

‘THE RESTORATION OF A CONGREGATION OF BAPTISTS’ Baptists and Irvingism in Oxfordshire

Over recent years British Baptists have become familiar with the emergence of new churches believing in the restoration of the ministries listed in Ephesians 4.11f - apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher - as a prerequisite of the Second Coming of Christ. Not infrequently such congregations have been given strength by secessions from Baptist churches; on occasion whole churches have adopted a restorationist theology and submitted to one or another of the apostles currently active in the United Kingdom. Considerable thought has been given within the Baptist constituency to the factors precipitating such events and the appropriate theological and pastoral responses to those who have seceded and those who have remained behind.

What is not commonly recognized, however, is that this is not a new phenomenon: the emergence of the Irvingite¹ movement in the 1830s witnessed the accession of several Baptist ministers, including Thomas Thonger of Mount Zion, Birmingham, William Keene of Melksham and Thomas Groser of Wells.² The most fascinating example of this, however, was James Hinton (1793-1862), whose father (of the same name) had been minister of New Road Baptist Church in Oxford from 1788 until his death in July 1823,³ and whose brother, John Howard Hinton (1791-1873), was to become a noted Baptist leader. Oxford in the early 1830s was a hotbed of religious ferment but, while the University was being shaken by the events which gave rise to Tractarianism, the local Baptists were being affected by Edward Irving's ideas about the restoration of spiritual gifts and the ministries of Ephesians 4 before the return of Christ. Hinton's story can be told in greater detail than those of the others because of the amount of available published and unpublished material relating to him and his friend, Henry Bulteel.⁴

Like his elder brother, James Hinton junior studied at the University of Edinburgh, gaining the degree of MA.⁵ Returning to Oxford, he was instrumental in beginning a Sunday school work in the nearby village of Littlemore in 1813;⁶ by the following year he was assisting in his father's day school.⁷ At some point he was ordained at Faringdon in Berkshire, being listed as pastor of the church there in 1823.⁸ In 1824 he became pastor of the newly-founded Baptist cause at George Street in the St Clement's area of Oxford, which numbered several members from New Road among its Trustees.⁹ This was a work which his father had set in motion a few days before he died, and the younger James also took over his father's educational work.¹⁰ Along with H.B. Bulteel,¹¹ curate-in-charge of St Ebbe's, he was influenced during the late 1820s by J. Haldane Stewart's¹² call to united prayer for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.¹³ A close friendship developed between Hinton and Bulteel, and this was to have unsettling consequences for both.

The setting for many of the events described in this article was the village of Eynsham, a few miles west of Oxford, where in 1808 or 1810 New Road had opened a chapel for outreach work.¹⁴ The cause prospered, congregations rising to over two hundred, and on the expiry of the lease a new chapel was opened in 1818.¹⁵ A church had been formed between 1812 and 1814,¹⁶ and the members requested James Hinton senior to act as their pastor until they could provide for themselves; he administered the Lord's Supper there once a month, other services being taken by lay preachers.¹⁷ By 1819, one J.T. Dobney was being described as 'pastor-elect';¹⁸ still 'minister and pastor-elect' in 1821,¹⁹ he finally settled as pastor in 1824 and served at least until 1831.²⁰ The appointment of a pastor implies that the work at Eynsham was now independent from New Road.

At this point we encounter an apparent conflict between Baptist and Catholic Apostolic sources. The Catholic Apostolic version of events was that opposition from Calvinists in the congregation at Eynsham to changes in the younger Hinton's preaching (apparently he and Bulteel were advocating belief in universal redemption and the immediate return of Christ - a very significant change, since his earlier ministry had been in Particular Baptist causes) meant that in July 1829 he 'seceded', along with seventy of his congregation. Soon after, Hinton and Bulteel visited Irving in London and on their return began to pray for Christ's Second Coming.²¹ Irving was in close contact with John Macleod Campbell, who was deposed from the Church of Scotland ministry in 1831 because he rejected limited atonement and those influenced by Irving also tended to reject traditional Calvinist belief in limited atonement.²² Hinton would have been no exception.²³

The first problem with this version is that the pastor at Eynsham was not James Hinton but J.T. Dobney. Although a James Hinton was one of the original trustees of the Eynsham chapel appointed in 1816,²⁴ this was more likely to have been the father. James junior participated in the annual meetings of the Oxfordshire Association on 9 June 1829; in view of his later vacillations as an Irvingite, it seems unlikely that he would have been capable of making up his mind to secede as early as the following month.²⁵ However, it is recorded that on 22 August 1830 he attempted to enter the pulpit at Eynsham and, when prevented by several of the congregation, stood at the top of the pulpit steps and gave notice in accordance with the trust deeds of a church meeting to be held on 30 August.²⁶ Another trustee, the maltster Robert Ford, wrote to the Bishop of Oxford on 22 September 1830 to certify that his house was being used as a dissenting meeting place,²⁷ so some kind of breakaway group was then meeting. This would have been, by some months, the first 'Irvingite' schism in England, but it appears to have been precipitated by disagreement over soteriology (and possibly eschatology); as yet there was no sign of any belief in the restoration of charismatic gifts.

The second problem with the Catholic Apostolic version is presented by Bulteel's adoption of high Calvinism, which predated his conversion to belief in general atonement. The train which led to his secession from the Establishment was laid by

his sermon before the University of Oxford on 6 February 1831. In this he defended the Calvinism of the *Thirty-Nine Articles* and attacked Anglican clergy for their Arminianism.²⁸ J.C. Philpot, an Anglican clergyman and Fellow of Worcester College, who seceded in 1835 and became a Strict Baptist, described it as 'a bold and faithful discourse, distinctly and clearly advocating the doctrines of grace',²⁹ Bulteel was still proclaiming Calvinist doctrines during his preaching tour of the West Country in June 1831 with William Tiptaft, another Calvinist clergyman who was to become a Strict Baptist and close friend of Philpot.³⁰ Dr John Hill, an earnest evangelical whose tea-parties at St Edmund Hall formed the centre of a social network which took in many of the evangelicals of the day, recorded on 10 August 1831 that the Bishop of Oxford had given Bulteel notice of withdrawal of his licence as curate at St Ebbe's, the preaching tour doubtless being the final indictment of a man who had been the subject of complaints by his churchwardens for several years.³¹ The following Sunday Bulteel laid down his charge under protest, denouncing the Bishop as 'an officer of the Church of Antichrist' and announcing a service in his garden that evening. A thousand people turned up, and Bulteel publicly tore up the Bishop's letter to him.³² For some weeks he preached in his back garden to large congregations. In September he stayed with Tiptaft and preached for him in Abingdon, a collection being taken towards the cost of building his new chapel; this was erected in Commercial Road and opened in 1832, drawing away a few from New Road.³³

Bulteel's adoption of Irvingite views therefore came as something of a bombshell to his friends. The initial evidence was the occurrence of several healings through the ministry of Bulteel and his wife, the first happening while he spent a week with Irving's congregation during October 1831.³⁴ On his return, he made known his belief in the genuineness of the charismatic manifestations, as Hill recorded: 'Bulteel has been spending a week with some of Mr Irving's friends & is come back satisfied of the genuineness of the miracles of healing + tongues:- and convinced moreover of their doctrine of general redemption'.³⁵ According to the Brethren leader, B.W. Newton, who had been greatly influenced by Bulteel's ministry at St Ebbe's, Bulteel had been introduced by a clergyman to Irving. He

saw Irving at his house, and some 'prophets' were there too. Bulteel said something severe in his bold way against the ministers who were in favour of Catholic emancipation, and one of the inspired persons said in an impressive manner, 'Is this the way that God's servants speak evil of dignities?' Bulteel quailed at her power, and gave in - He returned to Oxford an altered man.³⁶

Newton was unimpressed by the change:

Bulteel fell into connexion with Irvingism. - I knew it was injurious. I was myself at one of the Meetings and felt a supernatural power over me. - I went home and couldn't read my Bible, & I resolved never to be again within that circle. I left Oxford soon after. These things caused my leaving Oxford.³⁷

Tiptaft knew of Bulteel's change of views very soon after: he talked much with Bulteel, whom he considered was confusing those who sat under his ministry, but failed to win him back.³⁸ In the end he was forced to break the friendship: 'My old friend Bulteel and I can have now no communion. He holds the doctrine of universal pardon, is now distinguished for universal charity, and accuses God's children, who hold the doctrine of particular redemption, as having a bad spirit.'³⁹

In November, a rumour that Bulteel had begun to preach universal redemption reached the ears of the Strict Baptist, Henry Fowler, minister of the church at Gower Street in London. Bulteel met his enquiry as to the truth of this with a defence of the new light he had received which was as robust as his university sermon had been,⁴⁰ but such changeability led Fowler to raise doubts regarding his conversion.⁴¹

Early in 1832, Bulteel published an apologia for his change of views, entitled *The Doctrine of the Miraculous Interference of Jesus on behalf of believers, both in the first and in the last days of the Gentile dispensation, Asserted from Scripture and proved from Facts*. Affirming his belief that miracles were always meant 'to be present in the church's life, he expressed the conviction that those associated with his ministry were clearly 'connected with the fact of my having been cast out by one of the chief officers of a carnal church'.⁴²

Since 6 November 1831, Bulteel had been preaching regularly in James Hinton's pulpit at St Clement's.⁴³ On 12 February 1832, Bulteel preached for Hinton and was then baptized by him in the same service.⁴⁴ This provoked a pamphlet exchange between Hinton and the high-churchman, William Palmer of Worcester College. Palmer's first tract appeared just five days after Bulteel's baptism; in it he castigated Bulteel as a false prophet, rejecting the miracles which Bulteel claimed had occurred through his ministry. His baptism by Hinton confirmed this, since it implied that he had been calling himself the only true minister of God in Oxford while yet unbaptized.⁴⁵ Palmer impaled his opponent on the horns of a dilemma:

Mr Bulteel must himself confess, that he has *never yet been a minister of God*; unless he chooses to say, that his ordination and baptism in the Church were sufficient; in which case he condemns himself for separating from the Church, and receiving baptism *a second time* contrary to Scripture.⁴⁶

Either way, Palmer considered him under a spirit of delusion. If Bulteel had been a minister before the miraculous cures took place, he could only prove it by acknowledging the sufficiency of his Anglican baptism; if he was not a minister, then he must admit that he was wrong in believing that the miracles were a testimony to the Bishop's error in depriving him of his curacy.⁴⁷

Hinton responded on 25 February by undercutting Palmer's argument, denying the necessity of baptism as a pre-requisite for ministry; even strict-unionists, he revealed, would allow persons to preach whom they considered unbaptized. He himself had not been baptized when he began preaching (with his father's concurrence) in the villages around Oxford.⁴⁸ He accused Palmer of approaching

the case with his mind already made up, and of wilfully refusing to listen to the evidence - a token that he was the one under a spirit of delusion!⁴⁹

A postscript to the second edition of Bulteel's *Miraculous Interference* expressed the conviction that sprinkling was not to be equated with baptism, and that while he was inclined to baptize his own children, he would wait for more light on the matter, either from Scripture or through prophecy.⁵⁰ Palmer responded with another pamphlet, *At him again! or the fox without a tail, Being Another Word for Mr Bulteel*. Expressing surprise at his antagonist's unwonted silence,⁵¹ he put his finger on Bulteel's weak spot - his combination of instability and aggressive promotion of his latest doctrinal position:

He has already been a Calvinist, an Antinomian, a Paedo-Baptist, a Puritan, a Seceder, an Arminian, and is now a sort of mongrel Baptist. In a month hence he may be a Quaker, in two, a Socinian, in three, an Infidel, in four, a Papist. He cannot give us any security that his creed will not differ next Sunday from what it is now ...

And yet can Mr Bulteel deny that, amidst all his changes of religion, he has been continually in the habit of declaring, that he was the *only true minister of God in Oxford*, and even of threatening *eternal damnation* to all who would not embrace the very opinions which he himself gave up immediately afterwards?⁵²

Denying that any of the evidence adduced by Hinton proved that Bulteel was truly a minister of God, Palmer expressed the suspicion that Bulteel would change his mind again and himself declare that he was not.⁵³ His ignorance regarding whether or not he should baptize his own children proved him incapable of acting as a reformer of the church.⁵⁴ Palmer challenged Hinton to go all the way and give up contending for believer's baptism, and indeed to give up practising baptism altogether, since his practice of open communion proved that it was not an essential.⁵⁵

Hinton's support for Bulteel must have strained his relationship with the New Road church, although it would seem likely that St Clement's had been independent since his settlement there. New Road's membership list records that several members were put out of fellowship in March 1832 for following Bulteel's delusions and errors - presumably his belief in the manifestations.⁵⁶ Newton recalled that Bulteel sought to preach 'in the power' (i.e. under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost), and that 'Such excitement prevailed amongst his congregation that several rushed one night out of their beds and baptized one another in the Isis.'⁵⁷ One contemporary report alleged that the manifestations among Bulteel's congregation were even more powerful than those anywhere else, including Regent Square, and that Bulteel himself spoke often 'in the power'.⁵⁸

Developments in Eynsham were keeping pace with those in Oxford. One of Hinton's supporters there was a baker, Jonathan Smith,⁵⁹ who was developing a deeper spiritual life, studying the works of Richard Baxter and John Wesley, fasting

regularly, and praying seven times a day. With the prophet Edward Taplin from Irving's church in Regent Square, Smith had visited one of the charismatic movement's leaders, J.B. Cardale, in the autumn of 1831, and come away convinced that the work was of God.⁶⁰ He had been assured in prayer that God would restore his church, and exercised considerable influence when during the autumn of 1832 the first utterances in power at Eynsham took place. Hinton, as well as Bulteel, had now observed the gifts in London, and it appears that both their congregations had begun to pray for them to be manifested locally.⁶¹

Bulteel and Irving had agreed that ministers involved should confer informally regarding the gifts, but otherwise remain independent.⁶² According to Catholic Apostolic writers, Bulteel preferred the autonomy of such a network of gifted congregations and could not accept the introduction of the office of apostleship with its claim to universal jurisdiction; however, the excesses associated with his ministry were probably a more important factor in his change of mind. Criticism of Bulteel had come not only from those opposed to the manifestations but also from the 'gifted persons' (i.e. those considered to possess the gifts of tongues and prophecy) in Irving's London circle, who disapproved of the rash manner in which he sought to implement his convictions, and early in 1832 prophecy through the influential Robert Baxter had warned a group at Irving's house against grieving God by following Bulteel's course.⁶³ Further testimony to his fanaticism comes from another friend of Irving's, the converted Jew Ridley Herschell, who recorded that for six weeks in the spring of 1832 he filled the pulpit of an Oxford friend who needed a break in order to reflect on the excitement induced by the appearance there of the charismatic manifestations; in view of Herschell's comment that this individual scarce knew whether he was in heaven or hell, it seems that he is referring to Bulteel, who later spoke in similar terms of his experience. Herschell had already warned him of the danger of allowing these to continue unchecked: when, in the middle of his first sermon there, a woman began to speak in tongues, he silenced her with the assertion that he also had a message from God, insisting on observing the apostolic injunction that all things should be done decently and in order. He stated that such phenomena would be allowed after the service, when the unbelieving had retired, but the tongues gradually petered out.⁶⁴

Bulteel had evidently begun to doubt the gifts after Herschell's visit, some months before any apostles were called, and came by April 1833 to reject the gifts, along with Irving's christology.⁶⁵ It seems that his recantation was also partly due to reading that of the former prophet, Robert Baxter: realizing that he had never asked God to show him whether the spirit behind the manifestations was the Holy Spirit, Bulteel now prayed that if it was, the manifestations would increase, and that if it was not, they would cease. The next morning, the 'gifted persons' in his congregation were silent. He later recalled how, during his belief in the manifestations, the Bible had been a sealed book to him: he could not read two pages of it without falling asleep.⁶⁶ Philpot mentions further factors in Bulteel's

change of mind: 'What was called the spirit fell on his two children, then quite young, and this, with other circumstances - among others, that these views led him quite away from Christ crucified - instrumentally opened his eyes to see how he had been deluded, and to renounce his errors'.⁶⁷

Bulsteel's deliverance was gradual, however: part of his congregation joined Hinton's (presumably at St Clement's), the rest refused to accept the gifts, and Bulsteel himself retired temporarily from all religious activity, suffering some kind of breakdown. In a letter to Baxter he spoke of his severe mental suffering under the assaults of Satan presenting himself as the risen Christ, which he resisted by looking to Christ crucified.⁶⁸ He visited Hill on 18 May, giving:

an account of his gracious deliverance from the awful delusions concerning supernatural gifts (of miracles, tongues, prophesyings & visions) which he has so long been carried into ...

He spoke with horror of two of Irving's errors - concerning the human nature of Christ, & perfectibility on earth.⁶⁹

Hinton commented that several who came to him from Bulsteel's congregation had initially evidenced a rebellious spirit, especially towards his own position as pastor, arising out of their being misinformed regarding his pastoral conduct.⁷⁰ It appears that his assistant Symes had also come from Bulsteel's congregation, and that he and James did not always see eye to eye.⁷¹ Hinton evidently found it hard to give decisive leadership (a problem which would have been exacerbated by the gifted persons' claim to speak from God), and apparently suspended the observance of the Lord's Supper for a time, writing on 27 July 1833 to Spencer Perceval to request his advice:

On Lord's Day week, the period for the Lord's Supper returns, and I feel very reluctant to pass it by a second time; and yet I feel still more reluctant to celebrate it any more according to the fleshly ordinance, greatly desiring the ordinance from heaven. O thou Watchman, enquire of the Lord for me by his Holy Apostle, what He would have me do.⁷²

During the summer of 1833, there was another outbreak of prophecy at Oxford and Eynsham. Problems soon manifested themselves: a woman began to speak in power, forbidding the practice of infant baptism which was general among those who accepted the restoration of spiritual gifts. She commanded that instead the children be blessed by the pastor and that she should then lay hands on them.⁷³ The Irvingite leaders watched anxiously from London, awaiting the Spirit's direction, and wrote a warning letter. On 8 May she declared herself an apostle, calling on Hinton to accompany her to London where she would show herself to be such. Irving was under the impression that Hinton and Symes approved of this development, but Hinton considered that her 'call' proved that she spoke by an evil spirit.⁷⁴ Prophecy directed Cardale, now an apostle, and Perceval to go to Oxford at once to sort things out. An evil spirit was cast out and the woman repented.⁷⁵

Cardale stayed teaching for some weeks, carefully including the subject of infant baptism, and Perceval remained for a time ministering on behalf of the Apostles to strengthen Hinton until full ordination should be given him.⁷⁶ During this time, it would seem, prophecy called Hinton and Symes to minister in Oxford and surrounding villages: this may be interpreted as a call to the 'spiritual ministry', exercised in the power of the Spirit and attended by the charismata, which was expected to supersede existing ordination, which would have been viewed as lacking the ability to convey spiritual grace. Hinton testified to encouraging response to his ministry, which included gospel services, in the villages, although not in Oxford.⁷⁷ On 10 August he wrote again to Perceval in discouragement, confessing that he and Symes disagreed as to how to handle the manifestations, and that when testing one woman claiming the gift of prophecy, they came to contradictory conclusions; unsurprisingly, he felt out of his depth when it came to 'trying the spirits' by demanding testimony to Christ. 'Oh my ignorance and poverty! - May the Lord Jesus mercifully send down His Apostle to try the Spirits by the Spirit of Discernment of the Holy Ghost'.⁷⁸ It was the practice at this time for those claiming charismatic gifts to be tested to see whether, 'in the power', they would acknowledge Christ as come in the flesh (I John 4.1), in the sense entailed by Irving's christology, i.e. as peccable and maintained sinless only through the power of the Holy Spirit. What worried Hinton was Cardale's warning that even Satan could inspire individuals to confess Christ verbally in this manner, which limited the value of verbal assent to I John 4.1 as a test of the spirits.⁷⁹ He noted that three-sevenths of his congregation at St Clement's had left as a result of the gifts, while others would be caused to stumble when the prophetic command to practise baptism of infant children of believers had to be acted on; he expected to be called upon to give up the chapel by the denomination. His desire to engage in full-time ministry, for whose fulfilment he had prayed for fifteen years, seemed less likely than ever to come to fruition.⁸⁰ He asked Perceval to lay the letter before God for an answer; it was read by Cardale, who penned a response to which Perceval added.

Such dependence upon outside direction is remarkable when one remembers, firstly, the strong Baptist tradition of congregational independence, and secondly, Hinton's own background as the son and brother of notable pastors. Rossteuscher attributes the change in baptismal practice to the action of the Holy Spirit:

This breath of the Lord carried them over an obstacle, that would otherwise have stood very much in the way of the restoration of a congregation of Baptists. In the fact that the spiritual gifts were bestowed 1st on such as had been baptized as infants, the most stiff-necked could not but see that Infant Baptism had been ordained of the Lord, and it was acknowledged by Him. And express words of prophecy confirmed this truth and rebuked the sectarian error. Surely such doctrines never were put forth by the Baptist spirit. Mr Hinton immediately declared himself ready for the future to baptize Infants. For a moment the people seemed shocked at beholding the fall of their idols. But could they contradict the Holy Ghost Himself who was commanding it?

... the introduction of Infant Baptism met with no opposition in these congregations, except one that was demoniacal ... The Lord Himself had cured these people of their Baptist errors.⁸¹

Hinton was not the only Baptist whose thinking changed in this way; Thomas Groser, too, produced a work advocating infant baptism in 1834, soon after his conversion to Irvingism, again adducing prophetic words in favour of infant baptism as an important reason for accepting it.⁸² It is intriguing to note that Groser's pamphlet earned a reply from none other than John Howard Hinton, after James had sent him a copy for comment.⁸³ Tantalizingly, John sidesteps any direct comment on his brother's involvement in Irvingism.

If Rossteuscher's concluding sentence leaves us unconvinced, what are we to make of James's adoption of paedobaptist convictions? Part of the reason for his readiness to change his views may have been the fact that they were already, as we have seen, fairly liberal, probably having been shaped by his family and church background. His mother had been a paedobaptist and in membership at New Road before her baptism.⁸⁴ When refounded in the late eighteenth century, the church had incorporated Presbyterians from the old cause as well as Baptists in its fellowship, whilst Independents were also received into membership there.⁸⁵ However, we must not underestimate the influence of the prophetic manifestations: Hinton's background merely made him more receptive to their message, as did his temperament. By contrast, it is significant that Bulteel's adoption of Irvingite views coincided with his *rejection* of paedobaptism; we have also noted Newton's reference to spirit-inspired baptism of believers alleged to have occurred among Bulteel's congregation. It is possible, in view of the wariness shown by the 'gifted persons' in London concerning events in Bulteel's congregation, that the content, as well as the tenor, of the prophetic manifestations occurring under his ministry was unacceptable to them, especially if these manifestations were causing people to reject infant baptism. The London group would have been predisposed to paedobaptist views because of Irving's strong advocacy of an ecclesiology founded thereon, and this would not be the only occasion in the emergent Irvingite movement when prophecy was deemed not to be of God because it took an independent line on some doctrinal or practical matter.⁸⁶

Prophecy was to play a determinative role in shaping the course of the church at Eynsham; two of the seven Prophets who accompanied the newly-separated Apostles into retreat at Albury in 1835-6 were Jonathan Smith and J. Hester, another Oxford Baptist.⁸⁷ Yet events also demonstrated the need for it to be firmly handled: Rossteuscher comments that evil spirits were able to gain entry to the congregation because Hinton had failed to understand fully or exercise the rule and discernment which belonged to his office.⁸⁸ This weakness notwithstanding, Hinton was ordained as Angel (presiding minister or bishop of a congregation) for Oxford and Eynsham on 19 June 1834.⁸⁹ It has been suggested that the Irvingite congregation was initially set up at Eynsham rather than Oxford 'because the

University used its influence to prevent any church in Oxford itself,⁹⁰ although it may have been felt best to allow the furore surrounding the excesses in Bulteel's congregation to die down before attempting to establish an independent work in the city. On 25 December 1835, however, an independent Irvingite church was established in Oxford by the separation of the two congregations which had been under Hinton's oversight, Hinton continuing as Angel at Eynsham. Cardale paid a visit to Eynsham in July 1836, and a church building was consecrated on 17 May 1837 on ground hitherto owned by Robert Ford.⁹¹ Prophecy continued to cause problems, for Hinton's successor at Oxford, James Wells, wrote several letters to Perceval during 1837 about pastoral issues, including the case of another doubtful prophethess.⁹²

James Hinton married Rachel Wall at Eynsham in February 1838⁹³ and, although he became Angel of the Paddington congregation in August of that year,⁹⁴ he was resident in Eynsham again by 1840: the parish registers record the baptism of his daughters, Sarah and Eliza, on 18 January and their burial on the 24th.⁹⁵ Irvingite services in Eynsham ceased in 1843,⁹⁶ probably as a result of the introduction that year of an elaborate liturgy which required more ministers to perform it than most Irvingite congregations could supply, and which led to the closure of many outposts and the concentration of ministers in larger centres (members of closed churches would normally have attended their parish church). Of James's later life we have few details; the register of ministers at Paddington has only the note '?alive 1851'. He died at Oxford on 11 February 1862.⁹⁷ However, the Eynsham church was in use again by 1860, and was one of the last Catholic Apostolic churches in Britain to remain open, not closing until 1982.⁹⁸

The Baptist cause at Eynsham experienced a revival of its fortunes during the early 1830s before declining, probably as a result of the ferment introduced by Irvingism.⁹⁹ The St Clement's church did not appear in a list of Baptist churches compiled in 1835, although Bulteel's church did;¹⁰⁰ the following year, the St Clement's building was put up for sale to discharge the mortgage debt.¹⁰¹ New Road itself saw another secession in 1830, when Independents who had formed part of the congregation were amicably dismissed to form a new church, building their own chapel in George Street in 1832.¹⁰² Bulteel's congregation experienced a secession in 1840 which resulted in the founding of the first regular Brethren meeting in Oxford.¹⁰³ Bulteel himself continued changeable in his religious opinions; by 1844 we find him involved in the founding of the Free Church of England, preaching at the opening of its church in Exeter,¹⁰⁴ and he died at Plymouth, where he had associated with Brethren.

In this narrative, prophetic utterance has appeared in turn as the problem and, when it came through the 'gifted persons' in London or was in accord with the tenor of their utterances, as part of the solution. It seems likely that the charismatic movement's leaders were concerned to avoid the possibility of contradictory prophecy which had already been evident within their circle. They were learning

by experience how to test claims to prophetic gifting and it may be significant that the mercurial prophet, Edward Taplin,¹⁰⁵ was not sent to Oxford at any point; with his record of unacceptable prophecy and his refusal on occasion to accept the decisions of the Apostles, he might have proved of doubtful assistance in such a volatile situation.

The immediate effect of this episode on the evangelical cause within the University was perceived by some in negative terms: in Newton's opinion, 'Newmanism would never be the success it is if it hadn't been for that flood of Irvingism.'¹⁰⁶ Henry Fowler concurred with the judgement of the high Calvinist, Dr Hawker, that those who had recently seceded from the Establishment had all fallen into error, and that they would have done better to have remained where they were.¹⁰⁷ Certainly it was St Ebbe's which fared better than any of the other churches in this story, being served by a succession of respected evangelical clergymen through the rest of the nineteenth century and beyond. Furthermore, Reynolds chronicles an increasing number of evangelicals nurtured at Oxford after this period, so the long-term effect on more moderate evangelicalism of these events must have been less than the foregoing judgements might imply. It is debatable whether the evidence justifies Newton's assertion that the rise of Tractarianism owed much to Irvingite excess, as though the failure of one attempt to realize a 'high' ecclesiology led to the success of another. More probably, the forces which shaped the destinies of both movements were acting on each at the same time.

On a more general level, this episode highlights the turmoil affecting Baptists at the time: we hear of Baptists turning to Brethrenism (e.g. Robert Chapman at Barnstaple), high Calvinism (as seen in the events leading to the formation of the 'new association' in Suffolk in 1830), and here to Irvingism. Similar troubles beset the Independents and the Presbyterians. All this was part of the unsettlement which affected the 'second generation' of evangelicals, an unsettlement which reflected the disturbances on the wider social and political scene and which led many to conclude, as have Restorationists today, that evangelicalism needed something more in the way of an ecclesiology than it had hitherto possessed.

NOTES

- 1 Least anyone should consider this a term loaded with pejorative connotations, I should explain that the movement's formal title of 'Catholic Apostolic Church' did not come into use until 1849 (H.B. Copinger, 'Annals: The Lord's work in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries', typescript [1951], 101). I have used S. Newman-Norton's edited and updated transcript of this important Catholic Apostolic history in the library of the British Orthodox Church, but a copy of the original is in the Bodleian Library Bodl.MS.Facs.b.61).
- 2 Thomas Groser (1802-98), brother of the Baptist leader, William Groser (1791-1856), Baptist minister at Wells 1827-34; 'cast out' 18 May 1834 for preaching the Second Advent and accepting the restored apostleship; Irvingite Angel at Wells 1835-47; from the 1850s often preached at the Catholic Apostolic Church in Gordon Square, London (C.G. Flegg, *Gathered under Apostles*, Oxford 1992, 16; S. Newman-Norton, 'A Biographical Index of those associated with the Lord's Work', s.v. 'Groser, Thomas', British Library typescript [1972],

- pressmark: X203/482). A record survives of Groser's ordination as Angel in April 1835 and the prophecies associated therewith (Perceval Papers, BL Add.MS 49192, 57/11).
- 3 *Blackwell's Dictionary of Evangelical Biography 1730-1860*, Oxford 1995 (hereinafter *BDEB*), s.v. 'Hinton, James'; J.S. Reynolds, *The Evangelicals at Oxford 1735-1871*, Appleford 1975, 64.
 - 4 I have drawn extensively on Irvingite sources, but Anglicans, Brethren and Strict Baptist writers have also furnished valuable insights. Relatively little material has been found in other Baptist sources, however; if any readers can provide further information, I should be pleased to hear from them.
 - 5 J.H. Hinton, *Biographical portraiture of the late Rev. James Hinton*, Oxford and London 1824, 62.
 - 6 *ibid.* 283; W. Stevens and W.W. Bottoms, *The Baptists of New Road, Oxford*, Oxford 1948, 14.
 - 7 J.H. Hinton, *Biographical portraiture*, 83.
 - 8 *ibid.* 65; *Baptist Magazine* 15 (1823), 27 (hereinafter *BM*). I have not been able to trace when the ordination took place.
 - 9 *BM* 16 (1824), 532.
 - 10 *ibid.*; 23 (1831), 204, 393.
 - 11 Henry Bellenden Bulteel (1800-66): Fellow of Exeter College 1823; ordained deacon June 1824; priest December 1825; converted 1826; curate-in-charge St Ebbe's December 1826 (*BDEB* s.v. 'Bulteel, Henry (Bellenden)'; *DNB*; Index to clergy in the Oxford diocese, Oxfordshire Record Office). For a very full account of Bulteel's Anglican career, see Grayson Carter, 'Evangelical seceders from the Church of England, c.1800-1850', unpublished DPhil dissertation, Oxford 1990, ch.7.
 - 12 J. Haldane Stewart (1776-1854) was an Anglican clergyman who visited Switzerland in 1819-20 and was profoundly influenced by the *Réveil*. Returning to London, he determined to give more emphasis in his ministry to the Holy Spirit, and in 1821 published a tract which exerted a significant influence upon much of the Evangelical movement. *Thoughts on the importance of special prayer for the general outpouring of the Holy Spirit* (*BDEB*, s.v. *importance of special prayer for the general outpouring of the Holy Spirit* (*BDEB*, s.v. 'Stewart, James Haldane'; D.W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 1989, 76).
 - 13 E.A. Rossteuscher, 'The rebuilding of the Church of Christ upon the original foundations', 321. BL MS [1871], pressmark 764n13. Catholic Apostolics asserted that the younger Hinton owed his appointment to Bulteel's influence (L.A. Hewett, *The story of the Lord's work*, Glasgow 1899, 42), but this is impossible as Bulteel was not converted until 1826.
 - 14 The curate of Eynaham, Thomas Symonds, wrote to the Bishop of Oxford on 4 April 1808, expressing unease about the prospect of the Baptists opening a meeting-house (MSS.Oxf.Dioc. d.707 f.64, Oxfordshire Record Office), and this date has been followed by most sources; however, the 'Case of the congregation at Ensham [sic], Oxfordshire', produced by James Hinton senior in 1817 to solicit funds for building a new chapel, states that the need arose from the expiry of a seven-year lease taken out in 1810 on a building which had been fitted up for use as a place of worship (Eynsham Baptist Church Records, Angus Library, Regent's Park College, Oxford).
 - 15 Alan Crossley, ed., *Victoria History Vol.XII, Wootton Hundred (South) including Woodstock*, Oxford 1990, 153.
 - 16 *BM* 19 (1827), 135; 23 (1831), 204; 27 (1835), 561 give the foundation date as 1812; James Hinton senior placed it in 1814 (letter to the managers of the Particular Baptist Fund, 20 January 1817, Oxfordshire Record Office CH.CXXI/1; cf. [idem], *An historical sketch of eighteen Baptist churches, included in the Oxfordshire Association*, Oxford 1821, 7).
 - 17 J.H. Hinton, *Biographical portraiture*, 285; 'Ensham case'.
 - 18 Note of 3 April 1819 in an account book in the Eynsham Baptist records.
 - 19 [James Hinton senior], *Historical Sketch*, 7.
 - 20 *BM* 23 (1831), 592.
 - 21 Rossteuscher, 'Rebuilding', 321f; cf. H.B. Copinger, 'Annals', 14.
 - 22 A.L. Drummond and J. Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688-1843*, Edinburgh 1973, 203. Interestingly, John Howard Hinton also moved away from his father's moderate Calvinism (*BDEB*, s.v. 'Hinton, John Howard').
 - 23 It is worth noting that Hinton was related through his mother to the Independent Taylor family of Ongar in Essex, who had had some contact with Irving during the late 1820s (J.C.G. Binfield to author, 24 July 1996; J. Gilbert, ed., *Autobiography and other memorials of Ann Gilbert*, 1874, 2.93; *DNB*, s.v. 'Taylor, Isaac').
 - 24 Trustees' minute book of 1884 in Eynsham Baptist records.

- 25 *BM* 21 (1829), 346.
- 26 Memorandum in Eynsham Baptist records. Two of the three witnesses to this memorandum, William Smith and Robert Ford, were to join the Irvingites. No mention is made of Dobney; presumably he was absent.
- 27 MSS.Oxf.Dioc. c.645 f.166.
- 28 H.B. Bulteel, *A sermon on I Corinthians II.12 preached before the University of Oxford, at St Mary's on Sunday Feb.6, 1831*, Oxford 1831.
- 29 J.H. Philpot, ed., *The Seceders (1829-1869): The story of a spiritual awakening as told in the letters of Joseph Charles Philpot ... and of William Tiptaft ...*, 1930, 1.57.
- 30 *ibid.*, 164.
- 31 'Diary of the Rev. John Hill, Bodleian Library, St Edmund Hall MS 67/8.
- 32 Anon., *The unknown tongues!! or, Rev. Edward Irving arraigned at the bar of the Scriptures of truth, and found guilty*, 1832, 30.
- 33 J.H. Philpot, ed., *The Seceders*, 1.60, cf.170 (Tiptaft to W.T. Keal, 5 September 1831); Stevens and Bottoms, *New Road Baptists*, 15. The chapel was known as 'Adullam' (Alan Crossley, ed., *Victoria History. Vol.IV, The City of Oxford*, Oxford 1979, 418).
- 34 [H.B. Bulteel], 'Miraculous Cures', *Morning Watch* 5 (1832), 218-22. In qualification, it must be stated that in at least one case there had been prolonged resistance to teaching about the Holy Spirit and miraculous healing, which implies that Bulteel's views had begun to change a while before: however, this does not appear to have been public knowledge.
- 35 Hill Diary, 67/8, 18 October 1831.
- 36 'Fry MS', 105, Christian Brethren Archive, John Rylands University Library, Manchester, MS.7049 (underlining in source). This source, which represents Newton's recollections in old age, is an important if not wholly reliable primary source for Brethren history. Newton thought that this was the first time Bulteel had met Irving (*ibid.* 98); if this is true, then the earlier visit recorded by Catholic Apostolic sources may only have been to attend services at Regent Square.
- 37 *ibid.* 96.
- 38 J.H. Philpot, ed., *The Seceders*, 1.177 (Tiptaft to Keal, 16 November 1831).
- 39 *ibid.* 184 (Tiptaft to Keal, 25 February 1832). Newton recorded: 'Tiptaft told me he remained connected with the movement as long as he could. - But when at a dinner together they drank - or proposed - the toast "The Holy Spirit" he left, shocked.' ('Fry MS', 97).
- 40 H. Fowler, *Letters to the Rev. H.B. Bulteel, occasioned by his departure from the doctrines of truth, commonly called Calvinism*, 1831, 3-5.
- 41 *ibid.* 13.
- 42 H.B. Bulteel, *The doctrine of the miraculous interference of Jesus on behalf of believers ... Addressed to the Church of God at Oxford*, Oxford 1832, 30.
- 43 James Hinton, *A nut cracker: affectionately presented to a member of the Church of God at Oxford, who has found a hard nut to crack, with the hope of enabling him to get at the kernel without breaking his teeth*, Oxford 1832, 6.
- 44 *ibid.* 5f; 'A member of the Church of God at Oxford' [W. Palmer], *A hard nut to crack, or a word in season for Mr Bulteel*, Oxford 1832, 7. I am indebted to the Revd Dr Grayson Carter for assistance in locating these pamphlets.
- 45 [Palmer], *Hard nut*, 4f.
- 46 *ibid.* 10.
- 47 *ibid.* 11f.
- 48 James Hinton, *Nut cracker*, 6-8.
- 49 *ibid.* 12f.
- 50 Bulteel, *Miraculous interference*, 38f.
- 51 [W. Palmer], *At him again!* Oxford 1832, 3.
- 52 *ibid.* 6f.
- 53 *ibid.* 7.
- 54 *ibid.* 5, 10f.
- 55 *ibid.* 9.
- 56 New Road Baptist Church, membership list 1780-1836, Angus Library.
- 57 'Fry MS', 96.
- 58 'Another case of deliverance from delusion', *Christian Herald* 4 (1833), 125.
- 59 When Hinton tried to call the church meeting in August 1830, it was Smith's house which was to be the venue if the chapel vestry were not made available (Memorandum in Eynsham records).
- 60 Newman-Norton, 'Biographical Index', 103.
- 61 Rossteuscher, 'Rebuilding', 322f; cf. Copinger, 'Annals', 31.
- 62 Rossteuscher, 'Rebuilding', 325.
- 63 R. Baxter, *Narrative of facts, characterizing the supernatural manifestations, in Mr Irving's congregation, and other individuals, in England and Scotland, and formerly in the writer himself*, 1833, 72; cf. 'Fry MS', 98, 105. The gifted persons appear to have believed that Bulteel was following the lead given by a friend; it is tempting to surmise that the friend in question was Hinton, and the rash course Bulteel's (re)baptism.

- 64 [G.B. Sanderson], *Memoir of Ridley Haim Herschell*, [Edinburgh] 1869, 93f, cf. 95, 103.
- 65 Bulteel to Robert Baxter, 16 April 1833 (letter in possession of Mr Iain Murray of Edinburgh); cf. T.C.F. Stunt, 'Irvingite Pentecostalism and the Early Brethren', *Journal of the Christian Brethren Research Fellowship* 10 (1965), 46.
- 66 'Another case of deliverance from delusion', *Christian Herald* 4 (1833), 127.
- 67 J.C. Philpot, *Memoir of the late William Tiptaft* (2nd edition, 1867), 59n. Bulteel was not married until 1829, so the children must have been very young indeed!
- 68 Bulteel to Baxter, 16 April 1833; cf. Bulteel to E.N. Hoare (editor of the *Christian Herald*), 30 October 1833, in *Christian Herald* 5 (1834), 63; Rossteuscher, 'Rebuilding', 325; cf. Copinger, 'Annals', 31.
- 69 Hill Diary, 67/9.
- 70 Perceval Papers 68/10 (Hinton to Perceval, 10 September 1833). Perceval was the son of the assassinated Prime Minister of the same name; an elder in Irving's congregation, he later became an apostle.
- 71 Cf. Newman-Norton, 'Biographical Index', s.v. 'Symes, John'.
- 72 Perceval Papers, 68/7. The apostle is presumably Cardale, in view of his involvement with the situation noted above; the idea that existing ordinances were being cast off by God as being of the flesh had been part of Robert Baxter's prophecies. Problems with the Lord's Supper continued: Hinton wrote to Perceval on 7 September that ten had retired from the table before the communion, but that they had repented after prophecy condemned their action as rebellion (*ibid.* 68/11).
- 73 Rossteuscher, 'Rebuilding', 462f.
- 74 Letter of Irving to Drummond, 20 June 1833, Northumberland Collection (Alnwick Castle) C9/19; Tierney Papers. Card Index A.3, notes on Perceval Papers 68/8 (Hinton to Perceval, 10 August 1833), University College London MS.Add.384; Rossteuscher, 'Rebuilding', 463. I am indebted to His Grace the Duke of Northumberland for permission to make use of material from the Northumberland Collection.
- 75 Rossteuscher, 'Rebuilding', 463; cf. Copinger, 'Annals', 37.
- 76 Rossteuscher, 'Rebuilding', 464.
- 77 Perceval Papers 68/7 (Hinton to Perceval, 23 July 1833).
- 78 *ibid.* 68/8.
- 79 *ibid.* 68/9.
- 80 *ibid.* 68/8.
- 81 Rossteuscher, 'Rebuilding', 324; cf. Hewett, 'Story of the Lord's work', 44.
- 82 T. Groser, *Explanatory Notes on Infant Baptism*, Wells 1834, 16.
- 83 For Hinton's response, in a letter dated 18 November 1834, see *Theological works of the Rev. John Howard Hinton, M.A.*, 1864, 3.479-500. This states that Thomas Groser was the brother of William Groser, but wrongly alleges that Thomas's espousal of paedobaptism followed upon his joining the Plymouth Brethren (*ibid.* 500).
- 84 J.H. Hinton, *Biographical Portraiture*, 74.
- 85 *Victoria History*, 4.255, following Bodl.MS.Top.Oxon.c.300, f.386.
- 86 For other instances of this, see T.G. Grass, 'The taming of the prophets': bringing prophecy under control in the Catholic Apostolic Church', *Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* 16 (1996), 58-70.
- 87 Rossteuscher, 'Rebuilding', 322.
- 88 *ibid.* 462.
- 89 Copinger, 'Annals', 46.
- 90 Undated letter of Fr. Columba Graham Flegg to author.
- 91 *Victoria History*, 12.154 (cf. Robert Ford and William Smith to the Bishop of Oxford, 19 August 1837, MSS.Oxf.Dioc. c.646. f.51); Newman-Norton, 'Biographical Index', s.v. 'Hinton, James'; *idem*, 'The Catholic Apostolic Church: Historical Directory of Churches', 23. Undated MS, British Orthodox Church Library.
- 92 Perceval Papers, 68/29-31.
- 93 'International Genealogical Index', Oxfordshire, 1988 edition, 4014.
- 94 Copinger, 'Annals', 83.
- 95 Transcript of Eynsham St Leonard's parish registers, Oxfordshire Record Office.
- 96 *Victoria History*, 12.154.
- 97 Eynsham parish registers.
- 98 *Victoria History*, 12.154.
- 99 *ibid.* 12.153.
- 100 *BM* 27 (1835), 561. Bulteel's church was listed as having sixty members and no less than 800 hearers.
- 101 Alan Crossley, ed., *Victoria History of the County of Oxford. Vol. V, Bullingdon Hundred*, Oxford 1957, 266 (following *Oxford Journal*, 14 May 1836).
- 102 E.C. Alden, *The Old Church at New Road: A Contribution to the History of Oxford Nonconformity*, Oxford and London [1904], 33;

- Reynolds, *Evangelicals at Oxford*, new section, 35; *Victoria History*, 4.255.
103 Reynolds, *Evangelicals at Oxford*, 98n.
104 H.B. Bulteel, *An address delivered at the opening of a Free Episcopal Church, in the city*
105 Taplin was an influential figure among the London 'gifted persons', although he was in and out of favour with Irving and the Apostles; for details of his career, see Grass, 'Taming of the Prophets', 58-61.
106 'Fry MS', 234.
107 Fowler, *Letters to Bulteel*, 11.

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George Street Baptist Church, Plymouth: transcript of Church Book [the original no longer survives] 1648-1778

Hertfordshire Baptist Association: committee minutes and associated papers of HBA Women's organizations 1942-1994

Kent Baptist Association: minutes and associated correspondence 1975-1989

Robinson, Dr Theodore: missionary reminiscences and photograph album of Serampore, Calcutta, 1911

Steane, Revd James of Bletchingley, Surrey: diary and family photographs 1852-1856

Strode Crescent Baptist Church, Sheerness, Kent: church records 1897-1940

Tottlebank Baptist Church, Cumbria: additional records (meeting house licences, receipts, etc.) 1711-1789

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The Association of Denominational Historical Societies and Cognate Libraries will hold its annual meeting on 29 October 1998, 2 p.m., at Dr Williams's Library, when J.E. Wynne Davies will present a paper on the Welsh Presbyterian mission to Brittany. All interested persons are cordially invited. The Association's second conference, 'Protestant Nonconformity in England and Wales in the Twentieth Century: A Retrospect', will be held at Westhill College, Birmingham, 26-29 July 2000. Information from Howard F. Gregg, 44 Seymour Road, London SW18 5JA