

Wales under the Penal Code, 1662—1687.

D. R. RICHARDS has already published a history of the Puritan Movement in Wales from 1639 to 1653, and another of the religious developments, 1654 to 1662. This third volume, like the others, is due to a prize from the National Eisteddfod.¹ We hardly know which to congratulate more, the principality which encourages such research, or the denomination which raises such a scholar. If all secondary schools are as well staffed as that at Neath, Wales may give us more fine work.

This volume estimates carefully the effect of the ecclesiastical legislation on all classes; the politicians, the Popish recusants, the Quakers, other types of dissenters, the Established Church, schoolmasters, and physicians. There is again abundant reference to sources, and occasional courteous rectification of predecessors, including the author's earlier work. Our readers will appreciate best a sketch, extracted from the work, of how Baptists evolved in this time of persecution.

There were three types of Baptist in Wales, as in England. The Arminian or General Baptists, due to Hugh Evans of Coventry and Thomas Lamb of Colchester, were strongest in Radnor, but had been sadly weakened by the Quaker inroad. This period shows them fined and fined, till one hero lost his last cow; in 1682 most of them emigrated from Nantmel to Pennsylvania. The only deep mark they left was through a Londoner, William Rider, first elder of the church now at Borough Road, who convinced the Particular Baptists that hands should be laid on every one baptized. To the fortunes of these open and close Calvinists we now turn.

The first effect of the Conventicle Act of 1664 was to break down the rigid system favoured by John Miles of Ilston. He and most of his church had gone to the Old Colony in New England. And whereas he had tried to keep Baptists distinct from all others, adversity compelled them to have Presbyterians and Independents as bedfellows. The policy was deliberately promoted by Vavasor Powell, who was released on the fall of Chancellor Hyde, did good work in Monmouth, Glamorgan, and

¹ *Wales under the Penal Code*. By Thomas Richards, M.A., D.Litt. 172 pages, and indexes. National Eisteddfod Association, 1925.

Montgomery; when arrested, he defended himself with great legal skill, but was illegally confined; by *Habeas Corpus* he got up to London, where we are glad to hear of that "very factious man" preaching at Bunhill. In Wales we may probably credit to his organising abilities "the temporary sinking of ancient differences, a new and well-organised itinerant system, the alternation of meeting-places, and the reinforcing of the accredited preachers by" others who repeated the gist of their sermons to fresh congregations.

Dr. Richards has, however, traced the remarkable events which practically destroyed the practice of open-communion, and converted the Baptists almost wholly to strict-communion, at the expense of losing the Montgomery group.

The Olchon valley, on the edge of Hereford, close to Brecknock and Monmouth, was so inaccessible that it became the retreat of the stiffest and most uncompromising men, akin to the Scotch Cameronians: the incumbents in 1676 reported 220 dissenters over sixteen. From Cilmaenllwyd in Carmarthen, on the edge of Pembroke, William Jones had been displaced by a royal nominee in 1660; he was soon in prison at Carmarthen. Here he met the open-Baptist, Jenkin Jones, late of Llanthetty, and by him was converted. But a convert often goes beyond his teacher, as with the Tractarians and the older Papal recusants. William Jones became not only Baptist, but close-Baptist. Instead of being baptized by Jenkin Jones, he went across to Olchon, and by 1666 came back imbued with the dogged spirit of those mountaineers. He set to work on the borders of Cardigan, Carmarthen, and Pembroke, where already there were disciples of Peregrine Phillips and Stephen Hughes, and within a year had baptized thirty people, including some who had been apparently baptized by Jenkin Jones already, and the widow of another incumbent.

The crucial date, however, was 12 July, 1668, six months after the Conventicle Act had expired. Thomas Watkins paid a return visit from Olchon, with William Pritchard of Abergavenny, who had come back to the close-Baptist views of John Miles, and over to the six-principle views of William Rider. They organised the church of Rhydwlwm on the basis of "baptism & laying on of hands." The church deliberately rejected the open-communion views of Powell, revived the machinery of Miles, and became so deeply imbued with the Sixth-principle that when it built its first house in 1701 at Cilfowyr, it engraved Hebrews vi. 2 on a stone placed prominently at the door. Such was the origin of Molleston (Narberth), which at first included more than the inhabitants of the Cleddau valleys, baptizing 113 in the years of persecution.

As Dr. Richards has given a most detailed and documented

history, there are occasional tit-bits. It is delightful to read of Baptists eagerly buying the Statutes at Large, and working up their own cases to the discomfiture of magistrates. Since a "conventicle" became illegal only when five persons besides the family worshipped together, one bright house-holder in an alley got a stentorian preacher upstairs, opened his windows, and let the neighbours listen free. The Baptists were often cheerful, and sure they would win: after the Indulgence of 1667 the miller of Tredwstan broke forth into poetry, and chanted:

Does mo'ch ofon arnaf weithian;
Torwyd llawer ar eich cyrn.

BAMPTON had Baptists on the Tiverton roll at least as early as 1672, when Richard Hooper, John Ball, and Thomas Bryant took out licences. On 5 November, 1690, it was agreed that they should form a distinct church, and within a year they increased from 40 to 114; Ball and Carnall the first leaders. James White came in November 1696, but left within two years. James Murch, of Plymouth and Dalwood, settled in 1703, induced them to sing at their worship, and moved them from the Arthurshayne farmhouse to a place on High Street. He died in 1724. Elkanah Widgery settled within two years, and stayed till his death in 1766. Samuel Rowles followed in 1769, after Daniel Sprague and John Rippon senior had rendered help. He left for Rotherhithe in 1776, just as Thompson was gathering this information.

CULLOMPTON had members of Upottery worshipping here as early as 1700. Building was mooted in 1743, when Vearey presented the case in London, but it took seven years to get the house erected; and Vearey, who had been there since 1736, had moved on to Lymington. Nicholas Gillard settled about 1751, was helped forty years later by Rumson from Exeter, who succeeded him in 1803, when he resigned at the age of 85.

CORNWALL has not been a good soil for Baptists. Though several were there in Commonwealth days, only at two places was there any permanence. Stephen Midhope, rector of St. Martin's, resigned his living and founded a church in Looe, to which he ministered till his death in 1652. Cowlin was minister till 1694, Clement Jackson in 1722. They had a meeting-house, still to be seen in 1862 as a lumber-store, with its burial-ground; but the church died out by 1780, and the name of no minister was recorded in 1715 or 1774. From the labours of Thomas

Tregoss, ejected from Milor and Mabe, arose a Baptist church at Trelevah, near Penryn. John Plurrett was pastor till his death in 1698, then Cowlin from Looe till his death in 1720. John Lob, the deacon, built a thatched meeting-house in 1703. John Burford, a member of Up Ottery, came from Church Stanton in Devon, 1722-1741, and opened a branch at Grampound. After his death the meeting-house was converted into tenements and the cause sank very low. Jonathan Hornblower came in 1745 from Salop, and rallied all Baptists by 1764, building a new meeting-house at Chacewater, and merging the remnants of the old churches into what ultimately centred at Falmouth.

UPOTTERY had a tangled and adventurous early history. It may date from 1652, when Luppit was the chief place of meeting, and Thomas Collier was the evangelist to whom it is due. But in the times of persecution they met by stealth in woods and farms, and only in 1695 did they build the New House in Upottery, while the Old Hall at Prescott served others. The first pastor was Thomas Halwell, who piloted them from 1689 at least, till his death about 1720, being helped latterly by Bowsher and John Channin. A building was erected at Prescott in 1718. After Halwell's death there were troubles between rival ministers, and on the question of singing. Prescott organized as a separate church in 1727, but there was another crisis in 1745, settled by Isaac Hann. Prescott's first pastor was John Gillard, who went to Yeovil in 1771, after six years. Wood in a year went to Salendine Nook, Symonds ministered for a few months, then Joseph Alsop settled in 1773, and they built a new house in 1785. Next year Benjamin Thomas came from Upton and soon opened out at Uffculm; he resigned only in 1830. Meanwhile at Upottery Isaac Hann from Stockland guided the church, and promoted a rebuilding. After a year of Crisp, John Rippon senior took charge till the end of the century.

WHITTLESEY AND MARCH had a large company of General Baptists in 1710, when John Cropper, John Shearman, and Benjamin Grantham were leaders. John Catlin worked there in 1714; but to an outsider next year, Thomas Speechley seemed the elder; he had a flock of 160. But the General Baptists were very neglectful of training ministers, and by 1732 services were being conducted by Benjamin Dutton, the Particular Baptist of Wellingborough. The church dwindled; the meeting-house fell down, the property fell into private hands, and in 1774 Josiah Thompson knew nothing of any church. The New Connexion, however, did inquire, found a Thomas Grantham living there, and in 1823 made a new start.