or perhaps because of them, he was drawn to the marriage symbol, as is shown in his poem "Silo a Seion" in which he celebrates the joyous union between Shiloh (Christ) and Zion (the Church). In one of his hymns he rebukes taunting "Unbelief" and bids her leave him alone and be silent — an altercation which seems to echo a dispute between Dafydd and his wife. His most famous hymn, "Yn y dyfroedd mawr a'r tonnau" (In the great waters and the waves), has a story attached to it of how, locked out by his wife, Dafydd found refuge in a cowshed near the river on a stormy night and feared that he might be drowned in the rising flood. The hymn, which declares that Christ will hold him up in the waters, owes something to the Jordan symbol for death. There is no doubting the passion and the joy of those hymns in which fear and uncertainty have been banished and the trusting soul beholds the glory of the blest. A certain amount of rhetorical repetition of a word or phrase is characteristic of the style of the Welsh hymns of the period, but in Dafydd William it is sometimes carried to

to excess. Words like "Hosanna" and "Aleluia" and "rhyfeddol" (wonderful) are repeated in this way, or there may be a succession of short sentences beginning with a word like "Spirit" — the Spirit healing the broken heart, the Spirit raising the dead to life, the Spirit making a rumbuling and a shaking among the dry bones. A well-loved hymn tells of "the breezes of Mount Zion" fanning heavenly fire and giving strength and courage, and inspiring song after song on the pilgrims' way to the hill for which they yearn. Even though we smile at the occasional lack of restraint we cannot but marvel with Dafydd William at the "news" which he says "brought him to his feet".

Another Baptist, and one whose Baptist roots ran deeper, is Benjamin Francis<sup>17</sup> who wrote hymns in Welsh and in English. He was the son of the zealous Welsh Baptist preacher Enoch Francis. Educated at the Broadmead Academy in Bristol he spent his life ministering in Gloucestershire at Sodbury and Horsley. He wrote a longish poem in English on the end of the world, *The Conflagration* (1770), and some English hymns which the compilers of hymn-books seem to have ignored. Of his one hundred and ninety eight Welsh hymns, hymns of common worship rather than evangelical experience, with emphasis on the Sabbath, the Church and the sanctuary, the best known is one which takes as its theme the way of the Cross, the way that the Christian must follow. It speaks, quaintly, both of following the Shepherd and of following the Lamb.

The Welsh-born Wesleyan preacher Thomas Olivers<sup>18</sup> has on the strength of one marvellous hymn and a share in the shaping of two splendid tunes, not by any means his own, gained a securer niche than Francis. John Wesley, forgetting for the moment the work of Harri Llwyd in South Wales, said that he was his only Welsh-speaking preacher. It was Olivers who wrote that most Hebraic of Christian hymns, "The God of Abraham praise", much praised by James Montgomery for its "majestic style", "elevated thought" and "glorious imagery". He adapted the tunes Leoni (supplied to him by the Jewish chorister of that name and possibly an old Jewish tune) and Helmsley (an old melody, perhaps English, which he is said to have heard whistled in the street).

With John Thomas<sup>19</sup> of Rhaedr Gwy (Rhayader) we are back in the world of the Welsh Revival. He wrote not only some hymns of enduring value but the first spiritual autobiography in Welsh (if we regard Pantycelyn's *Theomemphus* as more of an allegory or a work of fiction), *Rhad Ras* (Free Grace), published in 1810, perhaps after his death. The title invites a comparison with Bunyan's *Grace Abounding*, but the two men differ greatly. Thomas's book is of equal psychological interest. He seems to have been an unwanted child from the beginning, probably illegitimate, hated by his brothers and sisters and virtually rejected by his parents at a time of desperate poverty. His early years were troubled by convulsions and religious fears. In early adolescence he was converted

17. Benjamin Francis (1734-99): *D.W.B.* sn. Francis, Benjamin.

18. Thomas Olivers (1725-99): *D.W.B.* s.n. Oliver(s), Thomas.

19. John Thomas (1730-1804 or later): Guto Prys ap Gwynfor, "John Thomas, Rhaeadr Gwy", in *Bwletin Cymdeithas Emynau Cymru*, December 1981.

under the preaching of Howel Harris. He divided his time between preaching with the Methodists and teaching in Gruffydd Jones's schools, but he became minister at Rhaeadr and neighbouring Congregational churches in 1761. He translated short works by Bunyan and Romaine and wrote religious pamphlets in addition to *Caniadau Sion* (Songs of Zion), the collection of his hymns. Among the finest pieces above his name in the hymnaries are an invocation to God in worship and a worthy paraphrase of the prophecy in Isaiah and Micah of the lifting up of Mount Zion as the centre for the unity and faith of mankind.

A full account of Welsh hymnwriting in the eighteenth century would not only have to do more justice to the names already mentioned but would also have to take note of the brothers John and Morgan Dafydd, Maurice Dafydd, Thomas Dafydd, David Davies of Swansea, Morris Griffiths of Llangloffan, George Lewis, Siarl Marc, Dafydd Morys, Edward Parry, Josiah Rees, John Williams of St. Athan's and John Williams (Siôn Singer).<sup>20</sup> There are also, of course, names which bridge the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; and it should be borne in mind that some hymns first published in the nineteenth may very well have been written and used in the eighteenth. The present study seeks to do no more than give an impression of the riches of Welsh hymnography in the century of the Evangelical Revival, riches unsuspected by many outside Wales and insufficiently appreciated within Wales; and it concludes with a glimpse of a hymnwriter who is unique not only in Wales but in Christendom.

And so we return to Ann Griffiths,<sup>21</sup> whose home, Dolwar Fach in Maldwyn (Montgomeryshire), has become more of a place of pilgrimage than Pantycelyn itself and whose peerless sheaf of hymns is coming to be studied outside Wales. She has been called "y danbaid, fendigaid Ann", "Ann the blazing and the blest". As a girl Ann Thomas was lively and high-spirited and fond of dancing, and inclined to mock the solemnity of Dissenters; but at about the age of twenty she experienced conversion under the preaching of a Welsh Independent minister, Benjamin Jones, and with a deep sense of sin and need and the judgement of the Eternal she joined a Methodist fellowship. In her home she became the warm friend of the servant-girl Ruth Evans. She took to expressing her Christ-centred vision in verses which she fashioned as she milked the cows or worked at the spinning wheel or walked to and from the parish church where she received communion. She would recite her hymns to Ruth and ask her to sing them. It is to Ruth's good memory that we owe their preservation. Ann married a nearby farmer, Thomas Griffiths, in 1804. Ten months later she gave birth to a baby who died after two weeks of life, and she herself died a fortnight later in her thirtieth year. Ruth married the Methodist preacher John Hughes, Pontrobert, and it was he who published Ann's hymns of which we have about seventy verses.

Some have unhesitatingly placed Ann among the world's mystics. W.J.

20. For these, see *D.W.B.*

21. Ann Griffiths (1776-1805): A.M. Allchin, *Ann Griffiths* Cardiff, 1976. Bobi Jones in *Pedwar Emynydd* Llandybie, 1970, provides the text of her hymns and discusses the view of other critics. See also chapter 4 of A.M. Allchin's *The Kingdom of Love and Knowledge* 1979.



Gruffydd said that she used mystical language, and it is true that her verses are full of the Welsh equivalents of "mystery", "wonder", "way", "perception", "unity", "recognition", "purifying", "swimming", "merging into the Godhead", "Giver of being". He sees in her also an agapetic submission to Christ, expressing itself in language borrowed from the Song of Songs. Saunders Lewis emphasises the sheer intellectual power of her acknowledgment of the Transcendent, and finds her mind like Plato's. Canon A.M. Allchin seems to follow both these interpretations and says, "There was that combination of intellectual vision and heartfelt longing in her which we find in nineteenth-century France in a Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity, in sixteenth-century Spain in a St Theresa of Avila". On the other hand, T.H. Parry-Williams remarked that she had had an evangelical conversion and partook of the same experience as her fellow-Methodists. J.R. Jones after seeing in her the mystical quest after unity of being was driven to acknowledge that she also had her Calvinistic side. Bobi Jones who once repudiated the idea that she was guilty of anything so unevangelical as mysticism has come round to saying that her mysticism moved within the discipline of Calvinistic thought. In a novel Rhiannon Davies Jones has provided an imaginary diary in which it is suggested that the agapetic element in Ann's experience had its beginnings in a thwarted human love.

There is in Ann Griffiths's hymns a great wealth of Biblical allusion and imagery — the way, the ark, the tree, the Rose of Sharon, the pool of Bethesda, the spikenard, waters to swim in, the river that could not be passed over, he whose fan is in his hand, following after the reapers, the golden sceptre, the golden girdle, the golden bells and the pomegranates. All these and more are used to glorify the Christ in whom the Giver of Being the Disposer and Sustainer of all things, is joined to our human clay. Helpless in the manger or wandering the earth with no place where he can lay his head, the Eternal reigns. The Incarnation is the miracle of miracles for Ann Griffiths, a fact in history but also an everlasting and universal truth. To express it she resorts to striking paradoxes — "He strengthened the arms of his executioners as they nailed him to the cross", "The whole creation moved within him as he lay dead in the tomb", "They put the Author of Life to death and buried the mighty Resurrection". That Ann passed through a Dark Night of the Senses admits of no doubt. She knew the Dark Night of the Soul too. She said that the path she had taken was altogether contrary to the way her nature would have led her — a path undiscerned by the eye of the hovering kite. But she found herself in the fellowship of the mystery revealed in his wound and she kissed the Son to eternity, never to forsake him more.<sup>22</sup>

PENNAR DAVIES

22. Here, in addition to the numbered references is a selection of works relating to this subject. H. Elvet Lewis's *Sweet Singers of Wales* (?1899) is somewhat out-dated, but Evan Isaac's *Prif Emynwyr Cymru* (Liverpool, 1925) is still useful, and John Thickers's *Emynau a'u Hawduriad* (Caernarfon, 1927) as revised and amplified by Gomer M. Roberts (1961) is indispensable. The *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*, edited by J.E. Lloyd and R.T. Jenkins (1959), gives further references. There are also denominational histories, including R. Tudur Jones, *Hanes Annibynwyr Cymru* (Swansea, 1966), T.M. Bassett, *Bedyddwyr Cymru* (Swansea, 1977), and Gomer M. Roberts (ed.), *Hanes Methodistiaeth Galfinaidd Cymru*, Vols.1-2 (Caernarfon, 1973, 1978). Thomas Parry's *A History of Welsh Literature* (as translated by H. Idris Bell) (Oxford, 1955) provides the literary background.

## HENRY BARROWE'S "A TRUE DESCRIPTION ....." 1589

*A copy found at Cheshunt College, Cambridge.*

The manuscript consists of three folded sheets of foolscap, sewn together as a six-page booklet, the outer sheet being torn and smeared with ink, but in any case blank. The text itself is quite clear, though liquid has caused the ink to run at the corner of the first page. It is headed, in the top right-hand corner above the text,

A true description out of the word  
of God of the visible church 1589

Scripture references are given in the margin throughout, and in the first paragraphs they are noted in the text by the use of bracketed minuscules. The Ely diocesan archivist, Mrs Owen, considered the hand late sixteenth century, contemporary with the text itself. The manuscript was found in an old filing case, now at Westminster College with the rest of the Cheshunt archive, labelled "Mss papers N.T. various".

The printed editions of this text are discussed by L.H. Carlson in *The*

- (i) There existed a mss. copy of the text seen by Richard Alison before 1589 and used by him in his *A plaine confutation.....*
- (ii) Two copies of the first edition, quarto Dort 1589 are to be found in Lambeth Palace library.
- (iii) A further copy in Lambeth Palace library was published in Amsterdam at the instigation of Arthur Billet; the order of paragraphs has been rearranged to represent a sterner view of excommunication.
- (iv) Copies of a third edition, Amsterdam c1604, are to be found in the British Museum and the H.M. Dexter collection at Yale; they too follow Billet's rearranged text.<sup>2</sup>

The Cheshunt mss agrees with Alison and the first editions in the order of the paragraphs. It agrees with the first edition in eight cases of minor differences in words and their order against the Amsterdam editions, disagreeing with both in three instances. Its scripture references correspond with the first edition, including the mistaken references corrected in the Amsterdam editions. It does not agree with any of Alison's differences against the first edition. We can therefore consider the mss in its relation to the first edition, for it must be either a copy of the first edition or a mss copy in circulation before the printing. It seems to be in far too good order to be either Barrowe's original mss or the printer's copy.

The general form of the mss text enables us to propose the alternatives above. The more important points of comparison between the mss and the first

---

1. *The writings of Henry Barrowe*, Elizabethan Non-Conformist texts, vol.III, 1962, ed. L.H. Carlson. The first edition text is there given in full.
2. The text of the Amsterdam edition is given in Williston Walker *The Creeds and Platforms of Congregationalism*, New York, 1893, and published in paperback by The Pilgrim Press, 1960. Walker gives references for H.M. Dexter's earlier work on the text.

edition text, on which a conclusion might be based are as follows:

Para. "Most joyful, excellent...."

1st ed. "...the spring shut up, the sealed fountaine,

*mss* "...*the spring shut up,*  
the orchyard of pomgranades..."  
*the orchard of pomgranates ...*"

Para. "And surely if this church..."

1st ed. "...obedient, faithfull and loving people..."

*mss* "...*obedient* and *faithfull people...*"

Para. "Their elders must be ..."

1st ed. "of maners sober, temperate, modest,

*mss* "...*of manners sober*  
gentle and loving, etc."  
*gentle, modest, loving &c.*"

Para. "The pastor's office..."

1st ed. "... give warning to the church, that they may

*mss* "...*give order to the church, that they may*  
orderly proceed..."  
*orderly proceed...*"

Para. "And if the fault be private, private ..."

1st ed. "... whom he knoweth most meete to that purpose..."

*mss* "... *whome he knoweth most fitte for that purpose...*"

There are other minor differences, and many in spelling, including a preference for "decon" in the *mss* and a general use of *y* for the printed *ie*. Such differences are to be accounted for by transmission of printed text to writing or vice versa, but the instances of omission above suggest strongly that the *mss* is either a copy of the printed text, or a copy of that text which was subsequently printed.

One very minor difference of some interest in the interpretation of the text, is the placing of a comma in the paragraph on excommunication.

If this prevail not to draw him to repentance, then are they in the name and power of the Lord Jesus with the whole congregation, reverently in prayer to proceed to excommunication,....

The classic question on this passage is "Who are they?". Possible answers are, the church officers; the small group who have counselled the reprobate; or the church itself; the latter being most likely both from the context, and Barrowe's view of church polity. But if we assume "they" are the church we have to deal with the apparent distinction between the church and the congregation. The *mss* omits "are they" and transfers the comma after "congregation" to follow<sup>2</sup> "prayer". This arrangement requires "the church" of the preceding paragraph to continue as the subject of the verb, but amplifies this as "the whole congregation reverently in prayer". A man may only be cast out of the "covenant and protection of the Lord" when he is excommunicated from the praying "con-

gregation and fellowship" which have met in that covenant. Even if this interpretation is unacceptable, the transfer of the comma may still be felt to improve the reading of the sentence.

This leads on to another question. In all the texts the paragraph beginning the section on church discipline does not read well.

1st ed: And if the fault be private, private, holy and loving admonition and reproofe, with an inward desire and earnest care to winne their brother:

But if he will not heare thee, yet to take two or three other brethren with him, whome he knoweth most meete to that purpose, ...

The Amsterdam editions are sensitive to this point and make some attempt to tidy up. They omit the repeated "private", and so miss the distinction between private and public offences which Barrowe made insofar as the admonition is concerned. They then add "is to be used" after "reproofe" and omit "thee" after "heare". Even then the sentence is unhappy. The mss, while it follows the 1st edition, is betrayed into its sole erasure in the whole work, writing "thee" for "him", and then altering that to "him" to correspond with the text. The text would read better if this "thee" stood. The sense would then be that "you the counsellor are to take with you a few members of the church whom the reprobate himself will own as suitable to admonish him."

The question all this confusion raises is whether Barrowe has here incorporated material from another work, such as a pastoral manual. The identity of "thee" here, and of "they" in the other paragraph we have discussed, might be clearer in some original context. It might also be seen that Billet's re-arrangement of the paragraphs, as well as presenting a sterner view of excommunication, represents an attempt to clarify the "private" — "public" distinction, *pace* the remarks about the repeated "private". By placing the paragraph 'All this notwithstanding....' before the excommunication, Billet has related it to private offences, and so avoided some of the uncertainty created by Barrowe's brief paragraph on public offences, notably in the words, "to proceed to excommunication ut supra." In short to what extent were the various modifications made between editions governed by the difficulties of syntax, as well as doctrine, and were these difficulties created by Barrowe, in his attempt to splice two different texts?

Finally, we must consider the scripture references. We have already noted the corrections made to these in the Amsterdam editions. The mss supplies several references not to be found in the 1st edition. Of these the most interesting are after the paragraph "If the offence be publique...", the mss giving Joshua 7:19, 2[O] and [2] Cor 7:9, as in the Amsterdam editions; and, more importantly, the references following the paragraph "Their doctor or teacher..." correspond with those of the Amsterdam edition, the 1st edition having no references whatever. This omission may have arisen on account of the transition from using notes in the text to placing notes after each paragraph, a change

which takes place at this point.<sup>3</sup> It may be that the notes in the mss were made good, as it were, from the Amsterdam edition; but bearing in mind the placing of the minuscules in the text, which is certainly original, and the general agreement with the 1st edition notes, a more likely interpretation of the evidence of the notes is that the mss is a pre-printing copy. Such an interpretation is not at variance with the other differences we have noticed, though they tend to argue more for the manuscript being a copy of the printed edition.

Our conclusions therefore are that the Cheshunt mss is closely akin to the first printed edition, and a witness with Alison to the ordering of paragraphs that edition adopts; and that while it is not Barrowe's manuscript, it may be a mss copy in circulation before the appearance of the printed edition. And by noting the sole correction we have reopened the question of the original form of the *Description*.

S.C. ORCHARD

---

3. *Vide* Carlson *op. cit.* p217, note 4 and Walker *op. cit.* p36, line 4.

## PETER STERRY, THE MILLENNIUM AND OLIVER CROMWELL

In July 1649, Peter Sterry went to reside at Whitehall as private chaplain to Oliver Cromwell, and remained in that position until the death of his patron in 1658. During that period, Sterry was in close touch with Cromwell, and played an important role in Interregnum politics and theology: whether he inspired Cromwell in prayer during and after crucial decisions had been taken, or helped bring about a more efficient ministry in England and Wales, or confirmed Cromwell's stand on the admission of the Jews to England, Sterry invariably supported his patron in times of political tension and religious doubt.

This sensitive position which Sterry occupied at Whitehall was overshadowed by the careers of more prominent divines like John Owen, Philip Nye and Thomas Goodwin who were also closely attached to Cromwell. Although these men were more involved in Cromwellian administration than Sterry, the latter became the target of continued attack and ridicule. From as early as 1652, and long after the restoration of the monarchy, Sterry was addressed in abusive terms, with descriptions ranging from sycophant and war monger, to mad millenarian and "Well flown Buzard."<sup>1</sup>

It is the purpose of this paper to present a defence of Sterry's career during the Interregnum and to examine how the interplay of religion and politics was instrumental in generating such hostility to Cromwell's chaplain.

While Cromwell was recruiting reliable administrators for the new regime — Milton was appointed Secretary of Foreign Tongues in March 1649 — he turned to Sterry who had been an active preacher since the mid 1640s. A close association between preacher and leader ensued, particularly in the area of millenarianism. For during the Interregnum, millenarianism proved one of Cromwell's and Sterry's strongest weapons, wielded offensively against early opposition, and later defensively against the Fifth Monarchy Men and the Republican followers of Thomas Harrison. With his theological scholarship, Sterry offered his patron an invaluable service towards the consolidation and defence of the new regime: by applying millenarian doctrine to political situations, Sterry explained Cromwell's conflict with zealous fanatics; and by portraying Cromwell as Christ, he provided an eschatological rationale for his patron's one-man government, and justified complete obedience to the ruler. As Milton praised Cromwell against foreign critics, so did Sterry defend his patron against internal dissenters and "mechanicks".

Such was Sterry's influence as a theologian of politics that in October 1652, a small pamphlet by David Brown appeared in London condemning an indecent act which had been committed in Sterry's church. Before describing this event, Brown seized the opportunity to attack chaplains like Sterry for their sycophantic interference in the civil affairs of England, and for their political sermons. In the "Prologue", Brown condemned the meddling in politics by preachers of Sterry's standing:

---

1. For a biography of Peter Sterry, see Vivian de Sola Pinto, *Peter Sterry, Platonist and Puritan* Cambridge, 1934; for attacks on Sterry, see note 30 below.

... all the warres of the three Nations were not only contrived by the speciall advice and means of the Lordly Preachers, who both lived in stately Palaces, and were the chief associates of Kings; but likewise all along these troubles, they while they had any power and authority remaining on their side, gave speciall directions, to their inferiour Preachers for blowing the bellows of the fire of contention.<sup>2</sup>

Brown continued by denouncing the power which these preachers had acquired during the Interregnum. Having abused the Bible in their self-serving interpretations, they had intimidated congregations and threatened to wield the sword of the magistrate against all those who dared challenge their errors:

...there was no man of whatsoever degree (who was then called a subject) throughout all the three Nations, that durst upon pain of life, yea and estate too, if he had any, oppose the meaneest of those clergymen.<sup>3</sup>

Clearly emotions were running high in London against powerful preachers like Sterry. The fact that Brown did not know Sterry personally, but had only heard about him, shows how notorious the Whitehall chaplain had become three years after taking up his post. Brown does not attack Sterry from any sectarian or ideological position: he is merely angered at the role that clergymen had played in the civil wars, and obviously continued to play in Interregnum politics. For Brown, Sterry represented the odious class of divines who had attached themselves to the bandwagon of political administration and had sacrificed all objective interpretations of the Scriptures for personal benefit.

Brown's attitude could be explained by Sterry's sermons between July 1649 and October 1652. On 5 November 1649, Sterry preached in thanksgiving for the victory at Drogheda, where he used millenarian calculations to justify the Cromwellian military assault; two years later his sermon in celebration of the victory at Worcester was even more steeped in millenarian lore and chronology. Sterry, like many of his contemporaries, was expecting the millennium to begin in the 1650s, and had come to regard Cromwell's military conquests as clear indications of the approaching eschaton. Brown must have treated such preaching not only as detrimental to peace, but as serving the growth of violent religio-political groups like the Fifth Monarchists; the millenarianism of influential Whitehall clergy like Sterry was giving a boost to revolutionary instability.<sup>4</sup>

What Brown, however, failed to realize, was that Sterry's political role was predicated on a theological premise. However much Sterry became involved in Cromwellian strategy, he remained motivated by a deep eschatological conviction that Christ's kingdom was imminent, and that Cromwell was its messianic herald. Sterry found no qualms in echoing Cromwell's ideas in his sermons, in

2. *The Naked Woman, or a Rare Epistle Sent to Mr. Peter Sterry Minister at Whitehall* 1652, prologue.

3. *Ibid.*

4. In *Ohel, or Bethshemesh* 1653, p. 223, John Rogers, a notorious Fifth Monarchist, praised Sterry for his millenarian calculations. Brown was not too wide of the mark.

generating views for Cromwell to include in his speeches, or in sharing his patron's perceptions of religious and political affairs. Cromwell's vision of England coincided with his. This is apparent in all of Sterry's Interregnum writings, particularly in those that present the transformations in his millenarian thinking. It is thus to his sermons and letters that one must turn to examine the exact nature of his cooperation with Cromwell, and to defend his career against the allegations of Brown and later critics.

The starting point for a consideration of Sterry's eschatology can be located in Robert Lord Brooke's *The Nature of Truth*, a treatise in which Sterry was thought to have participated. Brooke, along perhaps with his chaplain, attacked the writings of all millenarians, but expressed belief that the eschaton was near at hand.<sup>5</sup> Whether Sterry actually participated in the composition of this treatise or not is difficult to tell; it does, however, show some of the felicities that anticipate his later style, while his 1649 and 1651 sermons reveal his reliance on Brightman, who alone of all millenarians, is favourably viewed in the treatise.

The available writings of Peter Sterry from the mid 1640s to his appointment as Whitehall chaplain in 1649 consist of three Fast sermons. In none of these sermons did he address himself to the issue of millenarianism. Sterry, however, toed the Cromwellian line in his 1645 sermon by hoping for a reconciliation between Presbyterians and Independents;<sup>6</sup> he repeated this in his 1647 sermon, and like Cromwell, dismissed the Presbyterian insistence on ordinances, and condemned all millenarian calculations.<sup>7</sup> In his only sermon to the Peers in 1648, Sterry warned England to resolve all "Diversity" and "Uncertainty" of opinion.<sup>8</sup> Recalling the pessimistic tone of Cromwell's letters in that year, Sterry was afraid that God's wrath would soon fall upon them all. Although not yet employed by Cromwell, Sterry was clearly allied to the former's principles.

The favourable change in both Cromwell's and Sterry's attitudes towards millenarianism occurred between 1648-49. In letters written in November 1648, Cromwell reveals the shift towards millenarianism that was already taking place in his mind;<sup>9</sup> a year later, after the massacre of Drogheda, he wrote about the duel with the Papist antichrist which was to precede the rule of Jesus.<sup>10</sup> These

5. For Sterry's possible participation, see Pinto, *Peter Sterry*, p. 12; Robert Lord Brooke, *The Nature of Truth* 1640, p. 177.

6. Peter Sterry, *The Spirits Conviction of Sinne* London, 1645, p. 36; *The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, ed. W.C. Abbot, Cambridge, Harvard, 1939, vol. I, p.377.

7. *The Clouds in which Christ Comes* 1647 p.48.

8. *The Teachings of Christ in the Soul* 1648, A 3r, A 4v.

9. *The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, vol. I, pp. 677,699; For reference to the Jews' conversion, see Thomas Brightman, *A Most Comfortable Exposition of the Last and Most Difficult part of the Prophecie of Daniel .... Wherein the restoring of the Jews, and their calling to the faith of Christ, after the utter overthrow of their three last enemies is set forth in lively colours* 1644, pp. 299 ff.; see also the exchange between Robert Maton and Alexander Petree between 1642 and 1646. For the popularity of the Joachite interpretation of history, see chapter VI in *Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future* by Marjorie Reeves 1976.

10. *The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, vol. II, pp. 127-28.



factors were crucial in Sterry's change of attitude towards millenarianism: for on 5 November 1649, he passionately echoed Cromwell's elation, borrowed interpretations from John Owen's sermon of 19 April, and developed a "chronologie" derived from Brightman.<sup>11</sup> His residence at Whitehall, as well as the astounding victories of his patron, had convinced him of the imminent kingdom and the rule of the saints. Between 1648-49, Sterry completely revised his theological and political stand: a spiritualized interpretation of eschatology was transformed into an earthly millennium; the unwillingness to indulge in calculations was replaced by an enthusiasm to present the various theories that were bandied about by millenarians. If war and Cromwell were chosen by God to bring about His kingdom, then, Sterry believed, it was incumbent upon himself to prepare his congregation for this imminent transformation.

With its detailed references to dates and computations, Sterry's sermon stands out as one of the most consciously millennial of the Fast sermons in the 1640s. It was deliberately constructed to inspire hope in a victorious Cromwell, and to confirm the Independent ascendancy. It also echoed Cromwell's realization of the role that England was to play in bringing about the millennial reign over Ireland and Scotland. Sterry reflected the mood of Cromwell in power: no wonder that he used Hebrew more frequently than at any other time, as if the study of history could only be understood through the prophetic revelations of the Jews to the English Zion.

Meanwhile, and having extended his offensive into Scotland, Cromwell grew certain that his victories throughout the wars were heralds of the third dispensation in the Joachite chronology.<sup>12</sup> And the more hope there was in his success, the more pronounced preachers became about the imminent kingdom. Subsequently, on 9 September, less than a week after Dunbar, Sterry addressed a letter to his patron in which he drew a parallel between him and Christ, and between the latter's conquest over sin, and the former's victory over the Scottish army. Sterry was confident that the rule of the saints was being prepared by Cromwell's "resurrection" at Dunbar:

On that Thursday, and Friday all Mouthes were full of these reports, that it was impossible to engage the Scots, the Fluxe was amongst our Soldiers, the Army retreated, and would bee forcd to come backe for England with losse of Men, Money, Time, and Reputation. Thus the Sun seemed to bee gone backward upon our Dyall. But thus were wee brought low in our selves, that wee might trust in him, who raised our Lord Jesus from the Deade, that when Victory came, wee might Know, that it was the Lords, and that the Providence, and Power were of God. So on the very next Day, the Saturday, came the Glad Tydings, that the Lord had Justified his Servants, and the Worke of his Spirit in theyr hands.<sup>13</sup>

- 
11. *The Commings Forth of Christ* 1650, pp. 9ff. for Brightman, *The Revelation of Saint John* 1644, p. 325 and for borrowings from Owen's *The Shaking and Translating of Heaven and Earth* 1649, p.9.
  12. *The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, vol. II, pp. 235, 236.
  13. Holograph MS. at the Society of Antiquaries, London.

Dunbar had demonstrated God's favour to the Saints, and to their leader as His anointed. Although Cromwell was then frequently compared with Moses and David, Sterry could not but view his patron as the messianic king who would soon—in 1652 or 1656—establish the rule of Christ.<sup>14</sup> Having computed the dates of the millennium, the presentation of Cromwell as the messianic ruler was inevitable: not only did it demonstrate the accuracy of Sterry's calculations, but it ensured Cromwell theological support on the political front. Having become a well-known and quotable spokesman on millenarianism, Sterry pronounced on prophecies from within the framework of Cromwell's England.<sup>15</sup> Theology supported politics since God's revelations, for Sterry, occurred through the transformations that were coordinated in Whitehall.

Millenarian expectations continued at a feverish pace. After Worcester, on 28 October 1651, John Owen preached that all the desolation that had taken place in the country was an indication that Christ "was come forth into the world."<sup>16</sup> A few days later, on 5 November, Sterry also preached on the Cromwell victory. Like Owen, he turned to Thomas Brightman and to England's providential role in the defence of Protestantism. Furthermore, he urged the people to wait and prepare themselves for Christ's reign. Now that Cromwell had defeated his opponents, Sterry believed, Christ would come to reign from the "NORTH" as the victorious Cromwell himself would return to London from the Scottish north.<sup>17</sup>

The break with millenarian doctrine came in 1653/54, after Cromwell had dissolved the Barebones Parliament. This act reflected the agreement between Cromwell and his chaplains over the subversive potential in millenarian ideas. No wonder that the ensuing violent attacks from Fifth Monarchists like Vavasor Powell and George Cockayne were not only addressed against Cromwell, but also against "the great clergyman Baal's priests in England"—<sup>18</sup> a reference that doubtlessly included Sterry. Both Cromwell and Sterry were fully aware of millenarianism's dynamic nature; as long as they had been in opposition, millenarianism acted as their inspiration for action. In the wrong hands, however, it could lead to the Protectorate's overthrow.

In sermons, speeches and other writings, Sterry and Cromwell addressed themselves against millenarianism. In his imprimatur of 23 September 1653 to Nathanael Homes's *The Resurrection Revealed*, Sterry urged a spiritualized interpretation of the reign of Christ. No longer was he setting dates, and analy-

14. For Cromwell as David and as Moses, see Chapter IV of Frederick Plotkin, "Sighs from Zion: A Study of Radical Puritan Eschatology in England, 1640-1660," unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1966. For Cromwell and David specifically, see Joseph Anthony Mazzeo, *Renaissance and Seventeenth Century Studies* New York, pp. 207 ff.

15. Shortly after the publication of this sermon, Sterry was criticized in *A Brief Description of the future History of Europe* 1650, A 2v; see also note 4 above. Even in 1657, Sterry was still remembered for his millenarian zeal: see Thomas Hall, *Chiliasmo-Mastix* 1657, p.11.

16. *A Sermon Preached to the Parliament, Octob. 28, 1651* Oxford, 1652, A 2r, 9, 11.

17. *England's Deliverance from the Northern Presbytery* 1652, p.43.

18. *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic* (1653-54), pp. 304-307.

sing possibilities, but he was speaking of a "peaceable patient and joyful waiting for the coming of Christ."<sup>19</sup> Similarly in December of that year, when Cromwell found himself entangled with the Fifth Monarchist Christopher Feake, he turned to Sterry for aid in refuting him, and asked his chaplain to preach political "obedience, as the most necessary way to bring in the kingdom of Christ."<sup>20</sup> This latter part of 1653 can conveniently be treated as the period in which both Cromwell and Sterry turned their backs on millenarianism.

England, urged preacher and politician, had not yet reached its divinely inspired destination. The millennium could not yet begin because "the place of rest" towards which the English Israel was heading had not yet been reached, maintained Cromwell on 4 September 1654. Cromwell believed that such a delay resulted from the Jews' refusal to embrace Christianity--an event that would necessarily precede Christ's manifestation. In Autumn 1655, he convened a conference to consider the readmission of (wealthy) Jews to England. On meeting with heavy opposition from merchants and theologians alike, Cromwell pushed Sterry and his other powerful chaplains into the debate. Although no record exists of Sterry's statements during that conference, earlier references in his 1649 and 1651 sermons show that he regarded the Jews' conversion as a preparation for the eschaton. Indeed, he had maintained that their dispersion in America and their movement from central Europe to Palestine was leading to the millennial kingdom. Like his patron, Sterry relied heavily on Thomas Brightman, and although in 1655/56, he spoke no longer of a millennium, he confirmed Cromwell's view that the Jews' admission to England would hasten their conversion, which would make possible Christ's revelation.<sup>21</sup>

In the mid 1650s, Sterry continued to preach that the progress of the English saints towards the "Promis'd Land" not only would lead to a non-millennial "Heavenly Image" of the kingdom of Jesus, but would necessarily take place in slow stages.<sup>22</sup> Sterry repeated this Whitehall attitude against millenarianism in his private correspondence: one set of letters survives from him to his friend Morgan Llwyd, a Welsh millenarian, in which he tried to convince Llwyd of Cromwell's messianic role--an act that he successfully carried out by 1656. Indeed, in these letters, Sterry quietly suggested that Cromwell was the man of spirit who alone would herald the Joachite third dispensation:

As to the present Power, if wee bee yet ruled by man, after the Formes of Men, wee are of all nations the most wretched. But if by the Spirit, and Annoyntings of the most high, then is the Kingdome of God come downe into the midst of us.<sup>23</sup>

19. Nathanael Homes, *The Resurrection Revealed* 1654, A 1r.

20. Pinto, *Peter Sterry*, p. 29.

21. *The Commings Forth of Christ* 1650, pp. 11-12; *England's Deliverance*, pp. 36 ff.; Henry Jessey, *A Narrative of the late Proceedes at White-hall Concerning the Jews* 1656, p.6; Pinto, *Peter Sterry*, pp. 30-31.

22. This is from a fragment of a sermon on I Peter 4:1 preached after the "Nation" had changed from a "Monarchy to a Commonwealth" in *The Appearance of God to Man* 1710, pp. 397-405.

23. The MSS. are at the National Library of Wales. The quotation is in the letter of 23 July 1654, MS. 11439 D. Cf. Cromwell's words in *The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, vol. III, p. 590.

By winning Llwyd over to his side, Sterry succeeded in depriving the Welsh millenarian opposition of one of its leading figures.<sup>24</sup> Evidently, Sterry was apprehensive of the millenarian radicalism that inundated theological politics in England and Wales. Furthermore, he was slowly becoming aware that the messianic kingdom would not be in the future; evidence pointed to Cromwell as the man who had already fulfilled Christ's will. The eschatological kingdom was realised within England's saints: King Jesus need not vie with Cromwell.

In 1655/56, soon after Spain had grown to challenge the regime, Cromwell launched his navy against "the Roman Babylon, of which the Spaniard is the great underpopper."<sup>25</sup> The undertones of Brightman's writings had not really disappeared from Cromwell--especially when battles were at hand. Such an anti-Spanish religious sentiment was reaffirmed a year later in his address to Parliament on 17 September 1656. In his anger for receiving little support from Parliament, Cromwell accused the members of behaving in "a Laodicean spirit"--Brightman's and Sterry's words.<sup>26</sup>

At this critical time, Sterry again came to the support of his patron. The destruction of the Spanish treasure-fleet had proved to him the just cause of Protestantism over the Catholic and anti-Christ, of Cromwell over his enemies within and without. Apprehensive of the restlessness in Parliament and in the nation, Sterry proceeded to the defence of Cromwell, justifying the various political changes "as a fire, to take away the Dross from the Silver." Sterry recognized in Cromwell's action the essential demonstration of Christ's presence; Cromwell was in England as its messianic ruler: "Our King is come forth into our Land, not only to march through it with troupes, but to establish his throne here in Righteousness."<sup>27</sup>

In this sermon, Sterry showed to what extent eschatology was part of his intellectual and theological framework, as it also was for his patron. But the sense of millennial imminence which had earlier dominated his preaching, was controlled by the fear that political opposition aroused. Consequently, Sterry propounded the principle of a realised eschatology rather than of a future millennium. Cromwell was under attack: Sterry was at pains to demonstrate that his patron was the messianic king of England, "Bethseda, which signifies the House of Free Grace."<sup>28</sup> Being close to Cromwell, Sterry recognized the divine protection that had been afforded his patron: against many odds, Cromwell had overcome internal and external dissent, had miraculously escaped various assassination attempts, and had begun English hegemony over the three nations. For Sterry, such hegemony was not only politically important; it signalled the emergence of a unified kingdom of saints. This was proof enough that the realisation of Christ's kingdom had begun. The millenarian theology

24. See my "Peter Sterry and Morgan Llwyd," *J.U.R.C.H.S.*, Vol 2. No. 8 October 1981, pp. 275-78.

25. *The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, vol. IV, pp. 261 ff.

26. *Ibid.*, vol. IV, p. 276; Sterry, *England's Deliverance*, pp. 37 ff.

27. *The Way of God with his People in these Nations* 1656, Epistle Dedicatory; p. 26.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 47.

that had inspired Sterry earlier, was now bearing fruit in an eschatology realised by Cromwell throughout the land.

So Sterry monitored carefully the unfolding of England's destiny. And inevitably, he noted the transformation in the role that the saints were called upon to play: where earlier political unrest had necessitated millenarian aspirations, Cromwellian rule now demanded serious attention to the affairs of the spirit. The eschaton had been realised as a beginning to a long progress, a pilgrimage to the citizenship of God. Political agitation and the violent revolution of the saints must now come to an end. The proof that Christ had inaugurated His kingdom lay in Cromwell's rule; there was need neither for chronology nor for millennial expectations. Cromwellian messianism had confirmed the peaceable beginning of the third Joachite dispensation.

Sterry maintained this belief even after Cromwell's death. Near his patron's death-bed, he declared that Cromwell had "ascended to heaven to sit at the right hand of Jesus Christ, there to intercede for us, and to be mindful of us on all occasions."<sup>29</sup> These words echoed Cromwell's messianic view about himself—a view that had been sounded frequently in his speeches and confirmed in Sterry's sermons. For Sterry, Cromwell's death did not terminate the unfolding of Christ's kingdom, but served as a step towards it.

Because of these words, Sterry came in for such sharp criticism that he dedicated part of his last sermon in 1660 to self defence and explanation. Sterry had so affirmed Cromwell's mission to England throughout the Interregnum that with the Cromwellian collapse and the Restoration of the monarchy he was inevitably ridiculed as a "cringing" court chaplain and dismissed as a sycophant. Sterry became the target of verbal abuse and as his letters show, found himself in mortal danger, and sought shelter in Southwark, then a refuge for Puritans on the run.<sup>30</sup> Although in his 1660 sermon, Sterry denied having spoken thus about Cromwell, clearly in fear for his life, it is not difficult to ascertain that the criticised words were his: they were taken from the 85th psalm which had been a favourite of Cromwell's. Sterry who had been close to Cromwell during the period when this psalm had been invoked (17 September 1656; 23 January 1657; 20 January 1658) would have recalled its significance to his patron.

What all these critics failed to appreciate, as Brown earlier had also failed, was that Sterry's involvement in Whitehall had not been for personal gain. Sterry defended Cromwell's messianic role and England's eschatological destiny because he had been personally involved in generating these views. For Sterry, the fact that Cromwell had died did not mean that the messianic kingdom was finished; the process of salvation had been started, and would now continue

29. John Tillotson, quoted in Roy Sherwood, *The Court of Oliver Cromwell* 1977, p.108.

30. For attacks on Sterry, see *Reliquiae Baxterianae* 1696, vol. 1, p.75; *Bibliotheca Militum: or The Souldiers Publick Library* 1659, p.16; *Peters Pattern or the Perfect Path to Worldly Happiness* 1659, p.8; Pinto mentions other references, pp. 35-37; for Sterry's denial, see *The True Way of Uniting the People of God*, 1660, "To the Christian Reader;" for Sterry at Southwark, see MS. IV, catalogue number 289 at Emmanuel College Library, Cambridge, p.14.

for years to come. That is why he hoped that Richard would bear "the brightness of his father's glory."<sup>31</sup> Believing that Christ's kingdom had already begun through Cromwell's leadership, and that it was to be a kingdom fulfilled here and now in the spirit, rather than in a political rule, Sterry upheld this conviction against all odds.

At the Restoration Sterry sustained this belief in a realized kingdom, even when, under a flamboyant king and a persecuting church, the saints had come to ignore their providential role. At West Sheen, he founded a small society of resistant Puritans which he viewed as the nucleus of the eschaton. The letters written to members of this "lovely Society" reveal Sterry's intense faith in the Interregnum vision:

O my Son the Lord is at hand, the day hath already dawned, yet A little while and you shall see the heaven and earth passing away from before your Jesus appearing upon his white throne, then shall the whole Earth become a Paradise.<sup>32</sup>

Sterry wrote and preached to the saints that their endurance of persecution signalled the victory in the "Paradise within." He passionately dissuaded them from any political action, and in 1670 was still warning them against all millennial aspirations. The political ideal of the Interregnum had been transformed into a spiritual realization of Christ to the English saints:

Suffer not for the favour of man to please any party or perswasion.....  
Suffer not for any earthly interest, worldly power, or earthly kingdom.....  
Suffer only for the kingdome of grace.....in which he Reigns; now God will prepare, now God hath prepared for you a City, nay a Kingdome.<sup>33</sup>

Throughout the Interregnum, Sterry had dedicated his energy to the service of Cromwell and to the force of revolutionary Puritanism. In his articulation of millenarian and eschatological principles, and in affirming Cromwell's messianic role, he had proved himself an invaluable aide to his patron against internal dissent and parliamentary opposition. Sterry had faithfully served Cromwell because he believed in his patron's leadership; he remained consistent because he could discern, and articulate, the transformation of the millenarianism of the 1650s into the realized eschatology of the 1660s. Politician and preacher cooperated because they shared the ideals of the Puritan revolution.

N.I. MATAR

31. Bishop Burnet, *History of His Own Times*, ed. Airy, 1897, vol. II, p.148.

32. MS. III, catalogue number 292 at Emmanuel College Library, Cambridge, pp. 149-150. See my "Peter Sterry and the 'lovely Society' of West Sheen," in *Notes and Queries*, vol. 29 (1892), pp. 45-46.

33. Summary of two sermons by Sterry delivered in May 1670, available in a published version at the Library of the University of Illinois, pp. 4, 8.

## GEORGE GILBERT'S PREACHING DIARY FOR 1784 and 1785

George Gilbert founded the Independent Chapel at Heathfield in 1767 and he continued to serve it until his death in 1827 after becoming an outstanding leader of Sussex Dissent.<sup>1</sup> There has recently come to light a preaching diary kept by Gilbert from October 1784 to February 1785.<sup>2</sup> Fragment though it is, this diary helps to throw light on the geographical range of Gilbert's work, on the frequency of his preaching and on the character of his sermons. It appears to be the only extant record of its kind for a Sussex Dissenting minister of the times.

The main statistics of the preaching diary are:

Sermons preached 24 October 1784	
to 13 February 1785. . . . .	: 66
Texts recorded for sermons . . . . .	: 42
Texts from New Testament . . . . .	: 26
Texts from Old Testament . . . . .	: 16
Different texts used . . . . .	: 34

Thus, George Gilbert was preaching on average four times a week over this period. He kept Mondays and Saturdays free and he preached regularly at his own chapel on Sundays and at the midweek evening services on Wednesdays. On Tuesdays, he visited in turn Boodle Street, The Dicker and East Hoathly; on Thursdays, Hooe and Ticehurst, and on Fridays, Burwash and Chiddingly.

The diary covered a substantial part of the winter months, but there is nothing to suggest that winter conditions much influenced George Gilbert's preaching engagements. The man who had served in a cavalry regiment would not have been easily deterred by bad weather for riding. During this period, Gilbert preached also at Cranbrook, Tunbridge Wells, Mayfield, Alfriston, Lewes and even at Horsham far to the west.<sup>3</sup>

That thirty four texts should have served Gilbert for forty two sermons is no surprise. If anything, it is surprising that he did not work his texts harder. However, the use of different texts does not necessarily confirm that the sermons preached from the stated texts were all that different in character. It is evident that George Gilbert's thoughts were dominated by the contrast between the *light* of Christ and the *darkness* of our human nature evident in sinful works of the flesh. The diary includes three sets of the "Headings" prepared by Gilbert for sermons, including the following for his sermon preached on the text 1 Thes. ch.4, v.14:

1. by Nature we are not in Christ  
But Spiritually Dead and in Darkness in Sin  
in the World and the Flesh

---

1. Gilbert's career was noted briefly in the writer's paper in the *J.U.R.C.H.S.*, Vol. I, No.5 (1975)

2. The diary is owned by Mr. Raymond Channing Gilbert of Eastbourne, New Zealand, who is a great-great-great-grandson of George Gilbert. The writer is indebted to Mr. Gilbert for his kindness, including the supply of a photocopy of the diary.

3. It was in early February 1785 that Gilbert visited Horsham: "Roade 36 miles to Horsham and preacht 3 times. I trust ye Lord was with us."

2. by Grace are in Christ in Covenant  
By C'union Regeneration and Faith
3. Christ is in the believer's Life  
Light Salvation & Grace
4. God Brings us to Christ & Glory

George Gilbert had been converted by the preaching of Whitefield and his own formal Calvinism was evident in the *Declaration of Faith* which he prepared for his congregation.<sup>4</sup> But we see in Gilbert's case that familiar contrast between a formal Calvinism and a passionately warm evangelical appeal to every one of his hearers. It seems highly significant here that only one of the thirty four recorded texts was taken from the apocalyptic passages of St. Matthew and that Gilbert's selection of texts from the Old Testament concentrated on the Psalms, Isaiah and Proverbs, all designed to bring comfort and reassurance to his hearers.

Gilbert's congregations were typical of Wealden Dissent: yeomen farmers, agricultural labourers, craftsmen and traders. His preaching can never have been over their heads, particularly with its flow of metaphors drawn from his own deep Sussex roots. He was thus known and admired as a preacher of great simplicity, but few doubted his power as a man who also knew and understood compassionately the range of human failings. Early on, Gilbert had met with bitter opposition from a good many Anglicans, but in later life he was widely admired among them. Lower had this in mind when he summed up Gilbert's preaching:

His plain and simple addresses produced a wonderful effect upon his rustic audiences. On many occasions tears flowed from every eye, and it has been the opinion of competent judges that no preacher since the days of Whitefield had more powerful mastery over the feelings of his hearers.<sup>5</sup>

Gilbert's evangelical fervour and appeal played a significant part in the slow progress of the Methodists in East Sussex after the visits by John Wesley in the 1760s and 1770s and the planting of his societies at Rye and Winchelsea.<sup>6</sup> By the 1780s, George Gilbert had become thoroughly Congregational in outlook and later he was the driving force in bringing about a county-wide home missionary effort.<sup>7</sup>

The space available precludes reproduction here of the preaching diary in full, but the entries for December 1784 provide a good picture of Gilbert's range of texts. The diary entries in full, together with a copy of this paper, have

- 
4. Gilbert had happily admitted to communion and associate membership a number of Particular Baptists who had no chapel of their own in Heathfield, and his own first assistant pastor was Jacob Martel, a Particular Baptist in the making, with whom Gilbert broke over infant baptism.
  5. M.A. Lower, *Sussex Worthies* 1861
  6. As late as 1802, the Rye Circuit had only 680 members and it included a number of churches in Kent; the Lewes and Brighton Circuit was not formed until 1807.
  7. The Congregational Fund Board made annual grants of £5 or £7 to Gilbert between 1788 and 1809.



been deposited in the East Sussex Record Office at Lewes.

*The Preaching Diary*

<i>Date</i>		<i>Place</i>	<i>Text:</i>
			*denotes text used before in this period.
<i>December 1784</i>			
Wednesday	1 pm	Heathfield	Not stated
Thursday	2 pm	Hooe	2 Peter c.3,v.18
Sunday	5 am	Heathfield	Is. c.58,v.14.
	pm	Funeral at Heathfield	I Cor. c.15,v.10
Wednesday	8 pm	Cranbrook	Mark c.2
Friday	10 pm	Burwash	I Cor. c.2, v.12
Sunday	12 am	Heathfield	Ps. 104,v.34
	pm	Alfriston	I Cor. c.2,v.12*
Tuesday	14 pm	Bodle Street	Romans c.1,v.4
Thursday	16 pm	Hooe	I Cor. c.2,v.12*
Friday	17 pm	Burwash	not stated
Sunday	19 am	Heathfield	Deut. c.32, v.5
Tuesday	21 pm	East Hoathly	Is. c.26, v.3
Thursday	23 pm	Ticehurst	Ps.66, v.16
Friday	24 pm	Chiddingly	not stated
Saturday	25 am	Heathfield	Ps. 45,v.15
Christmas Day			
Tuesday	28 pm	Bodle Street	Luke c.2, v.4

NEIL CAPLAN

### THOMAS GASQUOINE AND THE ORIGINS OF THE LEICESTER CONFERENCE

The Leicester Conference of 1877, and the bitter dispute which followed it, comprised perhaps the keenest theological controversy experienced by the Congregational Union during the nineteenth century; yet its complex details have still not been unravelled, nor has the significance of the controversy been adequately assessed. While preparing for a discussion of the Leicester Conference in a larger study, I came across a personal statement concerning its origins written in 1896 by Thomas Gasquoine. When Gasquoine died in 1913, his wife forwarded the manuscript to R.J. Wells, then the Secretary of the Congregational Union, who passed it on to the librarian at Memorial Hall. It may now be consulted in the Congregational Library (in process of removal to Dr. Williams's Library) under the listing Mss. II c 57.

Thomas Gasquoine was undoubtedly the finest representative of the "gentlemen of the Leicester Conference" although some members of the Union

preferred James Allanson Picton with his "transcendental moonshine" as the best example of what the Conference stood for. Gasquoine was the minister at Christ Church in Oswestry when the controversy broke. He was at Commercial Street, Northampton, from 1881 to 1892 when he retired to Upper Bangor; and throughout his career the "creed he expounded was liberal and sympathetic towards those of other communions, but the central verities ... were always fearlessly proclaimed."<sup>1</sup> As his statement reveals, Gasquoine was the instigator of what became known as the Leicester Conference — that "public" meeting held at Wycliffe Chapel in Leicester at the time the Congregational Union held its Autumnal Assembly in the city, and which was called for all those "who value spiritual religion, and who are in sympathy with the principle that religious communion is not dependent upon agreement in theological, critical, or historical opinion." Gasquoine and Picton (who "preached like a Positivist, and prayed like a Methodist") were the two who delivered formal papers at the Conference in support of this principle; and although Gasquoine pleaded on the occasion that he and his friends had no desire to disturb the "peaceable existence" of the Union with such "marginal meetings....after the one we are holding this evening"; still, as Albert Peel recounts, the Conference caused "anxiety" in the churches, for "the fact of its being held during the Assembly week gave rise to the impression that it was an official gathering, and that the Congregational Churches were departing from their usual standards of belief."<sup>2</sup>

Congregationalists reacted severely to the Leicester Conference. The meeting in Wycliffe Chapel itself was something of a "hullabaloo" as D.W. Simon characterized it; for the majority of those who attended were curious Union representatives in Leicester for the Assembly, who opposed the Conference's principle of a creedless but Christian communion and subjected the promoters of the Conference to considerable ridicule. Those present were particularly incensed with Picton's intellectual terminology, like his phrase "the divine totality of being" which provoked laughter and cries of "Definition!" But although it could be argued, as Joseph Parker and James Baldwin Brown did afterwards,<sup>3</sup> that the Conference had thus been "answered on the spot" in Wycliffe Chapel by members of the Union, the Conference nonetheless became the subject of an increasingly bitter controversy fought primarily in the columns of *The Christian World* and *The English Independent* until May 1878. That month, in its stormiest session the Union passed several resolutions, or "the Resolution", against the Leicester Conference, which specified some of the "Facts and Doctrines of the Evangelical Faith" and re-affirmed "that the primary object of the Congregational Union is.....to uphold and extend Evangelical Religion." This

---

1. C.Y.B., 1914, p. 173.

2. Albert Peel, *These Hundred Years*, 1931, p.267. The fullest account of the proceedings of the Leicester Conference is found in a pamphlet entitled "Public Conference on the Terms of Religious Communion" held at Dr. Williams's Library.

3. Parker proposed an alternative resolution at the May meetings. See *The Nonconformist*, 9 May 1878, pp. 473-4. Brown's views are found in his Chairman's Address, "Our Theology in Relation to the Intellectual Movements of Our Times" C.Y.B., 1879, pp. 51-57.

was done despite the opposition of the Chairman of the Union for 1878, James Baldwin Brown: "*Qui s'excuse, s'accuse*, in a matter like this, as all the world will see when it reads your resolution."<sup>4</sup>

During the course of the controversy, as it unfolded in the press, Gasquoine wrote more letters than any of the Leicester men in defence of their principle of a communion based on shared religious sentiment. He it was who dared to take on the arch-opponent of the Leicester Conference, Edward White, who saw in the Conference a "hollow Unitarianism" threatening the very "citadel of the faith." White labelled the Leicester men "blank rejectors of the miraculous Theophany in Christ", agents of Unitarianism, who every Sunday fired their "mitrailleuse through the Bible".<sup>5</sup> He was thinking primarily of Picton, whose books were radically unorthodox (White said he "tried" to read Picton's latest on the train up to Leicester), as well as Mark Wilks and Joseph Wood. These three referred to themselves within the Leicester camp as the "trio on the left". But as Gasquoine attempted to point out, White and panic-stricken members of the Union were unfairly associating all of the Leicester men theologically with Picton and charging them with the crime of attempting to "uphold and extend" his theological views. Gasquoine admitted that Picton had jettisoned much that was considered orthodox; but it was wrong, he said, for White and others to conclude that they were all "lapsed and deteriorated", or that the Union was threatened or in any way compromised by only a handful of men. Baldwin Brown affirmed that there were "two essentially divergent parties" in the Leicester camp: those with whom certain truths were "under eclipse", and those who were "simply yearning for a purer and nobler Christian life." There was no need, he declared, to be seized by a panic and to behave "like savages who go out with their drums and make a dreadful noise when an eclipse takes place. We need no drums; we have only to wait."<sup>6</sup> Mark Wilks, who chaired the Conference, agreed, and added that a majority of those who planned the Conference were unquestionably orthodox — men like Gasquoine, William Miall, P.T. Forsyth, and William Dorling. And when the resolutions became public knowledge in April, he said that most of the Leicester men, and perhaps even Picton, could subscribe themselves to the doctrinal clauses without difficulty.

What annoyed the Leicester men in particular, and fanned the flames once they said so, was that of all people White should charge them with "sapping" the evangelical faith. His own heresy, the "annihilation of the impenitent", had "knocked the very keystone out of the arch"; and yet while White sat as an esteemed member in the Union the Leicester men were to be censured. "How often have we seen the last man who has got into a crowded carriage the first to call out, 'No room, full!'" Joseph Wood compared White to the knight in Hudibras who "Compounds for sins he is inclined to,/By damning

4. *Ibid.*

5. *Christian World*, 9 November 1877, p. 804; 16 November 1877, p. 824.

6. *English Independent*; 6 December 1877, p. 1283.

those he has no mind to."<sup>7</sup> The preface to the resolutions referred to "the uneasiness produced in the churches .....by.....the recent conference at Leicester", but the Leicester men argued that "far more 'uneasiness' exists in reference to the doctrine of the 'non-immortality of the souls of the wicked', as taught by Messrs. Dale and White, than about the Leicester Conference."<sup>8</sup> The Resolution conveniently made no reference to the matter of eternal punishment; but they asked, how large would the Union vote be against the Leicester Conference if it did? The Leicester men believed they were to be made scapegoats for the so-called "orthodox heresy"<sup>9</sup> of men like White, who, they argued, had jumped to the defence of the persecuted T.T. Lynch, but having caused no small "anxiety" himself, now took on the role of Dr. Campbell. "The free-minded man of one age becomes the bigot of the next!"<sup>10</sup> This charge of hypocrisy provoked a rejoinder from White, and a flurry of letters over the *Rivulet*. And the future historian of that affair will want to consider the resurrection of the *Rivulet* during the course of the Leicester controversy.

There are two important questions to be asked about the Leicester affair. What developments contributed to the calling of the Conference in the first place; and how is one to explain the unorthodox action of the Congregational Union which, by approving the resolutions, came perilously close to the creed-making it had always denounced? (Whether in fact the resolutions comprised a creed was a major issue of the controversy. Guinness Rogers, primarily responsible for devising them, claimed that they were no different in purpose from the Declaration of Faith and Order, while the Leicester men and *The Christian World* pronounced them a creed, "unjust, ungenerous, unbrotherly, un-Christian, un-Christlike" in Gasquoine's view.) We are fortunate to have Gasquoine's statement for it sheds some light on the origins of the Conference. But before considering it, and since it has little to say about the action of the Union, some tentative conclusions concerning this latter question are in order.

One unavoidable conclusion is that the resolutions were not passed by the Union to convince "the world" that it was orthodox as much as they were passed to convince the Union itself that it was orthodox. There is no question that Congregationalists were sensitive about their public image during the political 'seventies, and wished to repudiate the "idea....sedulously fostered by certain parties that among Congregationalists there has been a considerable departure from the old faith." But at the same time they possessed themselves "an underlying consciousness that, in some mysterious way, the revelations of God in CHRIST were in peril"; and, according to *The Congregationalist*, this had fostered a "widespread feeling of distrust" in the churches before the Leicester Conference took place.<sup>11</sup> Since the prosperous 1850's, when

7. *Christian World*, 15 February 1878, p. 124; 24 May 1878, p. 424; 9 November 1877, p.805.

8. *Ibid.*, 24 May 1878, p. 424.

9. *Nonconformist*, 17 May 1878, p. 499.

10. *Christian World*, 25 January 1878, p.84.

11. *The Congregationalist*, 1878, p. 708; *English Independent*, 18 October 1877, p.1064.

Congregationalists made such definite inroads into the middle classes, a process of theological liberalization had been under way as Congregationalists of a younger generation abandoned the already declining moderate Calvinism of their fathers for a more liberal evangelicalism consistent with the larger role they saw for themselves in the life of the nation. This was the theology of Edward Miall; and the shift is typified by the transition from "Angel" James to R.W. Dale at Carr's Lane. Dale was a key figure in this change, and the impact of his first book of importance, *Discourses on Special Occasions* (1865), should not be underestimated in this regard. The book deeply impressed a troubled young Scot roaming the hills around Bathgate who, "when once he chanced to pass through Birmingham ..... came and walked to and fro in front of Carr's Lane, and rejoiced to see the place where the man preached".<sup>12</sup> But the flight from moderate Calvinism, as Dale himself admitted by the 1870's, had "encouraged a revolutionary spirit ..... and made the idea of theological changes familiar to us."<sup>13</sup> Eustace Conder remembered an "upgrowth of an unprecedented SENTIMENT OF FREEDOM" which Dale confessed in 1876 "has been rather chaotic".<sup>14</sup> It had produced "uneasiness, restlessness, and apprehension" said Dale; and all the more so because an extreme theological liberalism had made its appearance, typified by the "Fatherhood" of none other than the James Baldwin Brown: "the Charles Kingsley of the Free Churches, the mediator of Maurice to them."<sup>15</sup>

The crime of the Leicester Conference was that it gave sudden visibility to a process of theological erosion that had already produced doctrinal confusion, and anxiety about identity, in the Congregational community. Moreover, the Conference offered a frightening glimpse of the direction in which Congregationalism was heading; for the ecumenical principle of the Leicester Conference anticipated what Nonconformity would come to represent once the disabilities had been overcome, and the ideal of disestablishment recognized as politically impossible. The result was panic, and the Resolution. The disavowal of the Leicester Conference was both a nervous and self-incriminating denial of theological erosion, and a belated attempt to assert doctrinal unity. And the most interesting aspect of the whole Leicester story is the way in which political circumstance reinforced the reaction.

At the very time of the controversy, Congregationalists were occupied with the greatest campaign to disestablish the Church mounted in the history of the Liberation Society, and deeply involved with the Bulgarian Atrocities agitation. Shannon failed to see how these issues were related for Nonconformists. "There is persecution for creed there as there is persecution for creed here" announced James Guinness Rogers before the Liberation Society. The

---

12. Andrew Martin Fairbairn, in *Memorial Sermons Preached in Carr's Lane Chapel on the Occasion of the Death of Dr. R.W. Dale*, Birmingham 1895, pp. 14-5.

13. R.W. Dale, *The Evangelical Revival*, 1881, p. 22.

14. Eustace Conder, in *The International Congregational Council 1891*, p. 195; R.W. Dale, "On Some Present Aspects of Theological Thought Among Congregationalists" *The Congregationalist*, January 1877, p.5.

15. F.J. Powicke, "F.D. Maurice" *The Congregational Quarterly*, April 1930, p. 175.

"men who are opposed to disestablishment are the same men who have been disposed to think favourably of Lord Beaconsfield's Eastern policy."<sup>16</sup> Rogers, the Chairman of the Nonconformist Vigilance Committee "in opposition to the Turk", believed that Gladstone was about to come round over disestablishment, and would lead a similar "moral" crusade against the privileges of the Church. And hopes were raised in this regard when Gladstone spoke at Memorial Hall, Rogers in the Chair, just a few weeks before the Union was to pass its Resolution against the Leicester Conference. These political concerns partly explain Rogers's vehement and leading opposition to the Conference. The essence of our Congregationalism is the Evangelical faith, and a departure from it would mean the speedy loss of our power." If there were "a decay in the reality and power of the faith...the prospect of Disestablishment would be removed to a distant future indeed."<sup>17</sup> For Rogers the Leicester Conference represented theological decline, the loss of Nonconformity's peculiarity, and a concomitant weakening of political power. It is no surprise that the man responsible for the resolutions, ratified by a committee he gathered at Memorial Hall, was James Guinness Rogers.

So much for the action of the Union. It is necessary now to complete the picture by considering the action of the Leicester men as it is described in Gasquoine's statement. Footnotes have been added to his account to provide supplementary details.

-----

#### The Leicester Conference

I wish, before I die,<sup>18</sup> to leave some brief statement of the exact genesis and aims of the once rather famous<sup>19</sup> Leicester Conference as these were recognized at the time by at least some<sup>20</sup> of the promoters; a statement which a sense of honour prevented my making at the time of controversy.

The genesis of the Conference was after the simplest possible fashion in my own study in Oswestry. Some time about 1876 there was reported to me that the greatly loved and honoured Baldwin Brown looking at the trend of thought in the Congregational Union had said that the Union was not unlikely

16. *Nonconformist*, 13 December 1876, p. 1258; 31 January 1877, p. 100.

17. *Congregationalist*, 1884, p. 4; 1881, p. 19.

18. It is clear that Gasquoine was ill at the time of writing (1896), and believed he was about to die. Throughout his ministry he suffered from "alarming illnesses" the beginning of which he attributed to the controversy. No doubt illness explains his absence from the May Assembly in 1878 when the Resolution was passed.

19. The controversy was quickly forgotten, no doubt because it had been an embarrassment to the Union. Guinness Rogers made several references to it in his reply to Spurgeon's Down-Grade charges (*Present Day Religion and Theology*, 1888). Perhaps the true significance of the controversy is found in Joseph Parker's comment before the Union as Chairman in 1884: "My brethren, I know that we are orthodox in doctrine. By an overwhelming majority we have declared ourselves to be evangelical in theology."

20. Gasquoine's mild acknowledgement that there was confusion in the Leicester camp itself about their intentions. There is also the suggestion here that some of the Leicester men were indeed attempting to promote Picton's views.

to split into two factions.<sup>21</sup> Such a prospect seemed to me only lamentable; and I was conscious of a distinct difference from this honoured leader. I was quite conscious of danger; but I lamented any tendency of what were called the broader men to stand aloof from the Union. Any tendency with the authorities to slight them and show their suspicion of them appeared to me, however much to be regretted, to be far less so than any failure in the broader section to claim their place in the Union, and to seek to influence its thought and action.<sup>22</sup> The very sense of catholicity, which I believe is the genius of Congregational life, made it only right, I felt, that different sections of thought should keep together in one spirit and fellowship.

My friend, W. Carey Walters, then of Whitchurch,<sup>23</sup> was calling on me and conversing with me in my study, some time in early 1877. I reported to him this remark of Baldwin Brown's, told him how I had also felt it would be a great help if at the time of the meetings there could be some special meeting of the

- 
21. What irony is here! It was Baldwin Brown's own anxieties that prompted the calling of the Conference. And although he denied it, Brown was in fact the father of the Leicester Conference. "Mr. Brown is looked up to by this class of 'advanced men'" observed one Leicester opponent, "and I believe he has not a little to do with the formation of the sentiments which found their expression in the Leicester Conference." (*English Independent*, 3 January 1878, p.10) All of the Leicester men were connected in one way or another with Brown, whom they called their "leader" and "friend". P.T. Forsyth and John Hunter are the best examples. The principle of the Conference goes back to Maurice. "I may be wrong, but I incline to say that a majority of our young ministers in 1877 bore the Mauricean stamp.....and the man to whom we looked up with enthusiastic trust as leader was James Baldwin Brown, who knew Maurice personally....." (F.J. Powicke, *op. cit.*) According to Powicke, White believed Maurice could be a half-way house to Unitarianism. A statement of P.T. Forsyth's in 1884 sheds further light on Brown's anxieties about a division in the Union: "I met him shortly afterwards in the North [at Hunter's manse in York?], and allusion was made to the expectations of some that he would have resigned his chairmanship. So he said he would have done but for one consideration. The step was not unlikely to lead to a split in Independency. And had such a schism taken place he would have been forced into the leadership of one section - a burden of responsibility which, with signs of failing vigour, he felt he dare not undertake." P.T. Forsyth, *Baldwin Brown* 1884, p.5. A portrait of Baldwin Brown was presented to Mansfield College in 1922.
  22. However, at a Sectional Meeting of the Union on "Shiftings of Theological Thought" in 1876, the "authorities" - in particular T.G. Horton - roundly denounced Picton's latest book *The Religion of Jesus*. At this meeting Gasquoine and Wood defended Picton's right to a place in the Union. Did Gasquoine fear that this kind of treatment would simply alienate men like Picton from the Union? (*Nonconformist*, 18 October 1876, p. 1038.)
  23. He was raised a Baptist, attended Regent's Park, and went Unitarian shortly after the Leicester controversy. Two months before the Conference Carey Walters became the minister of a new "Free Christian Church" in Whitchurch "willing to ....recognize as fellow Christians those who differed in their speculative views as to the person of Christ, and the nature of His salvation." Gasquoine came over to speak at the opening ceremony, as did the President of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association; but the "preacher of the day" who gave his blessing to the enterprise was Carey Walters's "friend", the "Chairman elect" of the Congregational Union, James Baldwin Brown. One correspondent to the *English Independent* protested that Brown's presence "will afford additional ground for the charges of our opponents....that an incipient Socinianism is slowly progressing among our ministers and churches." (*English Independent*, 4 October 1877, p. 1054.)

"broader" men, for which the Cong. Union should be in no way responsible,<sup>24</sup> a meeting in which they could confer together on matters of special interest to themselves. This, I believed, would give a real relief amid the dangers which Baldwin Brown seemed to think were besetting the Union. Carey Walters, although not a Congregationalist, responded to the idea heartily, and he suggested that such a meeting could well and easily be held at Leicester, where the Autumnal meetings of the year were to be held, and further suggested that Picton who was then at St. Thomas' Square<sup>25</sup> should be asked to attend it. I agreed at once, and as I was greatly occupied in work asked him to write to Picton to tell him what we thought, and to ask him if he would consent.

That was the genesis of the Leicester Conference, certainly in loyalty to the Congregational Union, not in opposition to it.

Of the correspondence between my friends Carey Walters and Picton, I know or remember little. But the idea, possibly through the influence of Carey Walters, got a little widened, and in May, during the Spring Meetings, a conference was called at Haxwell's Hotel, at which not only Congregationalists attended.<sup>26</sup> Mark Wilks was voted to the chair, and spoke of the aims of in any way organically seeking spiritual fellowship without some theologic agreement, somewhat doubtfully, at all events unhopefully.<sup>27</sup> I refer to this that at once the idea may be removed, from the minds of any who read this statement, that there was any desire on the part of Mr. Wilks or Mr. Picton to thrust what were supposed to be peculiarly their own views upon the members of the Cong. Union. In the course of his somewhat apologetic remarks Mr. Wilks said the idea of their Conference did not arise with any of them in London, but arose, he believed, out of a private conversation in some ministers' [sic] study in the

24. It is highly unlikely that Gasquoine foresaw this difficulty at the time.

25. It had no Trust Deed and under Picton consisted of the "painfully respectable....after the manner of lower-middle class Nonconformists." Baldwin Brown secured St. Thomas' Square for P.T. Forsyth in 1878 after Picton had left. Picton studied at Lancashire Independent with D.W. Simon in the 1850's. Both were strongly influenced (as was Baldwin Brown) by A.J. Scott.

26. There is no record of this preliminary meeting. Mark Wilks referred to it later as "an informal gathering of some fifty friends". The majority present were Congregationalists, and statements made later indicate that many were from Picton's and Wilks's congregations. We do not know if Unitarians were present, although John Page Hopps, who spoke at the Leicester Conference, may well have been there.

27. Gasquoine leaves the impression that the issue of fellowship was raised rather casually by Wilks. Wilks said later "We were perfectly clear as to what we desired, and I believe were unanimous in desiring....the drawing together of ourselves by closer religious ties....." At the Hotel meeting it was decided to hold a conference in Leicester, and a committee (known later as the "Leicester Committee") was created to plan the Conference and draft the wording of the public invitation. We know for certain that Picton, Wilks, Wood, Gasquoine, Carey Walters, William Miall, William Durling, and most likely Forsyth were on this committee.



North of England, he thought Mr. Hunter's.<sup>28</sup> It was not worthwhile correcting the mistake, and I did not do so; but I knew of course to what conversation he was referring.

It is right to say that with the larger aim I thoroughly sympathized. I accept the providence of God that has separated Unitarians and Trinitarians; but I believe the separation has been allowed to be too sharp and defined, even has been fossilized; whilst evangelic doctrine has been clouded by dark views of God, brought to theologic thought by the recoil from the Arians of the Eighteenth Century.

I have never regretted the holding of the Conference. I believe its main contention, which though it might have been better worded, was right. It has to be remembered we had little opportunity of meeting together; had to fix on our programme and statement only after conference by post.<sup>29</sup> I think, in many ways which I would not recount, it has been the means of much good, not least to the Cong. Union itself. That it caused many misunderstandings is clear. I, because of my remaining closely connected with the Congregational Union, had my own somewhat large share in bearing the burden. The constant attacks on brethren dear to me, the reception, as it seemed almost daily, for many months, of letters, pamphlets and newspaper articles on the subject I always felt had something to do with the serious breakdown of my health at Oswestry; but I do not think that even for one moment was my love to any brethren decreased, or my confidence in them shaken, even by their attacks, which I was sure were conscientious, on much that I valued.

*T. Gasquoine, Easter Sunday Morning 1896, written when kept at home, by sickness.*

MARK D. JOHNSON

- 
28. At The Mount in York which was a "cave of Adullam" for the Leicester men. Wilks's mistake was understandable for by this time Hunter had made a reputation for himself as a progressive. Theologically Hunter was the successor to Baldwin Brown who once said of him "This, this is my beloved disciple." See Leslie Stannard Hunter, *John Hunter D.D.* 1921, pp. 74, 52. Hunter led the devotional service before the meeting in Wycliffe Chapel got underway, and he became a vigorous defender of the Conference. We do not know whether his closest friend J.T. Stannard was present at the Conference, although he is listed as one of the delegates to the Assembly meeting in Leicester. It is likely that Stannard was present but reluctant to speak. His troubles at Ramsden Street in Huddersfield had already begun, and the Leicester controversy had an impact on the Ramsden Street battle. Hunter and Stannard were both "Simon's men" and there was a pro-Leicester cheering section at Spring Hill. Simon's position in the controversy was a difficult one, for he was to some extent implicated. The Conference convinced Simon all the more that the Congregational Colleges were failing in the attempt to ground their students securely in their theology. From the time of the Conference onwards Simon became increasingly vocal about transferring Spring Hill College to one of the Universities to ease the pressure on the theological curriculum.
29. At the Conference the wording of the public invitation issued by the Leicester Committee was subjected to much criticism.

## REVIEWS

*The Westminster Confession in the Church Today.* Edited by Alasdair I.C. Heron. Saint Andrew Press, Edinburgh, 1982, £4.00

What was a milestone on our way becomes a millstone on our necks. So writes J.K.S. Reid in a vigorous article on Confessional Subscription today in the Church of Scotland. Does the apothegm strike home also in connection with the Westminster Confession itself? In the history of doctrine, and of church relations, the Confession is of course a notable marker. Like milestones on our ancient highways, however, sometimes quite remarkable in themselves but nowadays often going unremarked, it is of little interest even to many ministers of churches in the Reformed tradition.

One purpose of the present volume is to make essential information about the Confession more widely available. Its articles on the making, position, and teaching of the Confession, as well as evaluations of its theological health, deserve attention beyond, as well as within, Scotland. Nevertheless, the experience of the Presbyterian Church of England, as John Ross relates it in his interesting contribution, supports the view that extensive interest in the Confession is now far to seek. Even in Ireland, according to John Thompson, over wide areas it is little known in detail, and not much used. The general impression gained from useful papers about the situation in Australia and New Zealand, as well as in the mainstream churches of the U.S.A., is that things are much the same in those countries as well.

A second purpose is to present a range of views about the current position in Scotland, and about possible ways forward. The great complexity of the legal position is authoritatively dealt with by Francis Lyall. Recent debate is reviewed by Roderick Pettigrew, the Secretary of the Assembly's Panel on Doctrine. For many readers, however, the final four papers, giving personal views on the attitude the Church should now adopt to the Confession, may well be the most interesting in the book. A touch of freshness in the discussion is not altogether lacking. One contributor even goes so far as to say: "We must be reasonable". As might be expected, there is a certain amount of thrashing of old straw. Something of a harvest, however, could be hoped for as a result of making plainer in cool print what it is often difficult to assess in the heat of rhetorical conflict.

Mention should be made of the useful reprinting in this book of some important documents bearing on its subject, as also of its select bibliography. It is recommended to all who are concerned about a matter of no little importance for the unity and peace of the Church in Scotland, but also for the future course of wider church relations.

F.G. HEALEY

*Richard Baxter: Puritan Man of Letters.* By N.H. Keeble. Pp. xi, 217. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1982. £15.

Richard Baxter was an exasperating saint and a copious writer and both these aspects of his life are well brought out in this study. Dr Keeble of the

University of Stirling brings out the enigma of a man who professed to abhor sectarian divisions and to be a mere Catholic Christian and yet could be a prickly nonconformist who found himself by times in prison. Dr Keeble also claims that "there can have been very few people who have ever written more in English". There was a compulsion laid upon Baxter to put into writing every thought he had so as to win the sinner, guide the penitent, encourage the faithful, and give practical help for daily living. The fertility of his mind in finding considerations to cover every possible development of his themes was amazing; in speaking about "weak and wavering purposes" he found seventy considerations why his readers should not remain in such hesitation and it took one hundred pages in which to expound them. In *The Life of Faith* he reaches a warning to the "ungodly unprepared sinner" on page 597, a page few sinners were likely to reach!

Baxter was also a pioneer in the field of Protestant casuistry. Casuistry was a field heavily cultivated by Roman Catholic moralists and their works often seemed to Protestants to be attempts to provide justification for the unjustifiable and to give approval to devious conduct. Therefore, there were few Protestant treatments of the field in any detail. Baxter sought to remedy this neglect. He held that each person had distinctive characteristics and had to face his own particular circumstances and was in need of detailed guidance in the numerous moral decisions he had to make. In *A Christian Directory* Baxter provides 1172 pages of guidance on numerous specific issues, and Dr Keeble points out that this work was not only more than twice as long as Jeremy Taylor's *Ductor Dubitantium* but also much more concerned with particular cases than is the work of Taylor who deals more with general principles.

Dr Keeble also holds that Baxter faced people not just with the authority of the Bible or the Church but with the sense of duty to be found in each person. Baxter was also in the humanist tradition in his emphasis upon the goodness of creation and upon the proper enjoyment of God's gifts and Keeble also sees him as a possible ancestor of English Romanticism.

Dr Keeble writes with clarity and verve; once begun, the book is compulsive reading. The bibliography of Baxter's writings and the array of comprehensive footnotes add greatly to the value of the work.

It was a disappointment that a greater place was not given to Baxter's excellent hymns.

The Clarendon Press has produced the work with customary elegance but on p. 131 "too" has been deprived of an "o".

R.B.K.

*OUR CONTEMPORARIES**Reformed World* (Vol. 36, Nos. 5-8)

These issues contain reports of conversations between Reformed Churches and the Church of Rome and Anglican Churches. They are also devoted to preparatory studies for the 1982 Ottawa meeting of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches; there are Bible studies by Professor Pokorny of Prague. As usual there is news about the Churches of the Reformed family.

*Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* (Vol. XLIII, Parts 1-3)

This journal covers a wide variety of topics mainly of Methodist interest, but there are penetrating articles on "The Methodist Class Meeting" by W.W. Dean, and on "A Methodist Family: Ministerial Succession and Inter-marriage" by the late H.K. Moulton.

*The Baptist Quarterly* (Vol. XXIX, Nos. 1-4)

Among articles in this substantial journal we note "Baptist Members of Parliament, 1847-1914" by D.W. Bebbington, "Relativity, Ecumenism and the Liberation of the Church" by C.J. Ellis, "Edwardians, Anabaptists and the Problem of Baptist Origins" by Ian Sellers, and "Baptists and the current debate on Baptism" by M.J. Quicke.

*Cylchgrawn Hanes* (Journal of Historical Society of the Presbyterian Church of Wales, No. 5, 1981)

This includes an important article in English by Professor Ieuan Gwynedd Jones of University College, Aberystwyth, on "The Religious Frontier in Nineteenth-century Wales". This was the annual lecture of the Society. The editor, J.E. Wynne Davies, has just edited a Festschrift in honour of his predecessor, Gomer M. Roberts. This well-deserved tribute is entitled *Gwanwyn Duw* (Gwasg Pantycelyn, Caernarfon, £4.95)

R.B.K.