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EDITORIAL

Our articles are literally, although eccentrically, congregational, for they are accounts of two congregations. Cradley Chapel moved from Independency to Episcopalianism. Its historian, Dr. Sell, is now Secretary to the World Alliance of Reformed Churches' Department of Theology in Geneva. George Street, Oxford, was a Congregational secession from a Baptist church. The secession, unlike the original, has ceased to exist. Its historian, Professor Johnson, teaches in the Faculty of Theology at Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee. Our reviewers include Dr. Carwardine, of the University of Sheffield, whose review article is a valuable complement to Dr. Mayor's paper in our last issue, Professor Lamont who is Dean of the School of Cultural and Community Studies at the University of Sussex, Dr. Orchard who is Divisional Secretary for Community Affairs at the British Council of Churches in addition to being Secretary of our society.

Note: The Huguenot Society of London is commemorating its own centenary and the tercentenary of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in *Huguenot Heritage 1685-1985*. Details of this commemoration, which will include a conference at the Royal Society in London in September 1985, an exhibition at the Museum of London from May 1985, a series of regional displays from Jersey to Northern Ireland, trails, a book (*Huguenot Heritage*) by Dr. Robin Gwynn, an award of £500 a year for a young scholar undertaking research into a Huguenot subject, an International Week and links with similar commemorations in Europe and America, can be obtained, upon receipt of a large stamped and addressed envelope, from Huguenot Heritage, Queen Anne's Chambers, 3 Dean Farrar Street, London SW1H 9LG.

CRADLEY CHAPEL: FROM INDEPENDENCY TO THE ESTABLISHMENT

The ecclesiastical parish of Cradley was constituted in 1841 and St. Peter's Church invites attention for at least two reasons. First, the main entrance to the building is by the east door, the chancel being (unusually) at the west end. Secondly, the exterior notice board notwithstanding, the popular record of the church's history by Frank Stevens is entitled, *A Short History of Cradley Chapel, commonly called the Parish Church of St. Peter, Cradley, Staffs* [1933]. These oddities are explained by the fact that the 1789 building was erected by Independents who were quite untroubled by questions of orientation; and the Deed of Consecration (1798) affirms: "We call and name [the building] by the name of Cradley Chapel and decree that it shall be so called and named in all future times for ever."¹

We have traced ecclesiastical developments which were but one aspect of change in the area of the South Staffordshire coalfield. Indeed, when the Countess of Huntingdon's preachers arrived in the area in 1783, the Black Country had yet fully to earn its name. There were fields and farms, and country lanes traversing the generally poor agricultural land. The hand-made nail industry was in evidence around Cradley, and hand-made chain-making was in the wings. But the big expansion of the coal and iron industries was to occupy the years 1800-1860. Tipton, regarded by many as the heart of the Black Country, comprised 4,280 souls in 1801, 24,872 in 1851, and 28,870 in 1861. In 1801 Cradley's population was 1,434, and there were 296 inhabited, and 9 uninhabited dwellings. By 1816 the population had risen to 1,629. An historian of 1836 could already speak of an atmosphere "everywhere charged with smoke," and of "uncounted steam engines, whose

1. An 1855 copy of the Sentence of Consecration may be seen at Dudley C.L., PR/CRA 2/3.

tall chimneys bristle the district, of which there were none fifty years ago.”²

The same writer found it in no way surprising that the Blackcountrymen, “consistently employed in mining, and in blackening manufactures, united but little with society beyond their narrow circuits, should acquire or preserve a peculiarity of manner, habit and language.”³ This is a land of whippets, of fishing in the “cut”, of pigeons — earlier of cockfighting. Here are to be found male voice choirs, Staffordshire bull terriers, industrial remains. Here may be heard sardonic Enoch and Eli jokes, and tales of such local celebrities as Perry, the “Tipton Slasher”.⁴ But it is a land which defies generalisation, and in which often justified local pride is very localised indeed: “foreigners” may be but a few hundred yards away. From this sturdy breed have come intensely loyal churchgoers. Indeed, there can be few industrial areas today where church attendance is higher than it is along a mile-wide band from Ruiton to Cradley.

The foundations of this relative strength, humanly speaking, are in such stalwarts as Thomas Best. A son of Robert Best of Old Swinford, Thomas Best came early under the influence of Lady Huntingdon’s preachers. As a youth he spent a year at Trevecca College, and then continued his studies under the direction of the Rev. William Miles of Kidderminster.⁵ In the summer of 1783 he began to preach in the open air at Cradley and neighbouring hamlets. The Rev. John Ryland of Birmingham hoped that Best’s services would be secured for the Church of England, but by now a band of followers had been gathered at Cradley, and Best resolved to remain with them.⁶ In the

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2. William Hawkes Smith, *Birmingham and its Vicinity*, 1836, p.12. See further, B.L.C. Johnson and M.C. Wise, “The Black Country 1800-1950”, in *Birmingham and its Regional Setting*, ed. M.J. Wise (1950), East Ardsley, Wakefield: S.R. Publications 1970, pp.229-248.
 3. *Ibid.*, pp.14-15.
 4. This bare-fist fighter has been honoured by a monograph published by Black Country Society.
 5. Best (as of Birmingham) appears in the list of Trevecca students in [A.C.H. Seymour], *The Life and Times of Selina, Countess of Huntingdon*, 1839, II, p.112; and on p.414 we read: “Another of her Ladyship’s students, Mr. Best, was the instrument of much good at Bewdley and other places. He afterwards took orders in the Established Church and became Incumbent of Cradley.” See for Best: *Protestant Dissenter’s Magazine*, 1795, pp.397-398; *Evangelical Magazine*, 1795, p.302; 518-519; March 1799 (portr.); 1854, p.566; *Congregational Historical Society Transactions*, VII, p.151. For Miles (Matric. 1773, d.1828), Headmaster of Kidderminster Grammar School, see *Alumni Oxonienses 1715-1886; V.C.H. Worcs. IV*, p.524; cf. H. de B. Gibbins, *A History of the Grammar School in Kidderminster*, 1903.
 6. The principal sources are the *Registers* of Cradley Chapel, and of Cradley Baptist Church. The latter incorporates the *Register* of the Independent church, as will be explained below. The *Registers* have been transcribed and published by the Birmingham and Midland Society for Genealogy and Heraldry, 1978. Of very considerable importance is James Scott’s ms., *History of Cradley, Principally designed to record interesting transactions respecting its religious societies, and more especially the Presbyterian Church*, begun 1800. I am indebted to Mr. J. Ray, Secretary of the Unitarian Church, Cradley, for putting me in touch with Messrs. Haward and Evers, Solicitors of Stourbridge, who hold this ms., and who kindly allowed me to take extracts for publication. I wish also to thank the Revd. David Rogers, the present incumbent of Cradley, for his kind assistance.

winter of 1783 John Parry made a room available for meetings, and in 1784⁷ Best and his supporters purchased the Wesleyan chapel which had been opened in 1768, but was no longer required by the Arminian Methodists. On White Sunday 1784 Best was "ordained to the ministry in general" by Messrs. Wills and Taylor, chaplains to the Countess of Huntingdon.⁸ That summer the building was enlarged to accommodate three hundred people, new pews and galleries being installed. The money for this work was raised by local subscription, and by Best's efforts in London and Bristol.

In 1787 it was "thought expedient" to constitute "a church upon the Independent or Congregational plan", and this was done in the following terms:

We whose names are here unto subjoin being convinced of our depraved state by nature of our rebellion against the moral Government of God by Practice, of our danger as being exposed on these accounts to his wrath and righteous indignation of our inability to procure the forfeited favour Almighty God: and having heard by the preaching of the Gospel of a suitable and free salvation wrought out by the incarnation, obedience, sufferings and death of the Lord Jesus Christ: and being enabled we hope by the influences of the holy spirit, to see our need of, as well as only to confide in them for our acceptance with God, here and hereafter, judging it to be our right and bounden duty, publickly to acknowledge the supream authority of God our Saviour, as the glorious head of the church, resolving and promising in his strength, henceforth to be found beleiving his promises, obeying his Precepts hearkening to his providences, and serving him and each other, according to all his laws, statutes and ordinances of his house taking the written word for our only faith and practice, aiming at the Glory of God each others edification, the increase of Christ's Kingdom: and the good of all mankind, Do hereby solemnly openly and without reserve, resign ourselves and ours wholly to the saviour of sinners in church Fellowship and communion solemnly promising and engaging to walk with God, and with each other in the observance of every Christian duty and Gospel ordinance under the direction of the spirit of God and according to that antient and evangelical promise left upon record Jer. 50.5. They shall ask their way to Zion; with their faces thitherward saying come let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten.

The covenant is signed by Revd. Tho. Best, Pastor; by four Deacons: Joseph Fellowes, Edward Stead, Thos. Franks and Mark Stevens; and by the members.

A formal call to the pastorate was addressed to Best, and he was inducted in August 1787. The participating ministers included John Barrett of Kidderminster, George Burder and Thomas Saunders of Coventry, John

7. Though Stevens, *op. cit.*, p.4 gives 1786.

8. So Cradley Baptist Register.

Punfield of Birmingham," and other ministers of various denominations."⁹ After an earlier request for dismissal had been denied by the Countess, Best was now securely among the Independents. He soon opened a school nearby. Some fee payers were taken, but at any one time thirty boys and thirty girls were educated *gratis*.

The cause grew in numbers and in enthusiasm, and in 1789 the Wesleyan building was pulled down to make way for a new and more commodious chapel. In the course of the demolition work Benjamin Beasley was killed by falling masonry. The new building was financed by collections taken far and wide. Many Established Churchmen joined Protestant Dissenters in supporting the fund.¹⁰ James Scott describes the development thus:

This chapel is delightfully situated on the declivity of the hill just above the village of Cradley... it commands an extensive prospect on the South and East, and has a convenient burial Ground. Close adjoining is a spacious and elegant building erected for the accommodation of two charity schools in which 50 Boys, and 50 Girls are educated free of expense to their Parents. These Schools are supported by a collection made after an annual sermon preached for their benefit, and also by a private subscription.¹¹

The *Abstract of the Title to Cradley New Meeting-house and School house, and to a part of a Fold-Yard, on part of which Land the said Meeting-house and School-house do stand, and also to a Messuage or Dwelling-house shop and Garden in Cradley* is dated 1789, and bears the names of John Padmore, John Parry, Thos. Best, Joseph Fellowes and Mark Stevens. It refers to transactions dating back to 21st March 1709, and to monies raised by voluntary contributions for the building of "a Meeting-house or place of Worship for the assembling together of a Congregation of protestant Dissenters for the worship of Almighty God together with other convenient and necessary buildings thereto..."¹² At the public opening of the chapel John Barrett preached in the afternoon from *Ezekiel* 34: 26, and Jonathan Scott of Market Drayton

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9. For Barrett (1751/2-1798) see G. Hunsworth, *Baxter's Nonconformist Descendants; or Memorials of the Old Meeting Congregational Church, Kidderminster, 1874*, pp.46-52. For George Burder (1752-1832) see *DNB*; A.G. Matthews, *The Congregational Churches of Staffordshire*, [1924], pp.135-136, 187, 189; A.P.F. Sell, "George Burder and the Lichfield Dissenters", *South Staffordshire Archaeological and Historical Society Transactions*, XIII, 1971/2, pp.52-60. For Saunders (1738-1806) see *Evangelical Magazine*, 1794, pp.37-38; 1806, pp. 272, 578-581 (and port.); For Punfield (d. 29.1.1791 aet. 62) see W. Densham and J. Ogle, *The Story of the Congregational Churches of Dorset*, 1899, p.393; A.H. Driver, *Carrs Lane, 1748-1948*, 1948, p.24; J. Sibree and M. Caston, *Independency in Warwickshire*, 1855, pp.177-178; *Cong. Hist. Soc. Trans.*, VII, p.97; IX, p.56. A letter from Edward Stead to the Countess of Huntingdon is extant. It is dated 10.9.1783. See Cheshunt College MSS F1/549.
 10. Why Stevens (*op. cit.*, p.20) should say that the meeting house and schools were erected by Best "largely at his own cost" is not clear.
 11. Scott ms., p.107.
 12. Dudley C.L., PR/CRA 2/1.

preached in the evening.¹³

As if the new complex of buildings was not enough, the Cradley Independents responded to a request from the inhabitants of Rowley that a school be built there — at Plant's Green. The chapel and the associated buildings were vested in the hands of thirteen trustees.

The Independent congregation was swollen by accessions from the Pensnett (Presbyterian) Meeting,¹⁴ by the attraction of some local Baptists and Methodists, and by Best's pulling-power upon "the thoughtless and irreligious". The speculation that anti-unitarian motives prompted those who came over from Pensnett must be resisted. That there had been a tradition of inter-denominational movement is clear from the fact that some Pensnett members had joined the Cradley Wesleyans in 1768; others had joined the Established Church at its founding in Brierley Hill in 1767; some had been threatened with eviction from their Kingswinford farms and cottages if they worshipped with dissenters; and some had been among those who first constituted the Cradley Independent church in 1783.¹⁵ Moreover, while Noah Jones who ministered at Pensnett, 1748-1762, did move in a unitarian direction,¹⁶ James Scott, who came to Pensnett in 1789 — the year of the opening of the Independent building — did not. On this point we have the testimony of Best himself. In 1795 Robert Foley, Rector of Old Swinford, published *A Defence of the Church of England* — seven discourses on *Ephesians* 5: 27. In the seventh sermon he declared that "the Presbyterians in this part of the kingdom are almost universally Unitarians". Best's reply appeared in the same year under the title, *A True State of the Case; or a Vindication of the Orthodox Dissenters from the Misrepresentations of the Rev. Robert Foley, M.A. &c. in five Letters, addressed to him: Wherein the important Subjects of Schism, the Divinity of Christ, and Obedience to Civil Government, are considered*. In his fourth letter he insisted that there were few unitarians in the Stourbridge Presbyterian congregation, and that the Rev. James Scott entertained no such sentiments.¹⁷

Best preached in various localities: Halesowen, Holy Cross, The Delph,

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13. For Jonathan Scott (1735-1807) see A.G. Matthews, *op.cit.*, pp.131-135, 136, 150, 151, 166, 187, 199; W. Gordon Robinson, *Jonathan Scott, 1735-1807*, 1962; *Evangelical Magazine*, 1795, pp.30-31, 290; 1807, pp.320, 489ff., 537ff., Oct. (port.); 1808, pp.194-199; *Cong. Hist. Soc. Trans.*, XX, pp.274-280.
 14. For which (with refs.) see A.P.F. Sell, "Retirement denied: the life and ministry of Noah Jones (1725-1785)," *Unitarian Historical Society Transactions*, XVIII, 1984, pp.91-105.
 15. See C. Eyre Evans, *op.cit.*, p.93.
 16. For Jones see art. at n. 14.
 17. T. Best, *op.cit.*, p.30 n. For Foley (matric. 10.11.1752 aged 16) see *Alumni Oxonienses, 1715-1886*. Foley dedicated his *Defence* to Bishop Hurd of Worcester — to whom Best and his friends were soon to appeal for admission to the Church of England. Lord Foley was the patron of the living of Old Swinford. For Scott see Charles Simpson, *The Story of the Unitarian Chapel Lye, 1790-1961*, [1961], pp.9-16, 17, 18, 31, 34-35 (inc. photographs: port. and memorial tablet). For reviews of Best's pamphlet against Foley, "this insolent priest", see *Protestant Dissenter's Magazine*, 1795, pp.397-398; *Evangelical Magazine*, 1795, pp.518-519.

Plant's Green and Lye Waste; and for a time he supplied the Dudley Independent church.¹⁸ His Cradley communicants numbered two hundred, and his stipend was £100 p.a. That Best was involved in the wider evangelistic work of the Church is clear from his sermon: *Evangelical Benevolence recommended, in a Sermon on I Thess. 1: 8, preached at Worcester, on the 25th of March, 1795, before the Worcester Evangelical Society, and the Association of Independent Churches in Worcestershire, and published by their Desire.* In Best's opinion,

The object we have in view is not to spread around us the licentious principles, nor the corrupt manners of a degenerate age; not the discordant dictates of proud reason, nor the political principles of a party; not the dogmas of the man of sin, nor the arbitrary decisions of any ecclesiastical power; not the reveries of the wild enthusiast, not the minutiae of religious difference among brethren; not the useful discoveries of science and philosophy, nor yet the mere rules of sound morality: The object we pursue is, to bring perishing sinners to understand, believe, and act under the influence of the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ — an object as benevolent as it is sublime: It is like that glorious luminary the sun; the more it is considered, the more its unparalleled utility must appear.

I

Sadly, contributions from far and wide notwithstanding, evangelical benevolence did not suffice to maintain the Independent cause at Cradley. In 1800 there was published *An Address (to Richard Hurd, Bishop of Worcester)¹⁹ of the Minister, Chapel Wardens and Inhabitants of Cradley, in the Parish of Halesowen, and county of Worcester respecting the Chapel and School of that place.*²⁰ With reference to the outstanding debt on the Cradley buildings the *Address* states that

Through the imprudence of an Individual (Mr. Wm. Wesley of Birmingham) these undertakings have been long greatly-involved. At their commencement, he engaged to advance a considerable sum of money towards defraying the Expences of the buildings, and issues out bills at discount, which were endorsed by honest and well meaning persons relying upon his then acknowledged responsibility. This person however becoming a Bankrupt, it was found necessary to keep these bills in circulation, by the aid of the neighbouring Bankers, in hopes of deliverance being in some way afforded, and in the meantime to preserve the endorsers from ruin... These circumstances greatly, and unavoidably increased the expences of the undertaking, which would by no means have been so extensive in the first instance, had not the

18. Scott ms., p.109; cf. W. Wimbury, "The rise and progress of Congregationalism in Worcestershire", *Cong. Hist. Soc. Trans.*, VII, p.151.

19. For Hurd see *DNB*; *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, Part I.

20. The assiduous James Scott provides copious extracts from this document.

individual alluded to come forward with great promises of pecuniary assistance, which it was believed he was then able to perform.²¹

By the time this explanation was published, and although its congregation was more numerous than ever, the Independent church at Cradley had been dissolved (as the terminology in the title of the *Address* implies). As early as May 1798 Thomas Best announced his intention of conforming to the Church of England, and this he did in December of that year. The *Address* to Hurd was *written* in the same year, and in it the petitioners set down their objectives:

We whose Names are underwritten, understanding that your Lordship hath been applied to by the Revd. C. Stephenson that the Place of Worship situated in Cradley in the Parish of Halesowen and County of Worcester should be taken into the established Church and become regularly Parochial, and also should this meet your Lordships approbation that Mr. T. Best the present minister intends applying to your Lordship for episcopal ordination, that he may be able to serve this Chapel according to the laws of the Church of England, beg leave to unite in requesting that your Lordship will be pleased to comply with these petitions... It may perhaps be proper to represent to your Lordship that Cradley is an extensive Township, and with the adjacent Country is so exceedingly populous in consequence of the numerous coal and iron mines wrought in the neighbourhood, and the carrying on of extensive nail, and other manufactories that within a few miles there are many thousands of Inhabitants; — And that the remarkable circumstances of the four large Parishes of Old Swinford, King Swinford, Dudley, and Rowley Regis, all uniting with this Township, together with its remote situation from its Parish Church of Halesowen as aforesaid, have long marked it out in our view as a situation which strongly required a place of Worship upon a parochial foundation, as a chapel of ease to the said church of Halesowen... As we are convinced upon very pleasing evidence that considerable good hath been done in this place and neighbourhood in consequence of the erection of the place of Worship above mentioned, and the school in connection with it, so we are fully satisfied that if your Lordship should comply with this petition more extensive good will be done. For having your Lordships consent to its becoming parochial, if the debt now upon the buildings cannot be discharged by the donations of those who wish to promote the interests of morality and religion, there is reason to conclude that this extensive and important object will be attended to by Members of Parliament who are friends to the undertaking, but who would be more so were it strictly connected with the Established Church.²²

21. Scott ms., p. 110.

22. *Ibid.*, pp. 112-113, for Christopher Stephenson (1748-1814) of Rowley see D.E. Jenkins, *The Life of the Rev. Thomas Charles, B.A., of Bala*, 1908, I, p. 360, n.1.

The *Address* is signed by Lord Lyttelton (the patron of Halesowen), Lord Dudley, Lord Dartmouth, most of the neighbouring Clergy of the Establishment, and some of the Inhabitants of Cradley.

Between May and September 1798 Cradley Chapel was closed for alterations:

Most of the double pews were divided into single seats, which provided accommodation for a greater number of hearers. The Vestry was raised higher and converted into a Chancel, which together with the elegant Pulpit furniture, much added to the beauty and spacious appearance of the Building. A neat Vestry was added close adjoining the Chancel. And the dimensions of the Chapel since enlargement are stated to be 90 feet by 60.²³

On 12th September the Chapel and burial ground were consecrated by Bishop Hurd. The Rev. William Sutton of Halesowen read the morning service of the Established Church, and the Rev. John Plumtre of Stone preached from *Matt.* 18: 20.²⁴ For some months following the Rev. C. Stephenson of Rowley and the ministers of St. Mary's, Birmingham, supplied the Chapel. Meanwhile Best was a student at St. Edmund Hall, Oxford.²⁵ He took deacon's and priest's orders and was (re)ordained by the Bishop of Llandaff in March 1799, thus becoming the first perpetual curate of Cradley.

The Sentence of Consecration contains the following properly pastoral motive:

... the Parish of Halesowen aforesaid is a very large and populous Parish and contains upwards of Eight Thousand Inhabitants... there is a certain Hamlet or district within the said Parish of Halesowen but situate in the County of Worcester called or known by the name of Cradley which said Hamlet or District of Cradley is a distinct Village or Township maintaining its own poor is distant from the Town and Church of Halesowen about two miles is very populous and contains Fifteen hundred Inhabitants and upwards; that it is very inconvenient to the Inhabitants of the said Village or Hamlet of Cradley to attend Divine Service at the Parish Church of Halesowen aforesaid especially in the Winter Season...²⁶

The *Address* goes further and underlines the financial motive:

Expectations were once entertained that Parliament would have rendered some assistance to these undertakings, but owing to the pressure of the times it was not thought proper to make an application; and the following plan is proposed.

That the Presentation now vested in Mr. Best for 99 years, is to be conveyed by him to six or more Ministers, and six or more Laymen of the established Church, and to subscribers of £100 and upwards, and to

23. *Ibid.*, p. 114.

24. For Plumtre see *DNB* under James Plumtre; *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, Part II.

25. Best matriculated on 17.5.1798, aged 35. See *Alumni Oxonienses 1715-1886*.

26. See no.1 above.

Creditors who shall relinquish that sum or upwards of their respective debts... That all interest upon the several debts shall cease from the 1st of May 1800. And all the creditors to state what parts of their debts they will be pleased to relinquish... That a general Release to Mr. Best shall be executed by the Creditors, and their respective debts be paid without interest, by 10 equal Instalments of 10 per cent, at the end of every three months. Subscriptions to be solicited of the publick at large, and paid into the hands of Messrs. Down, Thornton, Free and Cornwall, Bankers, Bartholomew Lane, London... If the money in the Bankers hands when any Instalment shall become payable, shall exceed 10 per cent, so much the more shall be paid to the Creditors.

There follow the names of eight clerical and seven lay Trustees of the Presentation, of whom one only, Mr. John Cardale of Stourbridge, was a Trustee of the Chapel in its Independent days.²⁷

By the Act of 12th July 1799²⁸ the patronage was secured to Thomas Best of three turns, and was subsequently to pass to the Lytteltons. Arrangements respecting fees, marriages, churchings, chapel wardens, rates, are all incorporated within the Act.

II

Thus Thomas Best took himself and his Chapel into the Established Church. But what of the church members? We have seen that they had diverse denominational backgrounds, and this undoubtedly facilitated Best's action. Those who had been Established Churchmen were quite content with the new arrangements, and others of like mind joined them. Some, however, were shocked by the proceedings, and turned to neighbouring Independent churches or to Park Lane (Presbyterian) church — the 1796 successor of Pensnett Meeting. Still others constituted Cradley Baptist church, whose *Register* contains a "Memorandum" which suggests that Best's conforming to the Church of England may not have been solely on doctrinal or church-political grounds:

Mr. Best when a dissenter took into intimate connection with him a man of the name of Bird who with him had the sole management of the money matters. After some years of intimacy they disagreed and parted about the time that Mr. Best turned to the Church. Mr. Bird being a member and Deacon kept the church book which became useless by Mr. Best turning to the church of England and thro' the disagreement it was not given up. Mr. Bird a little time after was reduced to poverty and sold this book to John Nock a member of the Baptist Church at Cradley of him the church obtained it and determined to devote it to their church concerns.

The Baptist church book thus incorporates the old Independent church book.

27. Scott ms., pp.122-123. John Cardale was possibly of the family of Samuel Cardale, an original trustee of Dudley Presbyterian Meeting. See "Paul Cardale" in *DNB*.
28. Act 39 Geo. III cap. 72, 1799; Dudley C.L., PR/CRA 2/2.

The book elsewhere justifies the actions of the Baptists, and expresses something of the shock which Best's action in conforming occasioned:

That posterity may be satisfied that the Baptists were justifiable in establishing an interest in Cradley at a time when Cradley was so noted for the preaching of the Gospel the few following facts are judged expedient to be kept upon record for impartial minds to judge from.

Cradley III May 1798. To the great surprise of the inhabitants an hand-bill was displayed informing the congregation and seat holders of the independant Chapel that by order of the Bishop of Worcester publick worship in that Chapel was suspended Certain Alterations being needful before the Consecration and with Mr. Best's request that the seat holders would meanwhile attend their parish Churches thus they who were Dessenters and had with satisfaction and thankfulness attended under the ministry of Mr. Best found themselves Deserted by him and deprived of their place of Worship without thier consent thus left destitute a large congregation was dispersed as sheep having no sheperd but souls whom this particularly concerns claimed the right of judging for themselves in Religious concerns being Dessenters from principals they began to attend with the Brettle Lane Baptist Church who meet in a dwelling house for worship at the Nine Locks about two miles from Cradley whose minister was Mr. William Snow his preaching being approved and love and Christian friendship abounding amongst them soon had six to propose themselves candidates for Baptism who were Gladly admitted and three others who once stood members of a Baptist Church at Neatherton near Dudley which had been some years extinct these nine were admitted into church fellowship all being inhabitants of Cradley and two of the Brettle Lane members also residing hear and one other of the old Netherton members being in all twelve of the Baptist denomination soon led to the appointment of a prayer meeting to pray that some door might again be opened hear for a preached Gospel.

With the encouragement of James Scott and other sympathetic Presbyterian and Independent ministers the work grew. At first worship took place in a house; then a plan for what we would nowadays call a united Free Church was drafted; but it failed when the local members feared that the organising committee was interfering too much. By now there were twenty-one Baptist members and only four Independents. When two of the latter were baptised they all resolved that henceforth members would be admitted only following believers' baptism.

III

Thomas Best and his wife Mary continued to serve Cradley Chapel. The *Register* records the baptism of ten of their children between 1789 and 1810. Their son Thomas was evidently baptised before 1789. He received his title at Halesowen in 1806, and subsequently ministered at Uttoxeter

and St. James's, Sheffield.²⁹ On 5th June 1817 he married Sarah Woolrich at Cradley Chapel. Best Senior died at his home, Colley Gate House, on 5th August 1821. The Rev. John Cawood of St. Edmund Hall, perpetual curate of Bewdley, delivered a memorial sermon in the Chapel on the text, *Hosea* 9: 8, which was published under the title, *The Christian Watchman*. Like the watchman of Ephraim, said Cawood, the faithful and devout pastor is "with God," both in his public conduct among men, and in his secret communion with heaven. "I am much deceived," he continued, "and have widely missed my aim, if, while I have been describing 'The watchman of Ephraim', your thoughts have not often been directed to your own Watchman, the laborious and faithful Minister of Cradley."³⁰ The Cradley watchman is now with God, "Having scarcely left his post, or remitted his labours for a single day during more than thirty years."³¹ As death approached this worthy man "called all his family including his mother and said 'Happy!' so loud as to disperse all their doubts and fears."³² After a warning to those "careless hearers" who did not profit from Best as they might have done the sermon concludes: "A faithful Watchman in the army of Christ... has been mortally wounded, and carried off the field; but the *Captain of Salvation* ever lives, and fighting under His banners, ye shall be more than conquerors..."³³

A tablet in Cradley Chapel reads as follows:

SACRED
TO THE MEMORY
OF THE REVEREND THOMAS BEST,
FIRST MINISTER OF THIS CHURCH,
WHO, AFTER A LABORIOUS AND FAITHFUL DISCHARGE
OF HIS MINISTERIAL DUTIES
IN THIS PLACE
DURING NEARLY FORTY YEARS,
WORN OUT
IN THE WILLING SERVICE OF HIS GOD AND SAVIOUR,
ON THE XXV DAY OF JULY, MDCCCXXI,
IN THE LXI YEAR OF HIS AGE
ENTERED INTO REST.
"REMEMBER THEM
WHO HAVE SPOKEN UNTO YOU THE WORD OF GOD:
WHOSE FAITH FOLLOW,
CONSIDERING THE END OF THEIR CONVERSATION:
JESUS CHRIST
THE SAME YESTERDAY, AND TO DAY,
AND FOR EVER."

Heb. XIII. 7, 8.

This Memorial,
a tribute of esteem affection and regret
was erected by the Seat-holders.

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29. Best junior was at Worcester College, Oxford. He matriculated on 7.7.1806, aged 19. He died 10.3.1865. See *Alumni Oxonienses 1715-1886*.
30. *The Christian Watchman*, p. 34. For Cawood see *Alumni Oxonienses 1715-1886*.
31. *Ibid.*, p.35.
32. *Ibid.*, p.37.
33. *Ibid.*, p.42.

IV

The story of the early years of Cradley Chapel is the story of a *thriving* Independent church — thriving, that is, except in terms of finance. Its minister, influenced in part by the need to clear a heavy debt, conformed to the Church of England and took his Chapel and associated properties with him. Many of his people accompanied him, but some, stunned at the way in which things were done, and loyal to the traditions of Protestant Dissent, did not. At a time of evangelistic zeal and initiative, when many sat loose to denominational theology, Best was something of an ecclesiastical pilgrim: from the Countess of Huntingdon, through Independency, to the Establishment. It is conceivable that he would have become a member of the Church of England in any case, and his evangelical Calvinism was in no way compromised by his move. But *would* he have transferred his churchly allegiance had there been no debt?

ALAN P.F. SELL

PASTORAL VACANCY AND RISING EXPECTATIONS: THE GEORGE STREET CHURCH, OXFORD, 1879–86

In the spring of 1879 David Martin, pastor of the George Street Congregational Church in Oxford for twenty-one years, became ill and had to vacate the pulpit. With this unfortunate but surely not unusual event began a troubled period in the life of that church from which it never fully recovered. As such this episode is of no great significance in the course of congregational history, except for the fact that it is part of a much larger range of Free Church religion which was filled with grand hopes played out amid fallible human beings, differing theological convictions, and limited financial as well as institutional resources. This range of experience stands somewhere between the “princes of the pulpit” religion, focusing on such notable personalities as Spurgeon of London, Dale of Birmingham, and Watson of Liverpool, and the smug critiques of Victorian Nonconformity offered by Matthew Arnold and several contemporary novelists.¹ Because it is not part of the grand scheme of things it seldom receives attention. But since the age of pulpit princes has passed and the smugness has gone out of criticism of the churches, perhaps more of the common story is relevant to the larger picture. Further, current analysis of churches reminds us how important the crisis points in a congregation’s life are, such as the period between ministers and the transition from one minister to another. Such particular studies may thus help to illustrate the difficulties as well as the possibilities faced by Nonconformists as

1. Two recent examples of these themes, respectively, are P.T. Phillips, ed., *The View from the Pulpit: Victorian Ministers and Society* (Toronto, 1978), and Valentine Cunningham, *Everywhere Spoken Against: Dissent in the Victorian Novel* (Oxford, 1975).

they attempted to make their witness in late Victorian England.

The George Street congregation began as a secession from the New Road Chapel in 1830.² New Road, from Presbyterian foundations in the seventeenth century, became Baptist during the following century, but had remained open to paedobaptist members. With the greater visibility of Non-conformists in the early nineteenth century and a growing appreciation of the differences between Baptists and Independents (the latter taking over the previously generic term "Congregationalist"), a small group of advocates of infant baptism in the church decided to form one of their own, erecting a building in 1832. A succession of five short-term ministers served them, none for more than five years, until the arrival of David Martin in 1858.

Membership grew slowly over the years. At the beginning of Martin's pastorate it numbered ninety-eight, of whom fifty-eight were women, a rather typical percentage for the period. (Of the more than six hundred added to the rolls between 1858 and 1886, sixty-one per cent were women.) The buildings seated nearly seven hundred; remodelling in 1866-67 reduced that to 624. But the *members* were only part of the constituency, augmented by a substantially larger *congregation*, as was the pattern within Congregational churches; and a later review of the membership's history noted that the chapel was often full during the peak years of Martin's ministry there.

Several factors combined to make this growth steady but undramatic. As the first Congregational church in Oxford, it participated in the creation and encouragement of churches on the edges of the city — in Summertown to the north, and in Marston and the Cowley Road to the east, for example — thereby reducing its own membership with each new foundation. In addition, there was considerable mobility within the membership; for example, in 1863, 1868, and 1873, half of the new members received had left within seven years, having moved away, transferred to another chapel (Baptist or the Brethren, for example), or dropped their membership. Further, the traditional Dissenting seriousness about the responsibilities of membership was evident for at least the first decade of Martin's tenure; church minutes record the exclusion of persons by vote of the membership for such offences as drunkenness, dishonesty, "immorality", "continued intemperance", and commercial fraud.

One additional feature of the membership should be mentioned before the main period of congregational difficulty is discussed. The occupations occasionally given in the church records show a community largely composed of small shopkeepers, tradesmen, and craftsmen. In 1859 the several new

2. Very brief discussions of the congregation's history can be found in W.H. Summers, *History of the Congregational Churches in the Berks., South Oxon and South Bucks Association* (Newbury, 1905), pp.251-54; and Christina Colvin, "Protestant Nonconformity and Other Christian Bodies", in *A History of the County of Oxford*, ed. by Alan Crossley, vol. IV (Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 422. After considering various options, including relocation and merger with another church, the congregation decided to close in 1930. Its modest records have been deposited in the Oxfordshire Record Office and are the basis of this article.

trustees elected included three grocers, two builders, two mercers, and one each who were a butcher, draper, bookseller, tailor, stationer, printer, chemist, and servant. Many of these occupations were also represented in members received over the years, together with dressmakers, milliners, bootmakers, schoolteachers, college servants, railway clerks, housemaids, and porters. This was not unusual for a Dissenting chapel, to be sure; but, viewed from the issues which would soon confront the church, this savoured more of the Christminster of Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* than of the university atmosphere of Oxford. It was clearly a "town" chapel, on the edge of a university community but not yet involved with it in any significant way.

That might not have mattered greatly except for the fact that the gradual removal of restrictions against Nonconformists eventually opened the older universities to them. After 1871 the question, "what part shall we choose to play in the intellectual life of the nation?", could be asked by Nonconformists in a serious way for the first time. In the university communities themselves, the Congregationalists in Cambridge responded first, moving from their chapel in Downing Place to a new location on Trumpington Street in 1874. It was, as B.L. Manning has stated, not simply to be the erection of a new building but a symbol of a new role for Dissent, to be a university as well as a town church.³ The transition of the early years here proved difficult, in part because of the adjustments to a Gothic building and to some innovations in worship, but also because the question of the church's possible relationship to the university community was not easily answered. Thus several years passed before harmony in the congregation could be restored. In the appointments of P.T. Forsyth (1894-1901) and W.B. Selbie (1902-09), both of whom went on to wider influence as principals of theological colleges, the church signalled its intention to provide its dual constituency with strong pulpit and theological leadership.

Martin's illness in 1879 was a nervous breakdown, which required a prolonged period of rest.⁴ He offered to resign, but on the advice of his brother and doctor the church decided only to relieve him from his duties for six months, in the hope that he would be able to return. Even after this period, when it was clear that he could not soon resume his work, many expressed the desire that he withdraw his resignation. Yet others indicated that there was no feasible alternative, and the church set to work to obtain a new minister.

At this point the possibilities for a Nonconformist chapel in a univer-

3. B.L. Manning, *This Latter House: The Life of Emmanuel Congregational Church, Cambridge, from 1874 to 1924* (Cambridge, 1924), pp. 3-5.

4. This information is not recorded in the church minutes but in Martin's son's autobiography; see Basil Martin, *An Impossible Parson* (1935), p. 43. Martin's grandson, Kingsley Martin, long editor of *The New Statesman*, later wrote that the illness developed from a decision that he was not one of the elect; see *Father Figures* (1966), pp. 29-30. Martin did not fully recover from his illness, and he died in 1882. The comparative struggles of faith over these three generations make a very interesting study in itself.

sity town began to be taken seriously by the members. Dr. James Legge, a member of the church, a former missionary, and professor of Chinese in the university, contacted Alexander Hannay of the Congregational Union and E.J. Hartland at the Church Aid Society, as well as other leaders of the denomination. Since many agreed that Nonconformity should be represented in Oxford by a minister whose influence would be strongly felt, initial discussion centered on the possibility of raising a fund to add to what the church could provide, so that a suitable (and attractive) income might be offered. To add to the interest a candidate quickly emerged, the Rev. Thomas Jones (1819-82), formerly of Swansea and recently returned from a short pastorate in Melbourne. Widely acknowledged as one of the denomination's ablest preachers, Jones was also available for a call. With support from the members and agreement from the Church Aid Society to provide £400 per year for three years, the members and congregation resolved to invite Jones at a salary of £800 per year. This sum, more than double that received by Martin, clearly signalled the new importance of the position within the denomination.

Such assistance from the Church Aid Society was unusual in two respects, both in the amount proposed and in the kind of aid offered. Formed in 1879 as a reorganization of the older Home Missionary Society, the Church Aid Society's primary purpose was to strengthen existing churches, particularly helping them to give adequate stipends to their ministers. Drawing on an earlier proposal that no pastor should receive less than £150 per year, the Society set as its goal to aid churches which could not afford to pay that amount. The interest was as much pastoral as economic, as there was small hope that good ministers could be obtained for inadequate salaries. Besides, as one report noted, "The circumstances of the age demand that the pastors of even our smallest churches shall be men of culture corresponding to the improved and advancing education of all classes."⁵ Because the task of assisting smaller churches was so great, the ordinary income of the Society could not be used for the university town churches. But because of the symbolic importance of these churches, a special committee of interested persons was appointed to consider ways in which they could be helped and to raise funds for such purposes.

Several constraints, both financial and institutional, prevented the University Towns Committee from assuming much more than an advisory role. For one thing it could not disturb a congregation's decision-making power, and thus could only suggest names of persons to a congregation looking for a minister. For another, it had no special funds at its disposal, and its appeals for funds throughout the churches produced only a modest amount. Even the plan to appoint occasional "select preachers" for the two Oxford

5. *The Congregational Year Book, 1882*, p. 47. In this same report it was noted that 43% of active Congregationalist ministers in England received less than £150 per year. To raise all such persons to that figure would require £66,000, some £41,000 more than the county unions and the Home Missionary Society had jointly provided to aided churches in 1878.

and Cambridge congregations during the academic year depended to some extent on the money available, as well as on the good will of the congregations. This practice, begun at Cambridge in 1880, was extended to Oxford in the following year.⁶ The committee hoped to do more of this, but noted in succeeding reports that its efforts had not received wide support. To illustrate both the challenge and the potentially missed opportunity, it included the remarks of one college fellow in the 1883 report: "I need hardly tell you that the work in Oxford is most critical. I am astonished at the apathy of the Nonconformists: their best men are drifting from them: the opening of the Universities, instead of a blessing, appears to be a most deadly blow, through which the life-blood of their most cultivated men threatens to escape."⁷ Even that not-so-veiled threat, however, did not result in increased contributions for the work; and the committee wondered, somewhat rhetorically, if there were any better means for attaining its goal of a Nonconformist presence in the universities.

Despite the congregation's enthusiastic invitation and the extremely large salary offer, Jones declined. He also declined to meet a deputation to discuss the matter. In October, 1880, two members went to the Congregational Union's autumnal meetings to meet the University Towns Committee. There the congregation received considerable support. A resolution from that committee noted "the exceptional position of the church in Oxford and its great capacity for rendering service to the cause of pure Evangelical Christianity" and promised assistance without interference in the church's independence.⁸ The search went on, and potential candidates were engaged as pulpit supplies.

The next strong candidate to emerge in 1881 was Robert F. Horton (1855-1934), recently appointed fellow of New College and minister of the Lyndhurst Road Chapel, Hampstead. Horton was himself a representative of the "new" Nonconformity, having been one of the first to be educated at Oxford and one of the student leaders of the Nonconformist Union, as well as a double first and president of the Oxford Union. Even though very young, his credentials suited him well for the church. But since Horton had been at Lyndhurst Road just a few months, he declared that he could not consider the position; a further inquiry through Hartland produced no new hope of reconsideration.

Several more months of supply ministry brought no agreement on another candidate. Professor Legge, who had assisted the deacons in their pulpit search, now wrote that he would no longer attend their meetings be-

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6. Annual Report of the Congregational Church-Aid and Home Missionary Society, May 1881, in *ibid.*; *ibid.*, 1883, p. 29. Manning states that this went on until 1895 in Cambridge, with one or two "select preachers" per term (*op. cit.*, p. 17). The work of the University Towns Committee is briefly noted in Albert Peel, *These Hundred Years: A History of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, 1831-1931* (1931), p. 313.
 7. *Ibid.*, 1884, pp. 48-49.
 8. Church Minutes, November 5, 1880.

cause his involvement seemed to hinder rather than promote their obtaining a minister. Though asked to reconsider, Legge declined. In December the committee recommended W.G. Horder (1841-1922), minister of the Wood Green Chapel, London, who was soon to earn a reputation as a hymnologist. Correspondence also ensued with Hartland. Would the University Towns Committee guarantee £250 toward the stipend if the congregation provided £250? Hartland replied that Horder was not available, but that the Committee would continue to do all it could to offer financial support for a suitable minister. It would be given for a specified period, perhaps three years, to be reviewed at the end of that time.

Of the names suggested by Hartland, the congregation next pursued John Brown of Bedford and laid out its ambitions to him as follows: "Nonconformity is gaining ground in the University. We think that we ought not to remain quiescent. The time has arrived, we believe, when our principles as Nonconformists, those principles which our forefathers held so dear,... should permeate the University, that many of the students might be drawn to find a spiritual home amongst us, while those of them belonging to Nonconformist families might be kept true to the principles of their parents."⁹ Once more, however, the candidate declined, saying he was not the person to do such important work. Once more a deputation was proposed to ask him to reconsider, but again to no avail.

The congregation's persistence showed in its dealings with Martin and its pursuit of several outstanding candidates, even to the point of regular appeals for reconsideration. But after so many failures to secure a prominent minister for the "new situation" of Nonconformity, it was in a difficult position. Without pastoral leadership, the number of new members fell sharply. Only seven were received in the first two years after Martin's illness and subsequent resignation; and while the numbers rose to ten and twelve for 1881 and 1882, this was far below the figures of twenty-two and twenty-six for 1877 and 1878. To assist the deacons — and perhaps to push them ahead with their work — the congregation elected five men to form a Pulpit Committee in March, 1882. This new committee took over negotiations with the next prominent candidate, George Burch.

This latest turn indicated how far the initially high expectations had fallen. A relatively young man, Burch (1852-1914) had been trained at Cheshunt College and had been an assistant to the widely admired Dr. Eustace Conder of Leeds for three years. Although supporting recommendations were written by Conder and by H.R. Reynolds at Cheshunt, another letter came from a minister in Leeds which questioned whether Burch was experienced enough for the Oxford position. He certainly had no reputation as an outstanding preacher; worse, at least two members of the Pulpit Committee thought that his sermons as a candidate had not adequately presented the gospel. An initial vote showed strong minority opposition, but the

9. Letter to John Brown, January 23, 1882, in Church Minutes, February 17, 1882.

congregation went ahead with the invitation on the support of other committee members. In June Burch accepted the invitation, but the salary was considerably below that mentioned in those initial conversations with the Church Aid Society. Further, there is no mention in the church minutes of aid sought or offered from the University Towns Committee. The only outside support noted was a commitment from Samuel Morley, the generous Congregational benefactor, to provide £25 for each of two years toward the stipend if the congregation could pledge a total of £300 per year. A congregational canvas was undertaken, and the initial replies looked encouraging. In these circumstances Burch came in September.

Despite Burch's early enthusiasm for the work, his pastorate was not successful. By December one of his early critics withdrew from the church, and in January a proposal to change the time of the Sunday evening service to meet the convenience of Nonconformists in the university was defeated. By May the treasurer's report noted deficiencies in the budget, and discussion centered on whether to take up weekly offerings in the pews. That practice began a few months later; but in April, 1884, a special meeting of church and congregation had to be called to consider the church's financial position. The treasurer then declared that the pastor's salary could no longer be guaranteed beyond the next autumn; subscriptions had declined over the past year and the previously large balance was nearly exhausted. The question was whether means could be devised to make up the deficiency in anticipated income.

Although Burch soon left the meeting to allow for free discussion, he did acknowledge some difficulties since his coming as well as his awareness of complaints being made about him. He hoped only that people would speak directly to him about their concerns. In his absence many spoke on his behalf, but no suggestions were made on how to increase the church's income. Although some objected to Burch receiving less than the guaranteed stipend, in the end a motion passed to the effect that he be asked to accept the amount of the pew rents for one year, with the hope that increased support would be received over that period.

Burch's response to the proposal was to seek another congregational meeting, in order to determine whether the people wanted him to stay or to leave. In a vote by ballot of 60-11, the congregation supported his remaining as pastor. But how much effort should be made to encourage people to give more money? As a result of this debate the treasurer soon resigned both this office and his position as deacon. Although Burch eventually announced his decision to remain, the problems clearly had not been resolved. Some indications of continuing difficulties were that over the next months the church magazine was discontinued for financial reasons and newly elected deacons expressed reluctance to assume that office. In the spring of 1885 Burch suffered a breakdown and in May he resigned, saying only that he had been for many months experiencing greater exhaustion after preaching and that the period of rest since early April had not helped. An older and considerably more experienced minister, Robert Harley (1828-1910), who had been lately

a teacher and chaplain of the Mill Hill School and principal of Huddersfield College, succeeded Burch in 1886.

Burch never resumed a ministry, but instead taught physics at Reading and engaged in scientific research and publication. One would like to know more about the character of the conflict between him and some of the George Street members, beyond what the minutes report. Complaints about his not preaching the full gospel must reflect some differences between his preaching and that of David Martin. As an old-style Evangelical, Martin had written such devotional guides as *The Daily Walk with Jesus in the Promised Land* and *No Cloud Between Me and Jesus*. His own personal tragedy showed him to be in the same school as that represented by John Angell James' *The Anxious Enquirer after Salvation* (1834). For a younger generation, influenced by the widespread rejection of the doctrine of eternal punishment and by revisions in the understanding of atonement, such a view was increasingly difficult to maintain. New theological currents troubled both individuals (including Martin's son Basil, who eventually became a Unitarian) and congregations, and were made more noticeable when a new minister did not preach exactly what his predecessor had done. Burch's relative youth and lack of ministerial experience exacerbated this problem, and it probably made it difficult for him to satisfy the expectations of a new Nonconformist presence in Oxford. But the congregation, too, showed signs of being unprepared for wider responsibilities. Did it seek to employ another "pulpit prince" without asking about the implications of a ministry to the university for congregational life?

As it turned out, the congregation missed its only opportunity to chart a new course for itself, although certainly not for want of trying. In the 1880s Oxford expanded and people moved out of the central area; with congregations already in these newer areas, all of the centrally located churches started to decline. For George Street the presence of Mansfield College from 1886 provided an additional complication. Although the new principal, A.M. Fairbairn, and his family joined the church, Mansfield soon began to hold services for Nonconformists in the university, thus preventing the possibility that George Street could ever seriously embark on a joint community-university ministry. Unable to become the focus of a new Nonconformist presence in the university, which the Cambridge church gradually became, and subject to demographic changes in its immediate area, neither the congregation nor its ministers could do much to stem the decline. Even Harley's experience did not help; "the conditions of the work at George Street are harder than they were," he wrote in his letter of resignation in January, 1890. After such a trying and frustrating experience, it remained for the members of the congregation, the officers and committee members of the Church Aid Society, and future historians to ponder the might-have-beens.

DALE A. JOHNSON

REVIEW ARTICLE: AMERICAN EVANGELICALS IN POLITICS AND SOCIAL ACTION

In 1970 American evangelicals, if not invisible on the political landscape of the United States, were largely considered to be confined to the periphery or to pockets of dead ground; the dominant culture, particularly as reflected in the media and in intellectual circles, tended to treat evangelicalism as a retreating phenomenon, curious, quaint and anachronistic. Yet within the last ten years evangelical Christianity has been "rediscovered" as a social and political force. Given unexpected visibility by the election of a small-town Southern Baptist to the Presidency in 1976, its influence was seemingly confirmed by its apparent role, through the efforts of the Moral Majority and other right-wing evangelical groupings, in putting President Reagan in the White House and in securing the defeat of a number of liberal Senators in 1980. According to various opinion polls taken in that year, one in every four or five adult Americans qualified as evangelical on a definition that embraced belief in the Bible as the literal word of God, the experience of being "born again" and a commitment to spreading the Gospel.¹ That all the contenders for the presidency in 1984 have felt moved to appeal explicitly to evangelical America in their campaigning is an indication of the supposed power of that constituency.

The coinciding of the rise of the evangelicals and their increasing political visibility with a wave of conservative political feeling has tended to sustain the view that "cultural conservatism" and "evangelicalism" are synonymous terms; so too has the prominence of such television preachers as Bill Bright and Jerry Falwell, leader of the Moral Majority and closely associated with the formidable political apparatus of the New Right. The assumption, however, may be little more than that: might it not dissolve in the face both of analysis of the contemporary movement and of a recognition of the historical reality of evangelicalism's ideological complexity?

During the 1960s and 1970s American scholars, even those interested in the study of contemporary religious movements, very largely ignored mainstream evangelicalism. Robert Booth Fowler's sympathetic but scholarly examination of recent evangelical thinking on social and political issues between 1966 and 1976 is thus something of a pioneering study, valuable, welcome and full of good sense.² Fowler recognises a certain doctrinal

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1. Seymour Martin Lipset and Earl Raab, "The Election and the Evangelicals", *Commentary* 71 (1981), 25. On a somewhat broader definition – those who believe in the Bible as the literal word of God, and in the divinity of Jesus, the only hope for personal salvation – 40 per cent of adult Americans in 1978 qualified as evangelical, according to a Gallup poll in *Christianity Today*.
 2. Robert Booth Fowler, *A New Engagement: Evangelical Political Thought, 1966-1976* (William B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan: 1982), pp. vii, 298. £11.30.

coherence in evangelicalism in these years and his efforts to define the movement — not the easiest of tasks — emphasise its wide, though not always unanimous, adherence to the doctrine of original sin, the “inerrancy” of the scriptures, premillennialism and distrust of the “social gospel”. Premillennialists interpreted the Book of Revelation to mean that Christ would return for a thousand-year reign before the final judgment; for many this suggested that there was little point in striving for political or social improvement before the Second Coming. Even those who believed that premillennialism did not remove man’s duty to struggle for reform were in tune with the quietists in rejecting the American Protestant tradition of the Social Gospel, the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century movement that looked principally to the social environment, not to individual sin, for the causes of human suffering. Evangelicals have seen the starting point for the reform of society in the purification of the corrupt individual through a turning to Christ.

It is, however, the diversity of evangelical thinking that provides the major theme of Fowler’s work. Drawing on the evidence of the most popular evangelical publications, particularly the files of widely circulating periodicals, Fowler is able to identify a number of “clusters” of evangelicals, classifiable according to their views on a range of social and political issues broadly assimilable under the headings of race, war, poverty, and the family. His argument is that during the years of its rapid expansion, from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s, “evangelicalism underwent an historic inner change at exactly the time that it slipped into the larger American culture”: the old conservative consensus gave way to fierce intellectual debate that encouraged and sprang from increasing social and political diversity. Two broad alignments emerged: the evangelical mainstream, essentially conservative on political questions, and various reform-minded groups committed to social action.

Fowler takes as representative voices of the evangelical mainstream the fortnightly periodical *Christianity Today*, its editor Harold Lindsell, and Billy Graham, one of the moving forces behind its founding in 1956 and, as arguably the most influential evangelist in the United States, the man who did most to spread its message to a wider evangelical constituency. *Christianity Today* has steadily championed human freedom, which it has interpreted to mean economic libertarianism and the absence of government restraint, and has attacked the growth of governmental power, socialism and collective action; though America might not be the bastion of freedom that it had once been, it was still the world’s best hope against communism and modern shifts towards state intervention. In party political terms this has meant the periodical’s closer identification with the Republicans than with the Democratic Party, particularly in 1972 when Nixon’s victory over McGovern and the radicals was seen as a victory for individualism, patriotism and Christian fellowship. Graham himself, of course, has been a frequent visitor to the White House since Eisenhower’s presidency; his association with Nixon did much to give him a Republican label. But for Graham, as for

conservative evangelicals generally, politics were to be entered and employed with caution; they could all too easily divert attention from reforming the individual sinner, the starting point for all social improvement. A number of conservatives, particularly younger, literate followers of Francis and Edith Schaeffer, were more sympathetic to the critics of the status quo in the years of the New Left, and indeed spoke the language of "revolution"; but it was spiritual revolution of which they talked, and thus — according to Fowler — they should be grouped with the evangelical mainstream on account of their rejection of any social explanations of sin.

At the same time a growing number of reform-minded and radical evangelicals were determined to confront social issues. In part they drew on the prescriptions of Carl Henry, who judged that "social concern is an indispensable ingredient of the evangelistic message"; they agreed with Senator Mark Hatfield that the experience of being "born again" could not be taken seriously unless it was accompanied by social action. Reformers constituted a diverse group but they stood firmly behind the "Chicago Declaration" of 1973, which encouraged a sense of social crisis and urgency, called on evangelicals to recognise their duty to defend the social and economic rights of the poor, and attacked America's pursuit of economic and military might, her materialism and false patriotism. Most interestingly, they probed beyond individual sin for an explanation of social problems. As David Moberg argued: "From a theological perspective, sin is the ultimate source of all social problems. In the immediate contemporary sense, however, the causes are often too complex to attribute directly to individual sin." Reform evangelicals considered it legitimate to work through politics and the institutions of the state to effect changes in society. Here they demonstrated less alienation from contemporary America than did more radical evangelicals whose disenchantment burgeoned during the experience of the Vietnam War and the Watergate affair. Through the pages of the *Post-American*, later renamed *Sojourners*, Jim Wallis and other radicals portrayed an America irreconcilably opposed to the principles of the Gospel, criticised the conservatives' obsession with individual liberty, patriotism and capitalism, and held up service and community as achievable goals. By the standards of European social democracy, let alone Marxism, they may not have been radical, but they did call for a substantial expansion of the welfare state, looked for a redistribution of wealth to the Third World and were ready to question fundamentally American values and institutions.

The author's point is well made: evangelicals in this period cannot be dismissed wholesale as right-wing bigots in the mould of Billy J. Hargis or Carl McIntyre.³ But were the "reforming" and "radical" elements as influential as Fowler implies? At its most extreme the argument from cultural

3. Albert J. Menendez, *Religion at the Polls* (Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1977) provides supporting evidence for the complex political ideologies and outlooks of the various evangelical groupings.

diffusion might suggest that the reformers' emphasis on the union of traditional individualism *and* social action has found its mainstream political expression in Senator Gary Hart's version of liberal Democracy. But how do we set about identifying and quantifying the reformers of Fowler's study? Here we run up against the limits of his analysis, for by definition an analysis of the content of evangelical publications tells one little of the precise distribution of forty or fifty million evangelicals by geography, age, sex, and outlook. Something on the circulation of evangelical publications would have helped here. Moreover, one wonders what modification to Fowler's conclusions would emerge from a study of the spoken as opposed to the written word: Graham's sermons are regularly broadcast from 900 radio stations, and this represents only a fraction of the evangelical use of that medium. We are left asking, too, just how representative of this constituency particular evangelical editors, publicists and "spokesmen" were.

From the standpoint of the 1950s, when evangelicalism was considered the ally and even progenitor of anticommunism, McCarthyism and right-wing politics, the later appearance of reform-minded and radical evangelicals seems an unconvincing deviation from tradition. Yet in the broader context of American history it represents a predictable and natural development. It is well understood that in the years of the early Republic, and particularly in the second quarter of the nineteenth century a combination of socio-economic and cultural changes generated a thrust for reform, in whose vanguard stood the representative figures of the evangelical community. Sustained by an increasingly democratic and egalitarian gospel, a postmillennialist insistence on the necessity of humanitarian, benevolent action as a prelude to Christ's Second Coming, and a perfectionist belief in the capacity of men and society for self-improvement, hordes of evangelicals threw themselves into campaigns for moral and social reform. Significantly, modern-day evangelical reformers see themselves as part of this historical tradition and as revivifiers of it. Two of them in particular, Timothy L. Smith and Donald Dayton, are also serious academic historians who have sought in their writings to rehabilitate evangelicalism and rescue it from its association in the popular mind with social and political quietism or bigotry.⁴

James D. Essig's *The Bonds of Wickedness* gives additional succour to those arguing for the historical significance of evangelical radicalism in social and political affairs.⁵ He sets out to demonstrate the existence of increasing evangelical concern about slavery in the era of the Revolution and the early Republic — well before the immediate antebellum period when it is firmly established that evangelical reformers took the antislavery movement in a radical new direction. Between 1770, before which he has been unable to

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4. Timothy L. Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform in Nineteenth-Century America* (Abingdon, New York, 1957); Donald W. Dayton, *Discovering an Evangelical Heritage* (Harper, New York, 1976).
 5. James D. Essig, *The Bonds of Wickedness; American Evangelicals Against Slavery, 1770-1808* (Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1982), pp. xiv, 208.

trace significant evidence of evangelical opposition to slavery, and 1808, when the African slave trade was outlawed, "evangelicalism facilitated anti-slavery commitment by fostering a distinctive style of spirituality which, in certain contexts, could result in a deep aversion to slaveholding." Natural rights political theory may have helped fashion the wider attack on negro slavery in revolutionary America but Essig argues for a separate thrust deriving from religious sensibilities sharpened by the experience of a religious awakening at mid-century. Their simplicity of life, renunciation of the world, opposition to the prevailing structure of politics and social power, experience of persecution, together with an emphasis on "distinguished benevolence" as an essential element in their belief, led many white evangelicals to respond empathetically to the misery of slaves and to call for an end to their oppression. By no means all white evangelicals viewed slavery from the social periphery of course — New England Congregationalists were hardly a persecuted group, yet they were leaders in the antislavery cause — and it is doubtful if the "empathy argument" can provide a fundamental explanation of evangelical antislavery, but Essig delicately identifies the points at which the suffering of slaves and of servants of God intersected.

Essig's elegant essay provides a particularly interesting perspective both on the relationship of evangelical thought to secular political ideology, and on the preparedness of evangelicals to use political institutions for social ends. In a chapter which examines the impact of republican political ideas on the thinking of four leading antislavery evangelicals — including the Presbyterian David Rice and the Congregationalist Samuel Hopkins — the author shows how they sought to safeguard the simplicity, temperance and self-denial essential to republican government in the new nation through the encouragement of holiness and through an attack on the menace of slavery. Convinced that slavery bred "a vicious commonwealth", Rice appealed directly though unsuccessfully to the Kentucky constitutional convention in 1792 to prohibit slavery from entering the new state and to encourage the gradual emancipation of those slaves presently resident; the Methodist General Conference in the same period exhorted church members to petition state legislatures for gradual emancipation laws.⁶ But in general evangelicals were cautious about getting involved in the political arena. Not only did they view political action as potentially corruptive of the modesty and humility of the godly, but they came increasingly to regard such action as a threat to church unity and social order. It was widely agreed that slavery was indeed a matter for political debate — in fact in the early nineteenth century it was insistently argued that the issue should be eliminated from ecclesiastical councils and left entirely to the political sphere — but churchmen should themselves desist from participating. Essig considers early-

6. For Methodist antislavery sentiment in a southern slaveholding area in the late eighteenth century and its decline in the early nineteenth, see William H. Williams' valuable local study *The Garden of American Methodism: The Delmarva Peninsula, 1769-1820* (Scholarly Resources Inc., Wilmington, Delaware, 1984), especially pp. 112-14, 161-68.

nineteenth-century evangelicalism to have grown more conservative as it grew more powerful and worldly and became more closely identified with the wider culture. His analytical framework here resembles Fowler's, though the consequences in the 1960s and 1970s were very different: as evangelicals then flexed their muscles and left their social ghetto, they emerged into a world whose radicalism some of them could not ignore.

It is the thesis of Leonard Sweet's study, *The Minister's Wife: Her Role in Nineteenth-Century Evangelicalism*,⁷ that evangelical Protestantism's challenge to the established social order in the antebellum period tested not only the relationship between master and slave but that between man and woman. The "liberating" effect of Arminianised evangelicalism on women in early nineteenth-century America has been stressed in much recent writing, and helped give a sense of honourable ancestry to those radical evangelicals of the 1970s who were championing equality between the sexes in both marriage and the church.⁸ Sweet's contribution to this debate is impressive in its range of analysis and documentation. There is much more to it than a description of the activities of a limited number of evangelical ministers' spouses. It is rather a study of the active female community within evangelicalism during a period when women numerically dominated the constituent churches and transformed the "religious ecology" of America.

In the years between the mid-eighteenth and the mid-nineteenth century Sweet discerns four types of minister's wife. First, there was the "companion", whose orientation was domestic not public, who saw her religious purpose as providing her husband with a hospitable and secure home environment from which to minister. Although the First Great Awakening of the 1740s helped breed the idea that women could be experts in religion as well as the home, this did not directly encourage religious activity outside the family. The shift came only during the years of the Second Great Awakening, from the late eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century when millennial hopes and perfectionist aspirations turned the laity, female as well as male, into missionaries, teachers and activists; and when the rapid social and economic transformation of the United States saw the birth of the modern family and contingent changes in the expected role of women. For while women were regarded as inhabiting a "separate sphere" from men, they were also seen as the moral cornerstones of the new society: religious progress would come only through women's involvement in the wider work. Thus emerged the "assistant" to challenge the "companion" as the ascendant type. Sweet pays special attention to Lydia Finney, the first wife of the high priest of American revivalism, Charles Grandison Finney, a woman whose readiness to act publicly as an extension of her husband's ministry demonstrated a high degree of independence. At the heart of the book are three chapters which discuss the encouragement to this independence provided by the practices

7. Leonard I. Sweet, *The Minister's Wife: Her Role in Nineteenth-Century American Evangelicalism* (Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1981, pp. vii, 327.

8. Fowler, *A New Engagement*, especially pp. 191-221.

of the “new measure” revivalism — especially public prayer of females in the company of men — and by the mushroom growth of women’s voluntary associations, often run by wives of ministers who subscribed to the model of Lydia Finney. Two other models are discussed: the “sacrificer”, demonstrated in the life of the self-effacing Peggy Dow, wife of the eccentric Methodist itinerant and folk hero, and the “partner”, as represented by Finney’s second wife, Elizabeth Atkinson, who pressed on beyond the limits of independence set by her predecessor, established a joint ministry with her husband, believed that women should even preach in public and “espoused a self-conscious religious feminism”. In a brief last chapter Sweet describes the retreat from the “assistant” and “partner” models in the later decades of the nineteenth century and speculates as to why there was a return to the idea of minister’s wife as companion.

There is much to admire in this monograph, not least the contextual material that the author invokes to set his scene: the financial support of ministers and its significance, the implications of women’s numerical supremacy in evangelical churches, the role of dress, the extent and character of female preaching, the accountability of pastors to their female church members. This reader’s doubts relate to a certain overloading of interpretation beyond what the evidence would seem to bear: Elizabeth Atkinson Finney certainly engaged in a ministerial partnership with her husband, but what significance should be attributed to her experiencing her most successful work in Britain and not in the United States? Moreover, just how representative was she? One senses that the “partner” model of wifely activity was much less securely rooted than was the “assistant”. On the whole, though, Sweet’s assessments are judicious. He is only too aware of the danger of identifying a “protofeminism” where there really was none. Evangelical women certainly experienced a novel sense of female sisterhood and public influence in these years but they were very largely suspicious of the contemporary women’s rights movement, secular and radical in its emphases. Equally, it is clear that when females were allowed to preach by the dominant male authority, permission — as Angelina Grimké expressed it — was “granted not from a conviction of her rights, nor upon grounds of her equality as a *human being*, but of her equality in spiritual gifts.”

There were, then, limits to evangelicals’ commitment to changing the social order, limits that are very clearly delineated in John W. Kuykendall’s *Southern Enterprize*.⁹ This is a specialised study of a kind which we sorely lack for the Old South, partly because the printed and most accessible sources for antebellum religious history are disproportionately northern. Kuykendall has worked through the records of the “Big Five” missionary societies established in the years after the War of 1812: the American Education Society (1815), the American Bible Society (1816), the American Sunday School

9. John W. Kuykendall, *Southern Enterprize: The Work of National Evangelical Societies in the Antebellum South* (Greenwood Press, Westport, Connecticut, 1982), pp. xv, 188, £22.95.

Union (1824), the American Tract Society (1825) and the American Home Missionary Society (1826). These interdenominational societies were largely under the control of north-eastern Calvinists, especially Congregationalists and Presbyterians, but they saw their mission as national in scope, extending through the length of the Mississippi Valley and into the Old South. In the early years their agents found a substantial welcome in the South, though "sectarian" Methodist and Baptists were often cool, and "antimission" Calvinists of a strongly predeterminist outlook and hostile to the Arminian direction of "Presbygational" theology and practice, stoutly resisted the societies' efforts. After 1837 the combination of economic depression, Presbyterian schism, and growing sectional divisions over slavery ended the work of one society, drove another almost wholly out of the region and left the remaining three – the Tract and Bible Societies and the Sunday School Union – able to survive only by avoiding the slavery question and by increasing the role of southerners in directing their southern operations. Even then many southerners feared that the societies' northern connections implied abolitionist involvement, and that the distribution of evangelical literature and Bibles to slaves would constitute a threat to social peace. Kuykendall's book demonstrates clearly the way in which southern Protestants either voluntarily or under duress divorced their continuing fervour for evangelical and spiritual progress from their initial concern for benevolence and the renovation of society. We need more such studies of southern religious life, though at the risk of seeming mean-spirited one could wish that at the exorbitant price of twelve pence a page the book had been better proof-read and indexed.

Southern evangelicals' coolness towards social concern in the ante-bellum period prefigures the more general shift within evangelical Protestantism in the early twentieth century. It is now commonplace to speak of a "Great Reversal" after 1900, as a progressive approach to social problems lost favour amongst revivalist evangelicals. Undoubtedly the finest study of the context in which this transition occurred is George M. Marsden's justly acclaimed *Fundamentalism and American Culture*.¹⁰ The book considers the extent to which militantly anti-modernist Protestant evangelicalism – Fundamentalism – was shaped by American cultural experience in a period which began with evangelicals being regarded with respect by the wider society, but which ended with their being seen after World War One as peripheral and foolish bystanders in a society that was openly turning from God. There is no space here to elaborate upon the variety of themes that Marsden explores, but two of his analyses in particular will be of interest to readers of this journal.

First, the author is concerned to ask why British and American evangelicalism, which up to the late nineteenth century held so much in common,

10. George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism* (Oxford University Press, New York, 1980), pp. xii, 307. Paper £5.95.

diverged in the face of liberal theology. The issues raised by Darwin and higher criticism were settled in Britain comparatively early on, and the notorious Scopes trials of the 1920s quite mystified British evangelical observers. Marsden speculates about why only America fostered a militant fundamentalism. His answers identify factors which Stephen Mayor rather passed over in his recent article in this journal comparing and contrasting the experience of mainstream evangelical Protestantism in both societies.¹¹ He particularly cites America's more vigorous Biblicism, primitivism and individualism — fostered by a largely unopposed revivalist tradition; the absence of an evolutionary view of historical development in that country; the relatively late flowering of romanticism simultaneous with the second scientific revolution; and the greater degree of intolerance for the wider society within American evangelicalism than in the corresponding British churches.

Secondly, Marsden distinguishes two quite distinct stages of the "Great Reversal". In the first of these, between 1865 and 1900, revivalist evangelicals began to lose interest in *political* action to reform society, but did not relax private efforts for social betterment. The earlier dominant postmillennialism gave way to pre-millennialism, the holiness movement emerged in its full flowering, and the pre-Civil War Calvinist tradition in politics lost ground. Evangelicals had hitherto seen political action in positive terms, drawing on an Old Testament model and attempting to promote God's will through the passage of civil laws. Antebellum Whiggery and Republicanism drew on this tradition, Whigs in particular winning evangelical approval for an approach to government that stressed its responsibility to maintain, through legislation, a nation committed to God's law.¹² But after the war holiness, with its emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit, not of law, encouraged a "pietistic" view of political action, and the "dispensationalism" of the late nineteenth century no longer allowed evangelicals to see God's kingdom as a kingdom of laws. This shift to a more private view of Christianity made politics much less important. Nonetheless, private involvement in progressive social reform continued well after 1900; the second phase of the "Great Reversal" only came as the emergent Social Gospel movement seemed to argue that good works were the only test of truth. Revivalist evangelicals saw this as undermining the traditional message of salvation through faith in Christ's atonement. It became increasingly difficult for them to accept that one could have both revivalism and social action.

In the America of 1984 the fundamentalist strain in evangelicalism is still alive; indeed many would argue that it has increased in strength since the mid-1970s. (The distinction between "evangelical" and "fundamentalist" is not always an easy one to draw, and there is an inevitable fuzziness in

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11. Stephen H. Mayor, "English Nonconformity and the American Experience", *Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society* vol. 3 no. 3 (May 1984), 104-15.
 12. Daniel Walker Howe, *The Political Culture of the American Whigs* (University of Chicago Press, 1980).

Fowler's attempts to categorize.¹³) The call for a return to Victorian values in private morality and economic policy, the renewed attack on the teaching of evolution in schools, the successful thwarting of the equal rights amendment, the defence of prayer in schools, and a seemingly unthinking commitment to a secular nationalism all indicate that fundamentalist, anti-modern evangelicalism is flourishing, and that it is readier than its earlier version to use the institutions of the state to achieve its end. Yet the past two centuries of American history demonstrate that fundamentalism has been by no means the only strain of American evangelical Protestantism and that the tradition of social concern and political action is likely to have a future as well as a past.

RICHARD CARWARDINE

REVIEWS

Godly People: Essays on English Protestantism and Puritanism. By Patrick Collinson. Pp. 604. Hambledon Press, 1983. £24.00.

I want to begin this review by quoting two exchanges from Patrick Collinson's collected volume of essays. The first is taken from his preface. His research supervisor, Sir John Neale, tells him in 1954: "Collinson, I like to think of you spending the rest of your life on this subject." The second is from his essay on Archbishop Grindal, who defends his excommunication of a Papist with these words: "If Sebastian will acknowledge his fault and amend, I am ready most willing to receive him."

Collinson would enjoy my staged antithesis. The historian joins the brotherhood (but doesn't have a Christian name). The sinner keeps his Christian name but on the other hand is expelled into the outer darkness. How easy, in the first instance, for those unfamiliar with Senate House academia *circa* 1950, to mistake the gruff formality of the first speaker for coldness. And to mistake, in the second instance, the speaker's caution for irresolution.

Collinson is good at teaching us not to jump to the obvious conclusion. Perry Miller seriously misunderstood the nature of a church covenant, and this was no venial slip (p. 533). But his idea of a "non-separating congregationalism" is not, therefore, to be cast aside. William Haller — steeped in the literature of Puritanism — nevertheless nodded (pp. 516-7) when he described the conversion experiences recorded in Clarke's *Lives*. Christopher Hill may have misread the social implications of Puritanism (p. 534), but he nevertheless has the root of the matter in him when he emphasises the strength and forcefulness of Puritanism as a lay and popular movement. Subtlety and balance characterise the essays reproduced in this volume. They reinforce the

13. Fowler, *A New Engagement*, pp. 9-14.

impression that, although Collinson has written good books, he may be even better as an essayist. The shorter distance suits him. He will begin obliquely — Erasmus will lead into Samuel Clarke, Theodosius into Grindal — and take us through, with great learning worn lightly, to a conclusion which has the force of inevitability. With characteristic modesty, he calls these twenty articles his “casual litter”. They are anything but: the publication of this volume, handsomely produced with attractive illustrations, is a landmark in Tudor studies.

There are a few cavils. The price is reasonable, but we have some essays footnoted on the page, others at the end of the text. The essays are not arranged in chronological order. This matters very much with Collinson: his is very much a mind on the move. He is not the man to go “gadding” to the trendy sermons, but his receptivity to new ideas is part of his great strength as an historian. Magic, the millennium and popular culture have now been assimilated into a framework which remains recognisably that of his prodigious doctoral dissertation of 1957. He defends in his preface the decision “to publish the articles without alteration, as the record of an historian’s developing perceptions.” But the structure of the book gets in the way of that worthy aim. Only once does he break his precept — with the first essay in the book — and the result is interesting. He updates (p. 18) his 1966 conclusions with a full critical comment from today’s perspective. He would no longer hold, with the force he did in 1966, that the puritanism of a man like Ames was the solvent of parochial religion. Indeed, in that essay, he cited a gathering at Aythorp Roding as proof of the dissidence of dissent. But, after supper, he wrote that the group “attended to one that read in the Book of Martyrs.” In 1966 he saw no potential strains in this “sect” group reading a “church” history — proof of the power of the “set” of the observer in conditioning his response to the documents. Late Collinson on early Collinson would have been a rewarding experience; p. 18 remains a tantalising glimpse of the might-have-been.

Quentin Skinner has written well on the problems of “set”, as well as the snares of “influence” in intellectual history, in an article which Collinson refers to on several occasions. It makes perhaps for the caution in the claims which Collinson advances for Grindal’s debt to Bucer (pp. 19-44). In that essay Collinson tracks down in Sydney Library a copy of *Scripta Anglicana*. This had been in the possession of John Field and Thomas Coleman (“perhaps the Thomas Coleman who was a member of the Westminster Assembly until his death in 1647”). He then notes that either Field or Coleman, but “most probably Field”, underscored certain passages in the text. Collinson goes on (haunted by Skinner’s precept?):— “No ‘influence’ here. Only a hard and unsusceptible mind gathering ammunition in the arsenal of Bucer’s writings” (p. 27). However, since the time that Collinson wrote his piece, we are more familiar than he was then with Coleman’s central role in Assembly debates on Church polity. Perhaps we should at least rethink the possibility of “influences”? Could it be that it was a soft and susceptible mind which was also in the business of gathering ammunition? In this essay — and in a

later one (p. 372) — Collinson claims that Grindal was “an admired figure in the eyes of those in the seventeenth century who favoured ‘moderation.’” There follow footnote references to Milton and Prynne in 1641. But this is plain wrong. In that year neither was advocating “moderation”. Both were “foot and branch” men, careful to depict Grindal as the best merely of a bad lot, which was — this was the point — irredeemable. Because Grindal was neither hot nor cold he would, like other Laodiceans, be spewed out of the mouth.

The fourth essay, “If Constantine, then also Theodosius”, is an example of Collinson at his most agile. He probes fourth-century history until Grindal’s text yields its secrets to him. More prosaically (but equally convincingly) Grindal’s fall is also explained in the context of European power politics in the fourteenth essay in the book. The two explanations are complementary, not contradictory. Why, though, are they placed so far apart in the volume? They were published at the same date (1979), but are here separated infuriatingly by over three hundred pages.

Collinson might be said to have discovered Thomas Wood and John Field. It is not least among the book’s attractions that we now have within the same volume both Collinson’s scholarly edition of Wood’s correspondence (pp. 45-107) and his pioneering essay on Field and the classical movement (pp. 335-370). But the doctrinaire zealots are not the people who command Collinson’s imaginative sympathy in the way that his Grindalian reformists do. These are the real heroes (and heroines) of Collinson’s *opus*: — Sir Nicholas Bacon, “the Senecan *quadratus homo*” (p. 141); the Lewkenors of Suffolk (pp. 445-466); Anne Locke, soul-mate to John Knox (pp. 273-287); and even — surprisingly but convincingly — “godly Master Dering” (pp. 289-323), whose taste for invective no more made him a card-carrying Presbyterian than it would make Prynne in the following century. Collinson’s greatest historical achievement has been to place this quieter alternative to Field’s “full reformation” at the centre of Protestant experience.

Quieter, and necessarily duller? To make this presumption is to miss the subtlety of Collinson’s revisionism. If the men and women he writes about are less shrill in their faith than some of their contemporaries, they are no less committed. They may enjoin balance and caution, but they may also at the same time kick over the traces in an alarming way. Collinson ought to scold them, but his humanity in fact warms to them. Dering knocks over a careful edifice of a career with one insolent sermon to his Queen in 1570. Collinson brings out the catastrophic consequences, but does not forget its *Lucky Jim* overtones: “What foolish and yet what superb contempt for everything that was expedient and tactically wise” (p. 304). Similarly he can rationalise Grindal’s downfall, as we have seen, in interestingly different ways, but incontrovertibly no Tudor Churchman should have written the letter which he did to his Queen. This is not, however, Collinson’s last word on the subject. Grindal’s crazy act of self-destruction represents “that sturdy strain in reformed protestantism which rediscovered the difference between

religion and politics" (p. 487).

In one of his finest essays Collinson rescues combination lectureships from historical oblivion. He warns that the official record will tell us only so much. Ultimately the theme is one, he says, for the gambler rather than for the systematic student. Because Collinson is the most systematic of students it is easy to overlook the gambler streak in his achievements as an historian. But some of his most notable discoveries have come from the inspired hunch: that, for instance, the case study of Anne Locke can illuminate the role of women in the English Reformation (this at the time of the unraised consciousness of 1964); that the "Stranger Churches" in London can show the international dimensions of Calvinism; that the early "Nott Conformy" of the young John Whitgift needs closer critical examination. There are stylistic gambles too — a discussion of Weber leads on to Tolkien (p. 548) or a discussion of Nicholas Bacon leads on to Lyndon Johnson (p. 141) — which ensure that, however meticulous the scholarship, Collinson is incapable of being dull. In this, as in other matters, he resembles the best of the Puritans he writes about: Collinson, not "godly Master Dering", is a true mirror of Elizabethan Puritanism. How right Neale was in 1954! The man and the theme have come together triumphantly in a way which now seems — there is no escaping the word — providential.

WILLIAM LAMONT

Pastors and People: The Biography of a Baptist Church: Queen's Road, Coventry. By Clyde Binfield. Pp. 348. Alan Sutton Publishing Ltd., Gloucester, for Queen's Road Baptist Church, 1984. £4.95 plus £2 postage, obtainable from J. Archer Spurgeon, 56 Armorial Road, Coventry CV3 6GJ.

Church or chapel histories are usually small chronicles, and none the worse for that. Dissent does produce real church histories, not those frustrating histories of parish churches which tell you about the recently discovered Saxon foundations and the fourteenth-century clerestory but nothing about the people. However slim or slight, a nonconformist history will say something about the first group of worshippers and venture an opinion on the ministers. It was imaginative of Queen's Road Baptist Church, Coventry, who have a good story to tell, and a 1926 edition of their history needing a replacement, to secure Clyde Binfield as their historian for this generation, or rather, one should say, as their biographer. He is insistent that this is a story of people and ministers, not just ministers, and that a future historian will have to set the church more rigorously in its social and economic context.

So let us look at it as a biography. There are some notable ministers, but the most loving portraits here are of Francis Franklin (1772-1852), William John Henderson (1843-1929) and Howard Ingham James (1889-1956). Faithful to his promise Dr. Binfield also offers leading lay figures in the congregation, such as George Betts (1846-1931), Thomas Bushill (fl. 1860s), Edward Thomas Peirson (1839-1927) and M. Irene Morris (d. 1971). There is much in the story which illustrates the life of many a Baptist or

Congregational church: the foundation lost in the fits and starts of seventeenth-century ecclesiastical politics and local enthusiasms, but claimed in this century to date from 1626 on the basis of prior supposition rather than from data; the rekindling of the fellowship during the Evangelical Awakening; the lower middle-class prosperity of the Victorian era and the confident spirit of the fellowship as the twentieth century began, the harrowing of old certainties from 1914 onwards and the divisions over pacificism in the 1930s; the changes in the pattern of worship and witness from 1950 onwards, always seeming in retrospect too little and too late. Dr. Binfield has already taken us across the ground in general in *So Down to Prayers* (1977); now he illustrates it from the particular.

The boldest biography is that of ministers extant. Safer chapel histories stop before the present with a pious paragraph about how the congregation look forward to renewed strength under the present ministry.

Dr. Binfield is not afraid to offer opinions on the people of the very recent past. Fortunately the quality of ministers in recent years has been such that one can speak frankly of them without courting the libel laws. However, this is the least satisfactory part of the book. Not only does time allow free comment; it also allows a broader over-view. The time was ripe for a re-assessment of the nineteenth-century congregation and the first approval of the fifty years which began the twentieth century, but it is early days to give a verdict on the last twenty years.

The book is enjoyable as well as instructive. It has the Binfield touches, picking up the telling minutiae of chapel life, like the perennial problem of movement and chatter in the great building distracting the preachers, the lantern lectures, or the ("Very seldom") attendance of W.E. Blomfield at temperance meetings at Wolston. There is also the usual Binfield delight in showing up family connections and their influence on the church's life, not to mention the patronage exerted by colleges over the years. The more one explores such territory the more one feels that the Holy Spirit rejoices in such networks, so long as they serve the church and not the individuals concerned. So, perhaps, the review must end with a declaration of interest in the Binfield manner.

When Binfield wrote a biography of Queen's Road Baptist Church, Coventry, he quoted a letter from W.E. Blomfield from the archives of Welwyn Garden City Free Church to which this reviewer, as its minister, had given him access. I had served as Congregational minister in Sutton, Surrey, where Blomfield had retired and where Gordon Hastings and Gethin Abraham-Williams, both of whom had ministered at Queen's Road, were my colleagues when they were at the distinctively built and liberal Baptist Church there. Richard Hamper, another Queen's Road minister, knew me and Binfield in his subsequent capacity as Secretary of the Free Church Federal Council, for I was a staff secretary and Binfield an Assembly member of the British Council of Churches, the two of us having first met at Emmanuel Church, Cambridge, whose links with Queen's Road, for links there must be have yet to be catalogued.

STEPHEN ORCHARD

The Church Book of the Independent Church (now Pound Lane Baptist) Isleham, 1693-1805. Edited by Kenneth A.C. Parsons. Pp. viii, 286. Cambridge Antiquarian Records Society. Obtainable from booksellers, £15. Available to members of the URC History Society until the end of the year for £12 plus £1 postage from the Cambridge Records Society, 14 Milton Road, Cambridge.

A visit to Isleham in the heart of the Fens does not immediately suggest that it could be the centre of a network of dissenting church life. There are indeed two nonconformist churches, both within a short distance of the impressive parish church on its slight eminence above the surrounding countryside, but the village seems calm and self-contained, continuing its life far from the turbulent outside world. However, by editing this surviving eighteenth-century record, Mr. Parsons has made available a story of vigorous and turbulent local dissent.

Isleham had two features which made possible the emergence of dissent. It is on the navigable river Lark and was at the centre of a number of trading tracks. The dissenting ideas common in East Anglia could be heard and spread abroad in its streets. Secondly, it was then in the diocese of Rochester and was therefore less subject to episcopal oversight than if it had been under the eye of the nearby bishop of Ely.

Notable dissenting leaders such as Francis Holcroft, Andrew Fuller and the very independent Independent, Richard Davis of Rothwell, influenced the rise of dissent in Isleham. The story is a microcosm of the movement in the country at large. There were the tensions between Independents and Baptists, the often uneasy relations with neighbouring Independent churches, and the opposition to the Established Church. Four ministers, John Culy, Samuel Campion, Thomas Mumford, and Samuel Lambert, left their mark on the Church.

There were renewed covenants between ministers and people for the upbuilding of Christian life and for the maintenance of discipline. A serious view was taken of any member suspected of reverting to the Established Church. Converts from the Established Church were to be rebaptized, but this requirement was waived later in the century. Aspiring preachers were tested by the officers and the membership; one preacher, Thomas Baron, was reluctant to accept the ruling that he had to exercise his gift in private before being allowed to lead the main services of the church. Doddridge's collection of hymns was in regular use in the services.

There are many instances of disciplinary proceedings against members for the sin of fornication, for suspected relapse into conformity, for drunkenness and "offering to fight", and for deviations from sound doctrine. The records also reflect some of the issues of the time; for example, Lambert, the minister, was much troubled when he discovered that members were buying

smuggled tea and he wanted all the members to make a written affirmation that they would not do so in future, but some of his deacons did not think it was a serious offence and they tried to cool his zeal on the matter.

Though dissenting from the ecclesiastical establishment the church was thoroughly patriotic and joined in national days of prayer and thanksgiving during the wars with the French. There was some regret about the outbreak of war with the American colonies.

It is to be noted that there is not the least reference to the Methodist movement which was in full spate in this century and had won at least some disciples in East Anglia.

Mr. Parsons has provided a well-arranged text with an illuminating preface, thorough annotation, and comprehensive indices.

R.B.K.

Studies in the History of Worship in Scotland. Edited by Duncan B. Forrester and Douglas M. Murray. T. and T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1984. Pp. 178, paperback. £5.95.

A study that has yet to be undertaken is a history of the influence of Scotland on the worship of the English Nonconformist churches. Did the eighteenth-century Presbyterians follow Scottish practice in disusing the Lord's Prayer, standing for prayer, substituting a lecture for the reading of Scripture, and sitting at a long table for the Lord's Supper? When did they introduce organs and hymns? Whoever investigates such questions will need to use as essential source-material this scholarly collection of essays.

Meanwhile many English readers will find much to interest them here. The book has been well edited; the contributors are masters of their subjects, and (with one exception) the essays can be relied upon for accuracy. The first six chapters recount the story of worship in the various Scottish Churches from the beginnings of Christianity there to the union of 1929. Ian Muirhead exposes the paucity of evidence for a separate "Celtic Church". James Galbraith tells the complicated story of the various mediaeval "Uses", mainly based on that of Sarum, and the fifteenth-century innovations, apparently from Bruges. Gordon Donaldson describes how in the 1550s the Second Prayer-book of Edward VI replaced the Latin rite in many parishes before the Book of Common Order was introduced in 1562/4. He details the various compromises made between English and Scottish practice in the early seventeenth-century, and wrecked by the clumsiness of Charles I. His second chapter well describes the variety of worship between 1660 and 1690 and the smallness of the difference between Presbyterian and Episcopalian worship. Henry Sefton recounts the peculiarities of eighteenth-century Presbyterian worship as well as the liturgical activities of the Episcopalians. Douglas Murray is interesting on the controversies and service-books of the nineteenth century, but might have told more about what actually happened in church. He is accurate (as some other writers have not been) on hymn-books and organs, and describes how for the first time changes were made in worship to

attract and retain worshippers. Chapters are included on Episcopal and Roman Catholic worship in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. David Read gives a good account of the last hundred years of Scottish preaching, but is not well informed on earlier times. Duncan Forrester on "Worship since 1929" and James Whyte on "The Setting of Worship" would well repay study by anyone interested in the reform of English worship and church architecture.

JOHN M. ROSS

BRIEF NOTICES

The Stainland United Reformed Church, dour without and magnificent within, as only a West Riding Congregational Church called Providence could be, is celebrated in Maxwell Allinson, *A History of Stainland United Reformed Church 1814-1984*, obtainable from the author, 7 Kirkwood Green, Lindley, Huddersfield, HD3 3WN, for £1 plus 25p postage. It is a full account covering every organisation as well as every nook and cranny of a building whose days are numbered. The illustrations are therefore of particular interest; and the note that the Church's records are deposited at West Yorkshire County Record Office, Wakefield (Ref. No. C.370) is a characteristic encouragement.

J.C.G.B.

Joseph Priestley, Man of Science, 1733-1804: An Iconography of a Great Yorkshireman. By John McLachlan. Pp.x, 62. Merlin Books Ltd., Braunton, Devon, 1983. £1.75.

"Yours is one of the few lives precious to mankind," said an American president of an Englishman who had once ministered for "three years of patient obscurity" at what is now a United Reformed Church. The president was Thomas Jefferson, the church was in Needham Market, the Englishman was Joseph Priestley. Priestley's claim to ecclesiastical fame, however, lies in his Unitarianism and his claim upon mankind lies in his science. John McLachlan, editor of the Unitarian Historical Society's *Transactions*, has marked the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of Priestley's birth with an iconography of portraits, engravings, medallions, medals, seals, statues, and other likenesses. Fifty-five of them are described here, more are referred to and sixteen are illustrated. They range from the "Leeds Portrait" of c.1763-5, which now hangs in the rooms of the Royal Society, to the Wedgwood plate, "Man of Science", which was produced in 1980. One of the portraits, date, artist, and provenance alike unknown, is in the possession of the church in Needham Market. Dr. McLachlan deals leniently with it, regarding it as most likely "an imaginative representation by an unknown artist based upon a copy" of Gilbert Stuart's fine painting of c.1803. The imagination lies in the fact that Stuart painted an elderly man, while it is a young man who hangs in

Needham Market. The descriptions are informative and the illustrations are indispensable, although their quality of reproduction lacks the clarity of Dr. McLachlan's account of them. Here, in short, is a proper celebration of the human face of godly reason, a vindication of Jefferson's courteous hyperbole.

J.C.G.B.

Liverpool Welsh and their Religion: Cymry Lerpwl a'u Crefydd. By R. Merfyn Jones and D. Ben Rees. Welsh and English Versions bound together, each 65 pages. Modern Welsh Publications Ltd., Liverpool, 1984. No price given.

Liverpool has had to undergo a great decline in its industrial and commercial power and this has been reflected in the decline in number and influence of the nonconformist churches. This book illustrates that decline and though it deals mainly with the Welsh churches it is of interest to our readers. It is made up of lectures given under the auspices of Liverpool University and the Welsh Presbytery of Liverpool by Dr. Jones and the vigorous and versatile Welsh Presbyterian minister, Dr. Ben Rees. The Welsh flocked to Liverpool and their chapels became citadels of their religion, language and culture. Many of their number became wealthy businessmen and dominated some aspects of city life, notably the building industry. These men were often leaders in the chapels and many people were drawn to the chapels not only for their religious life but also in the hope that elders could give them employment and this they often did.

Many of the Welsh chapels have now ceased to be Welsh chapels; even the cathedral-like building in Princes Road has now passed into other hands. It is an interesting witness to the continuing Welsh presence in Liverpool that the Free Church Hospital Chaplain is still a Welshman who can speak to patients in their own language.

The Welsh version is, in my judgement, more exact than the English version, but the reader will profit from reading either version and will learn much of interest about Liverpool nonconformity in general.

R.B.K.

OUR CONTEMPORARIES

Reformed World (Vol.37, Nos.5-8)

In these issues there are observations on the Lima document on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, notably by the veteran Reformed theologian, Lewis S. Mudge. Professor George Yule holds that a proper doctrine of the Incarnation is basic for a proper understanding of the unity of the Church; he dismisses as spurious Professor Macquarrie's distinction between "the unity of mankind" and "ecclesiastical unity". There is also the address given at the WCC Assembly in Vancouver by Allan Boesak, the President of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, on "Jesus Christ, the Life of the World".

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

Part 3 contains the Annual Lecture given to the Society in 1983 by Geoffrey E. Milburn on 'Piety, Profit and Paternalism: Methodists in Business in the North-East of England, 1760-1920'. This is a fascinating review of Methodist families who were influential in business life; Mr. Milburn is on the way to become the Clyde Binfield of Methodist historical studies.

In part 1 there is a survey of *Joyful News*, a weekly magazine which ran from 1883 to 1963. In part 2 there is a review by Henry Rack of Alan Sell's *The Great Debate*.

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

Among articles in these issues is one on Robert Browne and one on John Newton and Olney (by G.F. Nuttall). Dr. D.S. Russell gives what he calls a worm's eye view of the WCC. There is also Professor A.G. Dickens's quinquennial lecture on Martin Luther; this was given to the Baptist Historical Society and is of special interest in view of Luther's hostility to the Anabaptists. The Editor, K.W. Clements, has a timely assessment of the work of Bonhoeffer.

Cylchgrawn Hanes (Journal of the Historical Society of the Presbyterian Church of Wales, No.7)

The main article in this substantial issue is the annual lecture to the Society by Rev. D. Huw Owen on Hopcyn Bevan, one of the first ministers to be ordained in the Calvinistic Methodist Connexion when it took the decisive step to separate from the Established Church. Beside this article in Welsh there are two interesting articles in English, one on the marriage of George Whitefield (by Roger Brown) and the other on Nathaniel Rowland, the son of Daniel Rowland (by Euros W. Jones).

R.B.K.

Commemorative Meeting: EDWARD IRVING

Irving's first and only church, Regent Square, in Tavistock Place, London, WC1, will mark the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of his death on December 7th, 1834, with a special meeting on the theme, *The Life and Work of Edward Irving*. Further details can be obtained from Richard Francis, 2 Gray's Inn Square, London WC1R 5AA (01-242-4181). Members of this Society will be very welcome.

THE 1984 STUDY WEEKEND

The Society held its first weekend school at Westminster College, Cambridge, in September 1976. Since then schools have followed in every other year at Manchester, Bristol and Trevecca. The fifth school was held at

Kirkley Hall, Ponteland, Northumberland, from 7th to 9th September 1984. More recently, day conferences have been arranged for the intervening years. Two have been held, in London and Manchester, and a third is planned for 1985, at Mansfield College, Oxford.

Each of the weekend schools has been distinctive, within an overall pattern which seems to have grown of itself. Attendance at each has ranged between thirty to forty, and since there has been a different thirty to forty on each occasion it is to be hoped that the society has become more widely known to its members and to its various localities. At Kirkley, the ambience was Northumbrian (marked by Father W.J. Nicholson's lecture on "The Golden Age of Northumberland," in which he surveyed the European impact of Benet Biscop, Boniface and Alcuin) and Presbyterian (celebrated by our president's survey of Presbyterianism in Northumberland). Presbyterianism and Northumbria converged in the excursions, in the hospitality, and in worship at Bavington United Reformed Church. Perhaps the most evocative moment was the visit to Harnham Hall, now a farm but home and fortress in the 1660s of the formidable Katherine Babington. The ballast of the weekend was provided by a morning of members' papers where the themes of Northumbrian Presbyterianism were enlarged to include, among other things, Principal Grieve and the Kelvingrove election of 1923, the Churches of Christ in Northumberland, and the origins of the covenant relationship between the U.R.C. and the Palatinate Church. The focal point of the weekend was provided by Dr. Gilley's lecture which will appear in the next issue.

J.C.G.B.