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EDITOR: Dr. CLYDE BINFIELD, M.A., F.S.A.
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EDITORIAL

Professor Sell's "Little Friendly Light", Part II, should persuade readers of this Journal that judgments which dismiss the mind of eighteenth-century Presbyterianism as arid or decadent are best avoided. Many of us, indeed, if time-warped to that century, would warm more to the candour of Bourn than the temper of Andrew Parminter although our churches descend from the evangelicalism which Parminter espoused or which took such lively root in places like Nailsworth and Stroud.

We welcome as a contributor Leslie Ivory, a United Reformed minister whose note on Parminter restores to life what was for long just a name in a local church's history. Parminter's kinswomen of the next two generations, the Misses Jane and Mary Parminter, built that extraordinary Devon house, A la Ronde,

which was taken over by the National Trust in 1991, and they endowed the no less extraordinary chapel and almshouses of neighbouring Point-in-View. The Parmiters offer a suggestive commentary on the culture of Evangelical Dissent and it is to be hoped that the National Trust will not ignore that aspect of their recent acquisition.

We also welcome Philip Walmsley, whose article on Stroud is prompted by his postgraduate work at the University of Bristol, and as a reviewer we welcome Peter Brooks, Fellow of Robinson College, Cambridge.

A LITTLE FRIENDLY LIGHT: THE CANDOUR OF BOURN, TAYLOR AND TOWGOOD: PART II

I

Subscription, Toleration and the Establishment of Religion

Negatively, Bourn, Taylor and Towgood were opposed to credal subscription, to the claims of Rome, and to the pretensions of the state church on the ground that in every case assent was being required to positions which went beyond Scripture, and hence the principle of the sufficiency of scripture was under threat; moreover, assent was often hypocritically given. Positively, they defended the rights of conscience, stood for freedom of enquiry, and advocated toleration (within the limits already suggested).

Bourn refused to assent to the Westminster Shorter Catechism at his ordination, thereby prompting some neighbouring ministers to boycott the occasion. At Taylor's ordination no subscription was required or given.¹ With respect to the Salters' Hall controversy of 1719, Taylor later wrote.

As to these unhappy differences among the London ministers, I think I should not have subscribed had I been among them; because I am not satisfied that it is a means sanctified and approved of God for either finding or maintaining the truth. On the other hand I am sure it has been grievously abused from the first times of Christianity, to the dividing of Christians, and the destroying that love and mutual forbearance which is the distinguishing character of our holy religion, and the only bottom upon which the tranquility of the church can be rightly settled.²

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1. *The Principles and Pursuits of an English Presbyterian Minister of the Eighteenth Century, Exemplified in a selection from the writings of John Taylor of Norwich*, 1843, vi. The Advertisement is signed by Philip Meadows Taylor (1808-76) for whom see DNB, and eight great-grandchildren of John Taylor.
 2. Walter Wilson MS, Dr. Williams's Library A7.77.

There is no evidence that Towgood subscribed to a confessional statement, though since during the early part of his ministry his views were orthodox, and since his temperament was peaceable and non-pugilistic, it is possible that he did. He maintained the doctrine of the Trinity to his own satisfaction, and although he could not accept some of the offered explanations of it, he did not engage in controversy upon the issue. Certainly he could not accept that God had made anyone's salvation turn upon correct apprehensions of the doctrine of the Trinity, and he "accustomed himself to a suspense of judgment on points so complicated and embarrassing".³

The three divines were united in their opposition to the use of extra-biblical doctrines as tests of faith or terms of fellowship. Taylor may expostulate for them all: "Who were the first Reformers? Or who were any Synods or Assemblies of Divines, that they DARED to model Christian Faith into their own invented Forms, and impose it upon the Minds of Men, in their own devised Terms and Expressions? Hath *Christ* given Authority to *all* his Ministers, to the End of the World, to new-mould his Doctrines by the Rules of *Human Learning*, whenever they think fit?"⁴ Hence Bourn's anger when he discovered that some articles devised by Isaac Watts were to be put to an ordinand at Kidderminster: "one was the doctrine of the trinity, the second on original sin, and the third on our justification before God only on account of the merits of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ applied by faith. This measure met with the marked disapprobation of Mr. Bourn: he considered it as opening an inquisitorial office to try ministers' faith, as an invasion of the rights and privileges of a christian society, and as the offspring of insolence and pride in the persons who proposed it; while he was grieved at the heat and animosities which it produced".⁵ Bourn is not here said to have objected on the ground that the principle of the sufficiency of Scripture

3. J. Manning, *Sketch*, p. 10.
4. J. Taylor, *A Further Defence of the Common rights of Christians, and of the Sufficiency of Scripture, without the Aid of Human Schemes, Creeds, Confessions &c.* 1738, p. 33.
5. J. Toulmin, *Memoirs of Bourn*, p. 104. The articles are printed in appendix 5 (not 4 as given in the note to p. 104), pp. 189-90. See also Benson MSS, Bourn to Benson, 7 October 1743; Bourn to Watts, 2 December 1743. For Watts (1674-1748) see DNB. With hindsight, and from a different theological perspective T.S. James wrote, "No one would at the present day say that there is anything unreasonable in desiring to know a minister's opinions when he proposes to become the pastor of the person desiring the information. In no other body could such concealment have been practised, or would it have been justified, and it is to be explained only by supposing an entirely different view of truth and honour in theological matters from that entertained at present." *Op.cit.*, p. 41. Bourn himself seems to have known what it felt like to *wish* to impose doctrinal tests. Toulmin records, *op.cit.*, p. 133: "Being present...at the ordination of a young minister in Birmingham, who had been accommodated with the use of the new Meeting-house for the occasion, Mr. Bourn was so moved and disturbed by the sentiments advanced in the confession, that he made several efforts to rise and controvert them at the moment; and was with difficulty restrained from an open and immediate animadversion, by his friend Mr. Orton. who sat in the pew with him."
6. S. Bourn, *The True Christian Way*, p. 23.

was at stake, but he elsewhere made that point with characteristic gusto. To impose trinitarian tests, he declared, "is to give up *Scripture-sufficiency*, it is to return back into the Tenets of Popery: and will in Time sacrifice the Cause of Christ to Infidels..... If we pay that Regard to any Body of Men, tho' the most learned Assembly in the World, which is due to *Christ* only; we make a *Christ* of these Men; they are our Rabbi."⁶

Moreover, added Towgood, assent to man-made formularies is often hypocritically given. The clergy of the Church of England, he wrote, "are not thoroughly persuaded of the Truth and Importance of the *Christian* Religion, inasmuch as they solemnly subscribe *Articles*, which they do not *really believe*; and declare publicly, in God's Presence, their *unfeigned Assent and Consent* to Forms, in Divine Worship, which they *highly disapprove*; perhaps, heartily condemn..... many of them [are] either *Unitarian* or *Arminian*..... [There is] a Variety of evasive Shifts [which are] unspeakably detrimental."⁷ Man-made, extra-biblical tests are the hallmark of Rome and the English Establishment alike. When, in one of his catechisms, Bourn asks, "*Is not the whole System of Popery a Cheat put upon Mankind, and fitted only to rob Men of their Understandings, Consciences, Liberty, and Wealth*; and so ruin them in both Body and Soul, in this World and the next?" the answer, not surprisingly, is "Yes".⁸

In his catalogue of Rome's errors, Towgood includes the following: Rome forbids Bible study, against Christ's express command; the Pope is set in the place of Christ; the doctrine of merit is taught, as are the doctrines of purgatory, priestly absolution, and transubstantiation; the laity are denied the cup at the Lord's Supper; God is mocked in that prayer in a tongue unknown to worshippers is required. And what are Rome's fruits? "Extremely arrogant and proud, insatiably intent upon the Riches, the Power and Pomp of this World; cruel and unrelenting to all who differ from it."⁹

As for the sins of the English Church, they are many, and Towgood was regarded as the dissenters' "ablest advocate in the points of controversy which occasion their separation from the Church of England".¹⁰ Towgood took up his pen in response to the publication of three letters *To a Gentleman Dissenting from the Church of England* (1743, 1745, 1745), by John White, Vicar of Ospringe,

7. M. Towgood, *Serious and Free Thoughts*, 1755, pp. 7, 9, 16.

8. S. Bourn, *A Vindication of the Protestant Reformation* [1746], p. 202.

9. M. Towgood, *A Sermon preached at Exeter, February 6, 1745-6*, p. 18. Towgood turned his anti-Roman sentiments to political ends in his *Spanish Cruelty and Injustice. A justifiable plea for a Vigorous War with Spain, and a Rational Ground for Hopes of Success*, 1741. Whereas "we go forth to Battel only in the Name of the living and the true God...They come forth against us in the Name of *St. Peter* and the *Blessed Lady*...and call upon these idol and fictitious Mediators to help and defend them..." (pp. 4,39). The tract ends with a prayer which includes the petition, "BLAST, and bring to nought every unrighteous and wicked Attempt" (p. 39).

10. W. Wilson, *History and Antiquities*, II, 1808, p. 385.

Kent.¹¹ White charged the dissenters with schism, and Towgood replied that dissenters belong to the true Church, and that the Church of England not only makes claims and demands which go beyond Scripture, but is itself built upon a wrong foundation. Accordingly, one is not a schismatic if one separates from such a "Church". Thus, for example, in his first reply Towgood contradicts White's claim that "the Church hath power to decree Rites and Ceremonies; and Authority in Matters of Faith".¹² The Church has no such powers. Furthermore, White cannot show why "a body of infallible Men in Britain have Authority to make and enjoin Articles of Faith, but not a body of pretended infallible Men at Trent".¹³ In any case, the reality in England is that it is not the Bishops who possess authority, but the King and Parliament. Far from being an ally of the state, the Church of England is a creature of the state, and the civil magistrates wield powers which the Bible does not sanction. The Kingdom of Christ is not of this world, yet the Church of England erects terms of communion which exclude those whom Christ and his apostles have accepted - where, then, does the guilt of schism lie?

Again, Towgood insists that the constitution of the Church is to be found in the Bible; but that of the Church of England is found in the statute book, the Book of Common Prayer, and the codes of English law. Where the Church of Christ is a religious body, spiritually structured, open to all, and where the Lord's Supper is a spiritual observance from which the wicked are banned, the Church of England is a civil body having a political structure, which accepts only those who meet extra-biblical terms of communion, and in which the Lord's Supper is employed as a qualification for office, and is open to army and navy officers of whatever character as of right. The head of the Church of England is the monarch, whereas

In CHRIST'S Church, HIMSELF is the *only* Sovereign and Head; HE only hath Power to decree Ceremonies and Rites, to fix Terms of Communion and Authority in Points of Faith. Nor hath any *earthly Prince* Power to make Laws in *his* Kingdom, which shall bind the Consciences of *his* Subjects; or sovereignly to dictate to *his* Servants and Ministers what they shall believe, and what they shall preach. Yea, *his Subjects* are expressly commanded and charged to receive

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11. For White see *Alumni Cantabrigienses* I, iv. He was born in 1685, ordained at Peterborough on 22 September 1706, and served at Kettering, Stoke Nayland and Ospringe (1718-55). He died on 24 October 1755. Towgood had earlier spoken up for Dissent against the editor of Dr. John Warren's sermons. See his *The Dissenter's Apology*, 1739. He repeated and expanded his arguments when countering White.
 12. M. Towgood, *The Dissenting Gentleman's Answer to the Reverend Mr. White's three letters; in which a separation from the Establishment is fully justified; the Charge of Schism is refuted and retorted; and the Church of England and the Church of Jesus Christ, are impartially compared, and set in Contrast, and found to be Constitutions of a quite Different Nature*, 1746, p. 2.
 13. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

nothing as *Doctrine* or *Parts of Religion*, which are only *Commandments of Men*.

But in the *Church of England* there is ANOTHER *Sovereign, Law-giver, SUPREME HEAD* besides JESUS CHRIST; an *Authority* which commands Things which CHRIST never commanded, which enjoins Terms of Communion, and Rites of Religious Worship, which CHRIST never enjoined...

...by the Allegiance I owe to CHRIST my ONLY *supreme Head* and *King* in spiritual Matters, I am *obliged* to enter my Protest against the Pretensions and Claims of any OTHER *supreme Head*. For, can a Man *serve two Masters?*¹⁴

As if all this were not enough, in the Church of England a *woman* (the Queen) is placed above men in a quite unbiblical manner. Thus, in 1711, against the wishes of her bishops and clergy, Queen Anne decided not to condemn Whiston's books on the Trinity as heretical.¹⁵ Even the even-tempered Towgood can scarcely contain himself: "Behold here, Sir, a Woman exercising spiritual ecclesiastical Authority over *the Man!*"¹⁶

Towgood passes in conclusion to the Athanasian Creed. Does White seriously believe that God will "damn to the Pit of Hell all who cannot receive all the dark and mysterious Points set forth in that Creed"?¹⁷ Apparently so.

In his *Second Letter* Towgood makes plain his own stance *vis à vis* the Monarch: "I owe Allegiance to the King of England, because I receive Protection from him, and enjoy innumerable civil Blessings by means of his Government, under which I consent to live. But it does not hence follow, that I owe subjection to the Church of England.....from whom I receive no Protection, enjoy no Benefit or Advantage, and in Communion with which I by no means consent to live".¹⁸ He also took the opportunity of reproving White for libelling him: "Your representing me as having a great Zeal for Arianism, and being fond of these new Notions, for which I had given not the least real Occasion, is an Artifice so low, that you must give we [*sic*] leave to look down with great Pity upon it; not doubting that I have an Advocate and an Avenger in your Breast".¹⁹

The *Third and Last Letter* contains Towgood's case against "The egregious Absurdity of rejecting Presbyterian and admitting Popish ordinations",²⁰ which includes a sustained attack upon sacerdotalism, a repudiation of the Anglican view of linear apostolic succession, and a defence of the people's right to choose their own pastors.

14. *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.

15. For William Whiston (1667-1752) see DNB.

16. M. Towgood, *The Dissenting Gentleman's Answer*, p. 32.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 35.

18. *Ibid.*, *The Dissenting Gentleman's Second Letter*, 1747, p. 85.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 87.

20. *Ibid.*, *The Dissenting Gentleman's Third and Last Letter*, 1748, pp. 55 ff.

It says something for the force of Towgood's cumulative case that even after his death it was still being answered. More than fifty years after Towgood's first *Reply*, T. Andrews published a *Vindication of the Church of England; Intended as A Refutation of the Arguments Advanced by Mr. Towgood in support of the Principles in which he grounds his Dissent* (1799). Andrews denies that the civil magistrate claims a power over the conscience of men, that the Articles are used to coerce belief, and that bishops and priests themselves forgive sins. The Athanasian Creed, he declares, conforms to Scripture, and the bishops of the Church of England do only what New Testament bishops did.

None of which would have satisfied Bourn! In catechetical form he put his point in a nutshell:

- Q. What is the distinguishing Characteristick of the Protestant Dissenters?
- A. Their declaring for a Scripture Religion, *and the Rights of Conscience*, in opposition to the Leadership of Men in the Kingdom and Church of Christ, and all their arbitrary Impositions.²¹

Among "The Hardships of Ministerial Conformity to the Church of England" are the following:

That before they enter into the Church, as Clergymen, they must renounce Scripture Truth, with their own and the Peoples Rights, by declaring their unfeigned Assent and Consent, that every Thing in the Book of Article; Common-Prayer, and Book of Ordination, is agreeable to the Word of God; that they approve of all the Orders contained in them, and will use no other Form's.

- Q. Is it not great Presumption for fallible, imperfect, sinful Men, to require their Fellow-Servants to profes there are no Faults at all in so large a Book as the Common Prayer, nor in two more Church-Books, Works of Men's Composure?
- A. Yes.²²

In a word, unlike other societies, the Church may not make its own laws: "It is an absolute Monarchy, of which Christ is sole Legislator and King".²³ For similar reasons Taylor wrote, "From the Church of *England* we do indeed dissent; but not as Enemies, seeking her Destruction: but as real Friends, wishing her most perfect Establishment and Prosperity".²⁴

21. S. Bourn, *A Vindication of the Principles and Practice of Protestant Dissenters*, [1747], pp. 2-3.

22. *Ibid.*, pp. 53, 57.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 133.

24. J. Taylor, *The Glory of any House erected for public worship, and the true Principles, religious, civil and social of Protestant Dissenters, Represented in a Sermon Preached at the Opening of the New Chapel in St. George's of Colgate, Norwich, May the 12th. 1756, 1756*, p. 14.

It was bad enough when Rome and the Church of England went beyond biblical instruction, but now, declares Bourn, dissenters are doing it too! The matter was a delicate one because, on the one hand, "the Reformation from *Popery* [is] built upon every Man's *Right* to inquire into the Sense of the Bible, and his *Obligation* to profess according to his sentiments".²⁵ On the other hand, there was the question of the degree of permissible tolerance within the Church which then, as now, haunted the people of God. In Bourn's day there was the security of distance between dissenters on the one side and "papists" and Established Churchmen on the other; but where the frictions were *within* dissent, irritations could be felt more keenly. How to practise one's principle that "the *true Orthodox Way* of curing Mistakes and Errors, is by Evidence and Reason; the *Heretical Way* is by Force and Violence, Inhumanity and Ill Manners"²⁶ when one's nearest neighbours appeared to be irrational, ill-mannered enthusiasts, who held confessions over people's heads no less than did Rome and Canterbury? What to do when those who share a concern for religious toleration find one another to be religiously intolerable?

The issue came to a head for Taylor in connection with Joseph Rawson of Nottingham. As background to the case we may place side by side Taylor's verdict upon the Salters' Hall decision and an extract from the *Church Book* of Castle Gate (Independent), Nottingham:

This should always be remembered to their Honour, as being the only Instance, perhaps, that can be produced out of Church-History, for many Centuries, of any Synod of Ministers, declaring in Favour of Religious Liberty.²⁷

At a meeting of churches at Bolsover on 17 April 1728 the question was raised:

Whither a Church of Christ can or ought to Suffer a Minister that is known to be an Arian and unsound in the Fundamentals of Religion, To Preach or Exercise over them.

Answer'd in the negative.

Whither Arianism or Denying the True and Proper Divinity of Christ and his Equality with the Father as to his Divine Perfection be a Fundamental Error.

Answer'd in the Affirmative.²⁸

25. [S. Bourn]. *A Dialogue between a Baptist and a Churchman*, 1739, p. 122.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 140.

27. J. Taylor, *A Narrative of Mr. Joseph Rawson's Case: or, An Account of several Occurrences relating to the Affair of his being excluded from Communion with the Congregational Church in Nottingham. With a Prefatory Discourse in Defence of the Common Rights of Christians*, 2nd. edn., 1742, p. 9 n.

Taylor here overlooks the fact that the General Baptist Assembly had refused to discipline Matthew Caffyn (1628-1714) in 1691, 1693, 1700 and 1701. Some of Caffyn's expressions were capable of an Arian interpretation. On the other hand, he sought to convert Socinians. See A. Gordon on Caffyn in DNB.

28. Castle Gate *Church Book*, DWL MS. 201.33, p. 8.

In 1736 the hapless Rawson was accused by James Sloss,²⁹ co-pastor at Castle Gate, of associating with “heretics”. Sloss demanded an answer to the following “test question”: “Whether there are three Persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost; and whether these three are one God, the same in substance, and equal in all Divine Perfections and Glory?” Rawson’s reply, though biblically-grounded, was not deemed satisfactory by the majority of the church, and he was barred from the Lord’s table. He let it be known that he intended to present himself for communion none the less, and was threatened with civil redress. He published an account of his predicament, and Taylor was infuriated:

How durst [Sloss] charge [Rawson] with Heresy, who professed an hearty Assent to the Word of God, and a sincere Intention to live according to it? How durst he presume to call a Man out of Christian Communion, who made a full, clear, and unexceptionable Confession of his Faith, according to the Scriptures of Truth? A Confession, in the first Ages of Christianity, sufficient to have intitled him to Fellowship with Apostles, and the Gifts of the Holy Ghost?³⁰

Rawson had some supporters at Castle Gate - indeed, some members of that church seceded to the High Pavement meeting over the issue; but Sloss stood his ground and published the *True Narrative of the Case of Joseph Rawson* (1737). He agreed that Rawson’s own account of the affair was substantially accurate, but still charged him with Arianism. This prompted Taylor’s *A Further Defence of the Common Rights of Christians* (1738), in which he pressed the point for liberty, and contended against unwarrantably-imposed tests of church membership: “A popish, anti-christian Spirit, I will ever oppose, as God shall enable me”.³¹

For all their righteous anger (or, as their opponents might have said, their ungodly invective), Bourn, Taylor and Towgood were capable of the most eirenic utterances. I cite two examples from many. The first is from Taylor’s sermon preached at the opening of the Octagon chapel, Norwich (though note the confinement of his ecumenical spirit to fellow Protestants):

The Gospel, on the Part of the universal Father, is a Declaration of Peace on Earth and Good-will towards men; and is intended to produce corresponding affections of Benevolence in our hearts... *Christians* is the honourable name we wear, as a glorious diadem upon our heads, in token of the favour of the Father of the universe, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Episcopalians, Presbyterians,

29. It appears that Rawson had lodged with Sloss on his arrival in Nottingham from Scotland. Through no fault of his own, he sustained a financial loss and sought assistance from a member of another church. Hence the charge of consorting with “heretics”.

30. J. Taylor, *A Narrative*, p. 12.

31. *Ibid.*, *A Further Defence*, p. 78.

Independents, Baptists, Calvinists, Arminians, Arians, Trinitarians and others, are names of religious distinctions. But, however we may commonly be ranked under any of these divisions, we reject them all. We disown all connection, excepting that of love and good-will, with any sect or party whatsoever. We are a society built and established, not upon any human foundation, but only upon the foundation of the Prophets and Apostles, of which Jesus Christ is the chief corner-stone. We are Christians, and only Christians; and we consider all our fellow-Protestants, of every denomination, in the same light - only as Christians - and cordially embrace them all in affection and charity as such. Whatever peculiar tenets they may hold, or in what respects soever they may differ from us, such tenets and such difference we consider not as affecting their Christian character and profession in general. Notwithstanding such peculiarities, we allow that they may be good Christians, and as good Christians as ourselves. And therefore, upon these just and extensive principles, we deny communion to none of our fellow-Protestants; we refuse communion upon the same catholic foundation with none of them.³²

Bourn may supply my second example:

May the Period hasten for a new *Reformation*, wherein our Holy Lord will, (as it is likely he will), in some degree, reject all the *Parties* of Christians at this Day in the World; and form a *new People* of the good Men of the several Parties, who shall unite in the Articles of their Goodness, and sweetly bear with one another in their lesser Differences, leaving each other to the Divine Illumination.³³

The difficulty is that one man's liberality of spirit is another man's cavalier disregard of truth; one man's illumination is another man's heresy. And so to doctrine...

II

Christian Doctrine

Procedure here will be to visit the several "departments" of systematic theology as traditionally conceived, in order to ascertain the position of these three divines on those doctrines with which they dealt. I do not expect overall balance for, as is the way with controversialists (not least Paul), the terms are frequently set by the prevailing "enemies".

32. *Ibid.*, *The Glory of any House*, pp. 12-13.

33. [S. Bourn], *A Dialogue between a Baptist and a Churchman*, 1739, p. 152. There is an allusion here to Cotton Mather's Letter from Boston, 1717. For Mather (1663-1728) see DNB under Mather, Increase.

Although the question of subscription and the principle of the sufficiency of Scripture were the supremely important issues for Bourn, Taylor and Towgood (as for those at Salters' Hall), it cannot be denied that the doctrine of God, and especially of his triune nature, was much discussed by all of them. Toulmin makes the important point that whereas Giles Firmin (1614-97) had discussed the *humanity* of Christ - a theme to be taken up again by Lindsey, Lardner, Cardale and Priestley, the controversy in our period centred in the question whether or not the Son was co-equal with the Father.³⁴ Samuel Clarke and, in his wake, Bourn, Taylor and Towgood, denied this, and maintained the superiority of God the Father. But, by their own testimony, none of them denied the Trinity as such; they were concerned to oppose speculations concerning the triune God for which no biblical warrant could be found. Of course, to eighteenth-century and subsequent Athanasians they *were* denying the Trinity in falling into an Arianism which subordinated the Son to the Father.

Bourn's testimony was that "the Doctrine (of the Trinity, or) of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is a *principle Doctrine* of the Gospel; it is also a *plain*, intelligible Doctrine; and what all Christians have agreed in and never disputed. But if we give up any Points relating to this Doctrine, it is only *Human Explications* of it; and we give them up only because, either wholly incomprehensible to us, or utterly indefensible by us".³⁵ Having studied Clarke and Waterland, he felt able to say that "the more I read and think, the more I am confirmed in my present Faith concerning the *Trinity* as I find it supported by the whole Gospel, conformed to the Dictates of Reason, and influential upon my Religious Practice".³⁶ But that Bourn's was an Arian doctrine is clear from his dialogue with "Baptist":

If by the Doctrine of the *Trinity* you mean the Doctrine of *Father, Son and Holy Spirit*; they [i.e. Baptist preachers] might have stay'd at home; in regard, as far as I know the Town, this Doctrine is firmly believ'd by every Preacher in Town, and by all their Hearers...For my Part, I hold Jesus Christ to be God, or a God...But I can't bring myself to believe his *Supreme Deity*, because I believe in the same supreme Deity of God the Father; and it appears to me a plain contradiction to say there are two Persons or Beings who are both of 'em *Supreme or most High God*; and I never yet had Faith eno' to believe two contradictory Propositions.³⁷

This was too much for the Baptist John Gill, who pulled no punches concerning the Birmingham Dialogue-Writer: "I take him to be a *Heathen*, and not a *Christian*, much less a *consistent* one, since he gives strong intimation of his belief

34. See J. Toulmin, *Memoirs of Bourn*, pp. 18-19. Firmin, Lindsey, Cardale and Lardner are in DNB. Firmin is also in FAE.

35. S. Bourn, *The True Christian Way*, p. 21.

36. [S. Bourn], *A Dialogue between a Baptist and a Churchman*, 1739, p. 48.

37. *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

of a supreme and subordinate Deity, a superior God and an inferior one, and both as the objects of religious worship".³⁸ Others, too, attacked Bourn over the Trinity, among them the ubiquitous James Sloss of Nottingham who, although he had been a student under John Simson of Glasgow,³⁹ had clearly not been affected by the heresy of which some suspected his teacher. The dispute followed the publication of Bourn's tract, *An Address to Protestant Dissenters: or an Inquiry into the Ground of their attachment to the Assemblies Catechism* (1736). Here Bourn examined in detail the sixth question and answer of the Westminster Shorter Catechism, the first clause of which states that "There are three persons in the Godhead". Bourn begins by denying that "Godhead" signifies a material or spiritual substance without understanding, liberty and active power; for we could not have any idea of such a being. "Godhead" must therefore mean God himself: "Now by GOD, when taken simply and alone, is always meant God the Father, the one living and true God; the Father of the Universe, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; the Father of all Spirits; the Father of the Spirit of God."⁴⁰ But then the first clause of the Catechism's sixth question will have to be construed thus:

THERE are *three* Person in that *one* infinite, self-existent Being, in that *one* infinite, self-existent Persons we call God: that is, There are *not* three Persons, but one Person only in our Idea of God.

FOR, what is a *Person*, but an individual, intelligent, free, active Being or Substance. Is not *God* such a Person, without Original, and with all Perfection? Now to say, there are three Persons in this one God (or Godhead) is that not to fall into Dr. *Waterland's* Fundamental Blunder and Contradiction, too low for a Scholar, too mean for an honest Plowman, "That there are three individual, intelligent Agents or Beings, in one individual intelligent Agent or Being?" *that is*, There are three Persons in one Person; *that is*, There are not three, but one; *That is*, one and not one, three and not three.

I HOPE the Gospel of JESUS CHRIST is not chargeable with these, or any such like Absurdities.⁴¹

Furthermore, if the Father, Son and Spirit together comprise our idea of God, we effectively destroy the beings of Son and Spirit, for all perfection and dominion are in the Father alone, "to which Son and Spirit can make no addition".⁴²

38. J. Gill, *An Answer to the Birmingham Dialogue-Writer Upon the following subjects: The Divinity of Christ, Election, Original Sin, Free Will, Irresistible Grace, Imputed Righteousness, Perseverance, and Baptism*, 1739, p. 6.

39. For Simson (1668?-1740) see DNB. Professor of Divinity at Glasgow University, he was suspected, though never convicted, of heresy.

40. [S. Bourn], *An Address to Protestant Dissenters*, p. 6.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

The Catechism next declares that “These three are one God”. Bourn protests that if by “one God” is meant the God and Father of all things, then the first of the three only is the one God, by whom the others are begotten, and from whom they proceed. If what is meant is that the three are coordinate rulers of the universe, then there is no begetting and derivation, and we have not one God, but three. But if the Catechism intends to each that Son and Spirit are derived from God the Father, then this is good biblical teaching, “but very badly expressed... The Father and Son always agree, or are One in a *moral* Sense, for the Son ever doth what pleaseth the Father. But to make them One in the *natural*, or *physical* Sense, is either to deny the whole Being of the Son of God, or to destroy the first Idea and Principle in Religion, the Being of One God”.⁴³

Bourn next turns to the assertion that the three persons are “the same in substance”. If there is but one substance, numerically, then we have not three persons, but only one; if the three persons are of the same kind of substance, then, once again, we have three coordinate gods. Moreover, if the three persons are the same in substance, and if one is to be worshipped, then all must be worshipped, for if the whole deity is in each, the whole substance must also be in each. It would then follow that to worship any is to worship all: “AND then no Man can be charged with denying the Divinity of the Son, or with not paying him divine Worship, if he worship any one of the Three Persons, seeing, upon the Principles of the Catechism, they are all one and the same Substance; the same infinite, underived, intelligent, free, active Substance”.⁴⁴

Finally, the Catechism declares that the three persons “who are the same in substance, are equal in power and glory”. Bourn protests that the idea of identity excludes that of equality. In any case, if the three persons are equally uncaused and self-sufficient, how can the Father give life to the Son; how can the Son say that the Father is greater than he? Positively, Bourn affirms:

THE Scripture Doctrine of the *Trinity*...is a noble and important Doctrine; but then it is also, blessed be God, a plain, a *very plain one*; so plain that Plowmen, Children and Servants may easily understand it, as far as is in any way necessary to their Duty, Comfort and Happiness.

THAT there is ONE GOD, even the Father; and ONE LORD JESUS, by whom God made the Worlds, by whom he *governs* them; by whom he hath *redeemed* Men, and by whom he will *judge* them: That the SPIRIT of the Father and the Son is ready to assist us in all *Duty*, and to give us all needful *Comfort*, by and thro’ the Holy Scripture...This Faith in God, in Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost, if it produce a Holy Life, is I hope, enough to qualify a Christian for Acceptance with God. He who insists upon more, as

43. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

Fundamental and necessary to all Christians, discovers I think great *weakness of Head*; or what is much worse, a *dishonest Heart*.⁴⁵

Bourn concludes by asking whether children ought to be taught such unintelligible - even contradictory - propositions as if they were biblical truths; whether such propositions ought to stand as fundamental articles of faith; whether reverence for the great and the good entails the adoption of their errors; and whether those who endeavour to rectify mistakes should be blamed and defamed. He clearly expects negative answers on all counts. The sting in the tail of his tract is as follows: "THE *Athanasian Creed* I meddle not with, I own it to be more out of my Province; but I hope the Time is hastening on, when the *Church of England Liturgy* will be freed from so scandalous a Piece."⁴⁶

In his *A Vindication of the Answer to the Sixth Question in the Assembly's Shorter Catechism* (1738, not 1728 as printed), Sloss agrees that a catechism is not to be received blindfold; but, then, it should not be condemned blindfold either! The nub of his reply to Bourn is that Bourn is wrong to suppose that

because the Term God-head cannot be understood to denote infinite Matter, or an infinite *Spiritual*, but *unintelligent unactive Substance*, therefore it must of necessity signify and denote the Person of God the Father; which is a very wide Consequence, and shows how little this Author understands his Catechism. For by God-Head in this Question and Answer, the venerable Authors mean, the Divine Nature, Substance and Essence, together with all the essential Perfections, abstracting from all Consideration of the particular and peculiar Manner of the Subsistence of this Essence and these Perfections in the Father, or of the other sacred Persons of the Trinity, whereby they become and are denominated proper Persons, distinct from one another. And this is a *tolerable* Sense of that Term, tho' perhaps it may seem altogether *intolerable* to the *Arians*, because it cuts the Sinews of their whole Scheme.....if we take the Term God-head in the Sense above explained, as signifying the Divine Nature and Essence, then the Sense comes out to be this: there are three Persons in the God-head, that is, not in the one Person of the Father, but in the Divine Nature, which is common to all the three Persons, whereof they are all equally possest, and in each of whom it does subsist in a distinct and peculiar Manner.⁴⁷

He adds the consideration that we have no ground for assuming that a divine and human person must be alike in all respects: "One who is a Divine Person, may have two distinct Understandings, and two distinct Wills, tho' all other

45. *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

47. J. Sloss, *A Vindication*, pp. 10-11.

Persons, whether Angelic, or Human, should have but one, as is exemplified in our Saviour Jesus Christ, who has both the Divine and Human Natures, united in his one Person; each of which Natures has a distinct Understanding and Will..."⁴⁸

Sloss, "in Mr. Bourn's opinion, wrote neither with the spirit of a christian, nor in a manner becoming a scholar, a gentleman or a friend of truth. On these grounds he declined directing any remarks in defence of his own piece to Mr. Sloss himself, but made an appeal to his people..."⁴⁹ He asked,

Is not the Doctrine of *One God*, even the Father, who had no Beginning, who has all perfections underived from another, and all Dominion absolutely in himself; of *One Lord Jesus Christ* begotten by, or derived from the Father, in a way incomprehensible, by whom he made, redeemed, governs and will Judge the World; And of *one Spirit* proceeding and sent from the Father, by the Son, to inspire the Apostles, to teach, guide, sanctify and comfort Men; Is not this a much more plain and intelligible, more scriptural and more consistent Doctrine than that of your Teacher's?⁵⁰

He reiterates his earlier point: "I thought three distinct Persons cou'd not possess one, undivided, numerical Nature or Substance, and this *Nature Subsist in each of them in a distinct peculiar Manner ...*Does the Word of God say any such thing?"⁵¹ Bourn proceeds to repudiate Sloss's charges one by one, and of these protests one example will suffice: "Are Men, who profess to have *no other Master* of their Faith but *Jesus Christ*, and to derive all their Notions about revealed Religion from the New Testament, *Arians?* Can any conscientious Men call them so, while they profess not to have received one Notion from him, to have no Acquaintance with him, and to have seen none of his Writings, and while they disclaim such as are reported to be his peculiar tenets?"⁵²

Where the Trinity was concerned, Towgood, as we have seen, was more reticent in print than Bourn, but Taylor came forth with guns blazing on the subject. Indeed, it was said of him that "if ever he expressed an uncommon warmth and honest indignation against anything, it was against *Athanasianism*, which he thought one of the greatest corruptions of pure and genuine Christianity, as this doctrine entirely subverts the unity of God, the great and primary foundation of all religion, natural and revealed".⁵³

48. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

49. J. Toulmin, *op.cit.*, pp. 61-2.

50. [S. Bourn], *An Address to Protestant Dissenters*, p. 18.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 51.

53. E. Harwood, *A Sermon Occasioned by the Death of the Rev. John Taylor, D.D.*, p. 40. For the general climate of thought see J. Hay Colligan, *The Arian Movement in England*, 1913.

As with Bourn, so with Taylor: a prominent target was James Sloss. In the context of his defence of Joseph Rawson, Taylor thunders against

high swelling Words of Vanity; such as *Entity, Trin-Unity, Quoddity, Quiddity, Formalities, Essentialities, Primalities, Consubstantiality, necessary Emanation, hypostatical Union, mutual Circumplexion, a Trinity of Modes, Communication of Properties, Oeconomical, Co-essential, Co-equal, Co-eternal*. These, Christian, are barbarous Sounds, unknown to the pure and divine Mouth of thy Saviour, and the inspired Voice of his Apostles, whereby the Principles of thy Religion, in themselves noble and heavenly, simple and plain to every Capacity, have been worked into pompous Nonsense and profound Darkness.⁵⁴

In *A Further Defence of the Common Rights of Christians*, Taylor presents his own credo:

WHAT the Scriptures reveal concerning the Son of God, we acknowledge and believe. We own him in all his Offices, of Prophet, Priest and King; as the one Mediator between God and Man, our Advocate and Intercessor, the Surety of the better Covenant, the Captain and Author of our Salvation, the only Name given under heaven among Men, by which we can be saved, and who can save to the uttermost: We are assured of his Incarnation, Death, Resurrection, Ascension, to heaven, where he is at the Right Hand of God, *exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour*, and from whence he will come at the great Day to judge both the Living and the Dead. We believe all that he hath himself reported, whether by his own Mouth, or the Mouth of his holy Apostles, concerning his Person, Nature and Perfections, his Offices and Works. We take him just as he is described in Revelation: We change nothing of the Gospel; designedly and knowingly we add nothing, we diminish nothing, but leave everything to stand just as it is in the Word of God.⁵⁵

Taylor's sepulchral verdict on the question of the Trinity was that "The *Orthodox* began, and the *Orthodox* finished the Corruption of Religion",⁵⁶ For the other side, M. Adamson (a pseudonym - probably of the Baptist Grantham

54. J. Taylor, *A Narrative of Mr. Joseph Rawson's Case*, p. 13.

55. *Ibid.*, *A Further Defence*, p. 55.

56. *Ibid.*, p. 63.

Killingworth of Norwich, here writing as a Quaker) thought that Taylor should take off his mask and admit that he is not so much a Christian as an "improved pagan".⁵⁷

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Turning now to the doctrine of the providence of God, we find that both Towgood and Taylor were impelled to this theme by disasters. Following the devastating fire at Crediton, Towgood delivered a sermon entitled *Afflictions Improved*, which was based on a phrase from Ecclesiastes 7:14, "In the day of adversity consider". The fire, he declared, was no chance occurrence; it happened by the will of God. He urged his hearers, "As we are now tossed upon troubled Waves, and the Billows of Affliction are suffered to go over us, let a *strong Faith* in this Dominion and Providence of God be as an Anchor to our Minds, to keep them steadfast and firm".⁵⁸ Why did such a thing happen? Perhaps God wished to give us a sense of the extreme vanity of temporal possessions; to test our patience, and to provide others with the opportunity of displaying compassion; to chastise us for our deviations from his law. But, he cautions, the greatest sufferers are not always the greatest sinners, and the "Strokes of Divine Displeasure" fall on the innocent as well as on the guilty. Towgood encourages thankfulness for the lives spared, for the homes not burned, and calls his people to "behave with *Christian* resignation and Composure of Soul". "These Billows of Affliction on which we are now tossed, and the Storm of Adversity which sorely beats upon us, will then drive us the faster to the Haven of *eternal Rest*. By being cast into this Furnace, we shall come forth, like Gold, purified and refined, and be so much the *more prepared* for the happy World above, where every *Sorrow shall flee away, and God will wipe all Tears from our Eyes*."⁵⁹

Taylor's sermon on God's providence was prompted by the Lisbon earthquake of 1755, and delivered at Stowmarket on Friday 6 February 1756, the General Fast Day. He makes many of the same points as Towgood, but incorporates national, and not simply individual, applications. His text is Nahum 3:8. Taylor regards the earthquake as a judgment of God, and reminds

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57. M. Adamson (pseud.), *A Friendly Epistle to Neighbour John Taylor of The City of Norwich; Occasion'd by looking over his sermon preached at the opening of his New Chappel: Containing an earnest Invitation to him to join the Quakers, and not to attempt to raise up a New Sect when there are so many already in the World*, 2nd edn., 1757. For Killingworth (1699-1778) see DNB. Robert Spears (*Record of Unitarian Worthies* [1876], p. 303) refers to one McGowan who, in *The Arian's and Socinian's Monitor*, recounts a dream of seeing Taylor "tossing upon the burning billows of hell, and vainly, supplicating mercy from the God whom he had blasphemed".
58. M. Towgood, *Afflictions Improved: A Sermon preach'd at Crediton in Devon, Aug. 21, 1743. Being the Lord's Day after the dreadful Fire, which consumed the greatest Part of that large and populous Town*, 2nd edn. 1743, p. 13.
59. *Ibid.*, p. 39.

his hearers that England is no better than Lisbon: "When the divine judgments had their full commission, in vain [Lisbon's] sea girt strength, in vain all her natural and acquired defence, in vain her riches and the number of her merchants; nothing can stand before the judgements of an almighty God".⁶⁰ England must not trust in natural defences: these will not save us "if the providence of God be against us".⁶¹ If we learn this lesson as a nation, and put our trust in God, then our enemies will not prevail against us. If the nation at large pays no heed, believers will still be secure, "for the general wreck of nature cannot destroy the everlasting interests of the righteous; or should a patient, and long-suffering God bear with us as a nation, yet a little longer we shall be amongst the righteous for whose sake our land is spared".⁶²

* * * * *

On the doctrines of man and sin, we may turn to James Manning for a summary statement of Towgood's position. To Towgood, the idea of Adam as our representative in whom we sinned and because of whom we deserve punishment draws "a veil over the glory of the Divine goodness, eclipsing greatly its lustre, and making him not only like, but even worse than such a one as ourselves. To suppose the Deity to be angry, even to wrath, with a new-born infant" is blasphemous. Again, the idea of Adam's federal headship of the race is "totally repugnant to all those natural ideas of wisdom, justice and goodness, which the finger of God hath written upon the table of every man's heart..." Whatever came upon men because of Adam's sin, was more than repaired by Christ, the Second Adam.⁶³

It was left to Taylor to elaborate upon these doctrines at length, and this he did in *The Scripture-Doctrine of Original Sin* (1740). We may sample his position by quoting his comment upon John 3:6, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the spirit is spirit". Taylor writes,

The natural Birth produceth the mere Parts and Powers of a Man:
The Spiritual Birth produceth a Man sanctified into the right Use
and Application of those Powers in a Life of true Holiness. This I
take to be the true Sense of the Text: but do not see that it either
affirms or implies, that we derive from *Adam*, by natural Generation, a
Nature quite indisposed, and disabled to all spiritual Good. Certainly

60. J. Taylor, *The inefficacy of the greatest national strength to secure from the divine judgments, exemplified in the case of Nineveh, and applied to the situation and circumstances of our own nation. In a Sermon Preached to a Congregation of Protestant Dissenters at Stow-Market, On Friday, February 6, 1756. Being the Day appointed for a General Fast*, 1756, p. 4.

61. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

62. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

63. J. Manning, *Sketch*, pp. 145-7.

that cannot be concluded from the Force of the text; which, on the contrary, supposeth that we have a Nature susceptible of the best kind of Habits, and capable of being born of the Spirit.⁶⁴

Taylor is very concerned that the contrary view tempts us to transfer our wickedness and sin to a wrong cause.⁶⁵ It also turns God into a monster: "pray consider seriously what a God He must be who can be displeased with and curse His innocent creatures even before they have a being. Is this thy God O Christian? But so far is God from cursing His innocent creatures that he hath not only turned the sentence of general mortality into a general good, but hath also supplied a superabundance of Grace His Son".⁶⁶ How can young people remember their Creator "without the utmost Horror, who, it is supposed, hath given them Life under such deplorable Circumstances?"⁶⁷ Taylor staunchly supports the view that we are responsible for our own wrong-doing, and that if we are born with natural proclivities to evil, those proclivities are necessary, not chosen, and hence we cannot be guilty on account of them: "Imputed Guilt", he thunders, "is imaginary Guilt".⁶⁸

As with original sin, so with original righteousness. In his *A Scheme of Scripture Divinity*, Taylor rejects the notion. Such righteousness would have been produced in Adam without his knowledge - that is, by no act or choice of his; and hence it could not be a moral quality, but merely a natural instinct, "like the Industry of the Bee, or the Fierceness of the Lion".⁶⁹ In fact, "Our singular Honor and Advantage lies in our moral Capacities".⁷⁰

Criticisms of Taylor's stance came from many quarters. To Doddridge his efforts appeared as "a vain attempt to prove that impossible, which, in fact, evidently is".⁷¹ Taylor included a supplement to the second edition of *Original Sin* (1741) in which he replied to Isaac Watts's *The Ruin and Recovery of Mankind* (1740). Watts referred to Taylor's supplement in the preface to the second edition of his own book, but did not directly engage Taylor. He did, however, admit that he could not prove the imputation of Adam's sin from the Bible - something on which Taylor pounced as strengthening his own case, in a pamphlet entitled, *Remarks on such Additions to the Second Edition of the Ruin and Recovery of Mankind As relate to the Arguments Advanced in the Supplement to the Scripture-Doctrine of Original Sin* (1743). John Wesley, drawing heavily on Watts's book, entered the lists with his pamphlet, *The Doctrine of Original Sin* (1757), in which

64. J. Taylor, *Original Sin*, pp. 144-5.

65. *Ibid.*, p. 250.

66. *Ibid.*, p. 151.

67. *Ibid.*, p. 255.

68. *Ibid.*, p. 244.

69. J. Taylor, *Scripture Divinity*, p. 58. In the Irenaean line, though not explicitly so, Taylor holds that Adam "was in a kind of infantile State, void of all Learning, without any Theories, or general Principles to govern himself by", p. 77.

70. *Ibid.*, p. 60.

71. Quoted by A. Gordon, *Addresses Biographical and Historical*, 1922, p. 195.

he wondered whether Taylor was not "overthrowing the very foundations of primitive, scriptural Christianity".⁷² Samuel Hebden came forward as a defender of the Westminster standards, putting the sole agency of the Holy Spirit in regeneration against Taylor's view that virtue and holiness result from our free choices.⁷³ He makes it clear that the idea that "God the Creator infuses a Principle of Corruption, or a Propensity towards sinful Acts into the Souls of the Posterity of *Adam*... is a Sentiment we abhor, though some through Ignorance or Wilfulness have loaded our Doctrine with this Black Charge".⁷⁴ For his part, Hebden maintains the federal headship of Adam, and challenged Taylor either to prove that God did *not* make a covenant with Adam "as a Publick person", or else to surrender his whole scheme.

The biggest gun against Taylor sounded from across the Atlantic. In the opinion of Jonathan Edwards, no book had done as much to undermine the Westminster standards as Taylor's *Original Sin*, and he set out to repair the damage to the best of his ability. Edwards perceived that at the heart of the problem was a conflict between the increasingly fashionable individualism of the Enlightenment and notions of human solidarity. Where Taylor urged that universal sinfulness resulted from man's free and sinful exercise of his will, and that to invoke the concept of universal depravity was redundant and immoral, Edwards countered that if we do not posit universal depravity we cannot explain how every individual, as a matter of fact, freely chooses what is evil. His own conviction is that to be morally responsible entails not moral atomism (as we might nowadays designate it), but the recognition of one's solidarity with all of humanity from Adam onwards.⁷⁵ That Edwards's case was ignored in some circles is clear from the *Catalogue* of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association Centenary Exhibition. Of item six, Taylor's *Original Sin*, it is said that the book "did more than any other to emancipate the English Presbyterian Dissenters from Calvinism".⁷⁶

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72. J. Wesley *Works IX*, p. 432. For Wesley (1703-91) see DNB.

73. I refer here to his *Baptismal Regeneration disproved; The Scripture Account of the Nature of Regeneration explained; and the absolute Necessity of such a Change argued from the Native Corruption of Man since the Fall; In a Discourse on John 3: 5,6. With Remarks on some Passages in a late Book against Original Sin; and an Appendix Relating to three different false Descriptions of Regeneration delivered in some Modern Books*, 1741. Hebden had a preliminary skirmish with Taylor in his *Man's Original Righteousness*, 1740. Hebden (d. 23 January 1747, aet. 54) was minister at Canterbury (1715-23/4) and Wrentham, Suffolk, (1723-47) See A.F. Taylor, *English Presbyterianism in Canterbury*, 1927, pp. 7f. J. Browne, *Op.cit.*, p. 432.

74. *Ibid.*, p. 34.

75. See Jonathan Edwards, *The Great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin Defended*, *Works* (1834), reprinted Edinburgh 1974, I, pp. 146-233. See also David Weddle, "Jonathan Edwards on men and trees, and the problem of human solidarity", *Harvard Theological Review* LXVII, 1974, esp. pp. 158-69.

76. See *Unitarian Historical Society Transactions* III, p. 228.

What, on the broadly Arian principles of Bourn, Taylor and Towgood, becomes of the doctrine of the work of Christ? In one of his catechisms Bourn teaches that "God sent his Son Jesus Christ into the World, to save the Inhabitants thereof from the Devil, Sin, Death, and all Misery; and to this End made him a Prophet, a Priest and a King".⁷⁷ Christ conquered the Devil by refusing all his offers; by "dying a sacrifice to obtain Pardon"; by rising again and so conquering death; and by his gospel which persuades the sinner to escape. Bourn continues, "In order to Sinners being saved thro' Jesus Christ, they must comply with all Gospel Demands, or come up to God's Terms".⁷⁸ Here Bourn seems to be tumbling into a new legalism, and it is not surprising that some smelled Pelagianism.

Taylor has no doubt that "the Atonement *Christ* made was for the *Remission* or *Forgiveness of Sins*"⁷⁹ or that "Our being...reconciled to God is ascribed to the *Death, Cross, and Blood of Christ*."⁸⁰ Our "Sanctification, spiritual Healing, or Deliverance from the Power of Sin" is likewise ascribed to Christ's sufferings and death,⁸¹ as are the happiness of the future state, and all the blessings of the covenant. Accordingly, as to the effects of Christ's death, Taylor concludes

that the Sacrifice of *Christ*, was truly, and properly, in the highest Degree, and far beyond any other, PIACULAR and EXPIATORY, to make *Atonement* for, or to *take away Sin*. Not only to give us an Example; not only to assure us of Remission; or to procure our Lord a Commission to publish the Forgiveness of Sin: but moreover to obtain that Forgiveness, by doing what God in his Wisdom and Goodness judged fit and expedient to be done in order to the Forgiveness of Sin; and without which he did not think it fit or expedient to grant the Forgiveness of Sin.⁸²

Taylor's insistence here upon the need of a more-than-exemplary sacrifice is important as distancing him from some of the later liberal theologians.

There follows a discussion of mistakes concerning the efficacy of Christ's death. First, "THE Design of it could not be to make God merciful; or to dispose him to spare and pardon us, when, as some suppose, so great was his Wrath, that had not *Christ* interposed, he would have destroyed us".⁸³ Towgood concurs: "The sufferings of the mediator we are always to consider, not as the primary and moving cause of God's being propitious towards us, and willing to be reconciled, but as the manner or the medium in which he was pleased to show

77. S. Bourn, *Religious Education Begun and carried on in Three Catechisms*, 1748, p. 36.

78. *Ibid.*, p. 39.

79. J. Taylor, *Atonement*, p. 78.

80. *Ibid.*, p. 82.

81. *Ibid.*, p. 83.

82. *Ibid.*, pp. 91-2.

83. *Ibid.*, pp. 93-4.

himself propitious. Antecedent to the death of Christ he was gracious and merciful, and ready to forgive.”⁸⁴ But when Towgood further teaches that the sacrifice of Christ “was not a matter of necessity, which unrelenting justice required as an obligation, but a wise expedient to support moral government, to display the evil and demerit of sin, and consequently to be a perpetual incentive to humility and repentance”,⁸⁵ we detect the opening up of a gap between him and Taylor. They agree, over against some versions of high Calvinism, that God did not need a sacrifice in order to make him merciful and gracious - he was ever thus. In a MS note in a copy of the third edition of his *Paraphrase* on Romans Taylor writes, “The redemption that is in Jesus Christ is not the cause of God’s justifying grace; but ‘tis the way in which, or the means through which, it is exercised and communicated to us”.⁸⁶ For holding this Taylor was criticised by George Hampton, for whom “the death of *Christ* is, by the will of God, the direct and immediate cause or ground of our forgiveness”.⁸⁷ But whereas Taylor allows that according to *God’s* requirements something had to be *done* (and not simply shown) in order to secure the forgiveness of sins, Towgood, writing a generation later is more firmly set in a Socinian direction, for to him Christ’s sacrifice is intended to impress, and to have effects upon, *us*. However, when we press Taylor as to what precisely had to be done, the answer is somewhat hard to find. He denies that Christ satisfied the demands of the law, that his death was vicarious, and that our sins are imputed to him.⁸⁸ Positively, the value of Christ’s death is not in its pain, but in its obedience and goodness: the blood of Christ is the blood of the spotless Lamb of God - how can the obedience of such a one *not* procure pardon? Those who ponder seriously the death of Christ cannot but see “how odious and detestable all Sin is to God”,⁸⁹ (an Abelardian emphasis this), and must realise how powerful a stimulus to sanctification it is. Thus, “because in the *Cross of Christ*, or in *Christ crucified*, the whole of the Gospel, both as the Mercy God hath shown us, and the Influence it should have upon our Hearts, is comprized, the *Cross*, or *Christ crucified*, is with *Paul* the same thing as the

84. M. Towgood, *The Grounds of Faith in Jesus Christ*, 1784, p. 31. For making this perfectly proper point John McLeod Campbell was called to task fifty years later. See G.M. Tuttle, *So rich a Soil!*; A.P.F. Sell, “God, grace and the Bible in Scottish Reformed Theology”, *The Irish Theological Quarterly*, forthcoming.

85. So J. Manning, *Sketch*, p. 142.

86. Quoted by H. McLachlan, *The Unitarian Movement*, p. 229.

87. G. Hampton, *Candid Remarks upon the Rev. Mr. Taylor’s Discourse, Entitled, The Scripture Doctrine of Atonement Examined in a Letter*, n.d., p. 89. For Hampton (1716-96) see G.E. Evans, *Midland Churches*, p. 34.

88. J. Taylor, *Atonement*, pp. 94-100. These points were countered by the high Calvinist Baptist John Brine (1703-65), for whom see DNB, in *The True Sense of Atonement for Sin, by Christ’s Death, Stated and Defended; In Answer to a Pamphlet intituled, The Scripture Doctrine of Atonement [sic] Examined, by Mr. Taylor, of Norwich. With an Appendix containing An Answer to the Objections of an anonymous Author to the Doctrine of Satisfaction, in a Pamphlet, intituled, Second Thoughts concerning the Sufferings and Death of Christ, &c.*, 1752.

89. *Ibid.*, p. 110.

Gospel; and preaching the one, the same as preaching the other".⁹⁰

That the anti-Calvinists did not constitute a monolithic bloc is clear from Harwood's judgment in his funeral oration for Taylor. Speaking of *The Scripture-Doctrine of the Atonement*, he remarked, "it must be confessed he failed most egregiously. His reasoning was neither clear nor satisfactory, owing perhaps to the doctrine being in itself *almost* unintelligible, and *hardly* capable of being rationally explained".⁹¹ Fifty years on, and some steps further along the Socinian path, William Turner wrote that Taylor's book is "an ingenious attempt to construct a scheme which shall be consistent with the moral perfections of the Father of Mercies, and at the same time, enable a man to use the language of reputed orthodoxy. Like all such half measures, however, it is generally allowed to have failed of its object".⁹²

The writings of Bourn, Taylor and Towgood contain scattered references to other aspects of the doctrine of salvation broadly conceived, but they are not exhaustively treated. Something of the flavour may, however, be gleaned from Bourn on predestination and preterition: "I think I ought to acknowledge that these are Doctrines which I am not able to defend; and therefore I give them up: They appear to me, and I believe to most Men, inconsistent with Gospel *Declarations*, and contradictory to its whole *Design*...A very good Account may be, and has been given of the many Texts which speak of *Predestination* and *Election*, without drawing in a Scheme so dishonourable to God".⁹³

* * * * *

Some "departments" of systematic theology are only lightly touched upon by these three divines. Notable in this connection is eschatology, though of Towgood it was said that he "was a firm believer in the doctrine of the Millenium, or that there would be a glorious state of the church after the fall of Antichrist, and the subsequent conversion of the Jews to the christian faith, in which it should flourish in peace, righteousness, and a pious offspring, for a thousand years, under the undisturbed government of Jesus Christ, over both Jews and Gentiles, who were to be united in one church".⁹⁴

By contrast, ecclesiological questions loom relatively large in the writings, because they were the foci of controversy. We have already considered the church-state question, but we must now briefly note their positions on ordination, baptism and the Lord's Supper.

That Bourn held a high view of the pastoral office is clear from the analogy he

90. *Ibid.*, pp. 121-2.

91. E. Harwood's *Sermon* on the death of Taylor, p. 46.

92. W. Turner, *Warrington Academy*, p. 5. For Turner (1761-1859) see *Ibid.*, Introduction, and DNB under Turner, William (1714-94).

93. S. Bourn, *The True Christian Way*, p. 20. For a broader discussion of these issues in the eighteenth century see A.P.F. Sell, *The Great Debate*, ch. III.

94. J. Manning, *Sketch*, p. 154.

draws in the funeral oration delivered on the death of his father: "As our Union with the *Catholick* Church consists in an *Adhesion* to *Jesus Christ* as universal Head; and to all true Christians as Fellow-Members; which Union is form'd by the Communication of the Spirit on Christ's Part, and by Faith exercis'd on all proper Objects, Love and Obedience on the Part of Christians: So the Union of a *Particular* Church consists in an *Adhesion* to their *Pastor*, and to the several Members of the Society taught and ruled by him in full Subordination to Christ."⁹⁵ As to the mode of ordination, Bourn reminded Job Orton that "YOUR *Investiture* into this sacred Office has been performed (as far as Men can do it) by the laying on of the Hands of the Presbytery, or Senior Pastors (signifying their Approval and Consent) and by the Prayers of this Assembly to the God of the Spirits of all Flesh, for a Blessing on your future Labours".⁹⁶

Where baptism is concerned, Bourn appears to take a "lower" view than either Taylor or Towgood. This emerges, for example, in one of his dialogues with a Baptist: "I must confess that the Controversy about the *Time* and *Mode* of Baptism appears to me of no great Moment; seeing *Baptism* itself is an outward Ordinance, or a meer Ceremony, tho' of Christ's Institution."⁹⁷ During his first pastorate Bourn dedicated, rather than baptised, an infant, as Toulmin relates: "It appears that some of Mr. Bourn's congregation at Crook, did not hold the divine authority of the rite called Infant Baptism; but, as on the birth of a child they wished to express sentiments of devotion, and to bring themselves under an engagement to give their offspring a religious education, Mr. Bourn was ready to meet the state of their minds, and, with a candour, which did him credit, to assist their pious views, by dedicating their child to God in their name, without the use of water."⁹⁸

Whether Taylor had Bourn in mind we cannot say, but he certainly expressed himself opposed to what he regarded as a levelling down of sacramental procedure:

Baptism, by a strange liberty, has...been changed into the *dedication* of children, in one instance, at least, where an Infant was only dedicated to God, but not baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. This practice has a direct tendency, to dissolve, in the thought of christians, the essential connection between Baptism and the Covenant of Grace, of which Covenant, Baptism is the memorial, sign, token or seal, most properly confirming and assuring to the Infant baptised, and the rest of the Family, all the unspeakably great blessings of the Gospel, as they are freely given

95. S. Bourn in *Several Sermons Preach'd by the late Reverend Mr. Samuel Bourn*, pp. 9-10.

96. S. Bourn, *Charge* to Job Orton, p. 29. Dr. G.F. Nuttall points out that the use of "investiture" with its lay connotation is perhaps intentional.

97. [S. Bourn], *A Dialogue between a Baptist and a Churchman*, 1737 p. 41.

98. J. Toulmin, *Memoirs* of Bourn, p. 23. For a specimen of such a service of dedication see *Ibid.*, app. 2, pp. 167-9. See also A.P.F. Sell, *Church Planting*, p. 48.

to us of God in Christ: and so all the comfort and encouragement to a pious life, which the Ordinance in succeeding generations is intended to inspire, will be lost to you and yours, and sunk into utter oblivion.⁹⁹

Taylor worked out his position in some detail in *The Covenant of Grace, and Baptism The Token of it, explained upon Scripture Principles* (1757). He examines the biblical covenants, concluding that, analogously with circumcision in the Old Testament, baptism is the sign and seal of the covenant of grace. It is only a sign or token, however: it causes no change in the religious state of the recipient, but simply declares that the individual concerned has been placed in a state of favour by the free gift of God in Christ. Baptism is an initiating ordinance, as was circumcision, and it is open to infants since they are children of the covenant. Taylor proceeds to offer stock answers to Baptist objections that baptism is not for infants but only for believers, and that the analogy with circumcision does not hold.

Grantham Killingworth (now writing under his own name), who had in 1740 taken Taylor to task over baptism,¹⁰⁰ now returned to the fray. He argued that there is biblical warrant for baptising adults born of Christian parents; that the circumcision analogy falls; and that children of Christian parents are not holy seed who have a natural right to the ordinances of Christ. He concludes with an old jingle which, he thinks, fits Taylor well:

By education most have been misled;
So they believe, because they were so bred:
The priest continues what the nurse began,
And thus the child imposes on the man.¹⁰¹

Towgood had a long-standing interest in baptism. He wrote his ordination thesis of 1722 on the validity of infant baptism,¹⁰² and in 1750 he published, *The Baptism of Infants a Reasonable Service; Founded upon Scripture, and undoubted Apostolic Tradition: In which its Moral Purposes and Use in Religion are Shewn*. He takes the middle way of arguing that baptism is not a prerequisite of salvation, but neither is it to be despised as of no significance. He refers to the Abrahamic covenant, to children *qua* holy seed, to Christ's commission of Matthew 28:19; and to the apostolic tradition. He then comes to the religious and moral purposes of baptism: it is a solemn vow of dedication, the importance of which

99. J. Taylor, *The Scripture Account of Prayer, in an Address to Dissenters in Lancashire; Occasioned By a new Liturgy some Ministers, of that County, are composing for the Use of a Congregation at Liverpool*, 1761, p. 78.

100. See G. Killingworth, *The Necessity of Baptism, in order to Church Membership and Christian Communion, Shewn from Christ's own words John 3: 3, 5 in Two Letters to A Learned Divine*, 1740. (The second letter is wrongly dated 1840.)

101. G. Killingworth, *A Forerunner To a farther Answer, if need be, To The Rev. Dr. John Taylor of Norwich, His Covenant of Grace, And Baptism the Token of it*, 1758, p. 15.

102. See J. Manning, *Sketch*, pp. 10-11 n.

must ever remain with us and affect our lives; and it signifies God's gracious condescension and promise. It is, accordingly, a privilege not to be shunned. In reply John Gill denied the validity of the appeal to apostolic tradition, and argued that there was no ground for infant baptism either in the Bible or in tradition.¹⁰³

In 1751 Towgood followed with a further pamphlet, the argument of which is sufficiently indicated by his title: *Dipping not the only Scriptural or Primitive Manner of Baptising, And supposing it were, yet a strict Adherence to it is not obligatory on us*. While not averse to contending for his own position, Towgood did not consider that differences over baptism should be church-dividing: "Now, therefore, Brethren, though there happens to be a trifling and insignificant difference betwixt us, as to the circumstance of water baptism, let Satan not get advantage of it, to separate and divide, and thereby weaken and disgrace us in the sight of an observing world. The difference, surely, is not such, but we may worship in the same Assembly, eat at the same Table of Christ our common Lord, and walk in perfect communion and fellowship with one another."¹⁰⁴

As to the Lord's Supper, Taylor maintains

1. That the Lord's Supper is the principal Part of Christian Worship.
2. That, when Christians assembled together, as a Congregation, it seems, they always did celebrate this Ordinance...
3. That all professed Christians joined in this Ordinance, there being no Traces of the Distinction between Hearers and Communicants, which in after-times was introduced.
4. Nevertheless the Apostle thought it his Duty to prevent the profanation of the Ordinance...
5. But we cannot reasonably suppose, that the Duty of this Ordinance is fully discharged, by merely guarding against the profane, or unworthy, Use of it; or that a slight, careless Remembrance of Christ is sufficient to answer the Ends of it.¹⁰⁵

Taken as a whole the Supper suggests that God is our Father, for the table is set within his house. It reveals our relation to the Son of God, to the society of angels and of the faithful departed, and to each other.

One might characterise Taylor's as a "high memorialist" view of the Lord's Supper, for as he elsewhere writes,

103. J. Gill, *The Argument from Apostolic Tradition in favour of Infant Baptism*, 1751.

104. M. Towgood, *Catholic Christianity; or, the Communion of Saints, earnestly recommended to all professing Christians, particularly to the Brethren of the Antipaedobaptist Persuasion*. Included in J. Manning's *Sketch*, p. 191.

105. J. Taylor, *The Lord's Supper Explained upon Scripture Principles, and adapted to the Use of common Christians*, 1756, pp. 11-12.

in the Lord's Supper all the Grace and Precepts of the Gospel are exhibited under the Signs of *Bread*, signifying *Christ's* broken, or crucified Body; and of *Wine*, signifying his Blood shed *for many for the Remission of sins* which we are to eat and drink in *Remembrance* of him, or with the Attention of our Minds fixed upon him. Not barely remembering there was such a Person; but duly considering, how he stands related to us; in what Manner he endured his Sufferings, and for what End. *Eating Christ's Body*, and *drinking his Blood* are, doubtless, to be understood figuratively...¹⁰⁶

Towgood referred to the Lord's Supper on a number of occasions in his writings, but in *Catholic Christianity* he objects to the way in which the sacrament is being turned into a badge of sectarianism by Baptists who advocate closed communion: "The Table they thus erect is not the Lord's Table, but a Table of their own: and as far as they thus eat in criminal separation from, and uncharitable seclusion of other acknowledged christians, they eat not the Lord's Supper."¹⁰⁷ More generally, he declared that in the Lord's Supper

ALL sincere Christians are considered, however distant in Place, as eating at the SAME TABLE...Hence...no Christian has a right to reject any other his Fellow-Christian from partaking with him at the Lord's Table, in Account of any Difference of Sentiment in Things not fundamental, his moral Character being such as the Gospel requires...[When Established Churchmen and dissenters] fence around their SACRAMENTAL TABLE with Terms and Conditions and Forms and Rites which CHRIST never prescribed, and reject us from HIS TABLE, unless besides what HE enjoins, we submit also to some Injunctions and Requirements of their own...[the Church's] CATHOLICISM [is] destroyed, and an unhappy Breach made in the COMMUNION OF SAINTS.¹⁰⁸

The passage just quoted is from Towgood's *The Grounds of Faith* (1784). This was his address to his Exeter congregation at the close of sixty years of ministerial service, and further reference to it fittingly concludes this review of the doctrinal positions of three Presbyterian divines. "Take care", warns Towgood, "that you be well established in the rational Belief in the christian Revelation...It is not a blind and enthusiastic, but a rational Faith which Christianity requires".¹⁰⁹ The grounds of our faith are that in Jesus all the ancient prophecies are fulfilled; that his teaching is excellent, that his miracles attest the divinity of his mission, and

106. J. Taylor, *Atonement*, pp. 122-3.

107. M. Towgood, *Catholic Christianity*, in J. Manning, *op.cit.*, p. 190.

108. M. Towgood, *The Grounds of Faith in Jesus Christ briefly stated, and Shewn to be a solid Foundation for Peace and Joy unspeakable. With an earnest Recommendation of Catholic Christianity, and the Communion of Saints, Addressed to A candid Society of Christians at the Close of his Ministrations amongst them*, 1784, pp. 82-3, 87.

109. *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

that he died, was raised, and is ascended. Moreover, Christianity has stood the test of persecution and appears to be founded upon a rock. If an alarmed penitent should feel too weak to embrace salvation [and much was currently being made of the doctrine of assurance - to the extent that undue introspection was sometimes encouraged] he should take heart, for if God "sees it to be the real Wish and Desire of our Souls to be set free from this fatal Bondage, and that we are sincerely disposed to exert faithfully the feeble Powers we still have to obtain this Deliverance, let us not be discouraged...there is Liberty for such Captives; one mighty to save".¹¹⁰

III

Christian Nurture

Bourn, Taylor and Towgood were all diligent catechists, who not only wished to communicate biblical truths to their charges, but also to encourage them in a godly walk and in the life of prayer. There is ample evidence for the validity of Toulmin's judgment on Bourn: "Mr. Bourn, though he did not think it proper to lay aside the Assembly's Catechism, which initiatory piece of religious instruction carried with it, in that day, a very undue authority; yet showed in his use of it his integrity of mind and zeal for truth: for in his catechetical lectures he freely censured, as he thought a faithful pastor ought to do, the doctrines he believed to be erroneous; which were not, in his opinion, either few or small."¹¹¹ But that Bourn was not simply negative is clear from his catechetical writings. It remains only to indicate the objectives and basis of his teaching ministry. "It is of great consequence to young people to be led into early acquaintance with, and to have their minds, while tender, impressed with a lively sense of [God's] adorable perfections. This acquaintance will enoble, enlarge, direct and comfort their minds. This acquaintance, when chosen, cultivated, and delighted in, is the true principle of all religion, sincere and cordial obedience to God."¹¹² Consistently with this he exhorted Job Orton thus: "LET me especially recommend to you, *Sir*, Diligence with *young People*. Many of your older People may be at their Pitch of Goodness; but with young People there is Room for all your Pains; and these I esteem the principal Object of a Minister's Concern and Care; and if you arrive at a skilful, moving Way of dealing with them, there is hope you may not labour in vain."¹¹³ Bourn lamented that Christian parents did so little towards the nurture of their children: "Christian Protestant parents are more concerned about building Houses, furnishing Rooms, raising Trees and

110. *Ibid.*, p. 57.

111. J. Toulmin, *Memoirs of Bourn*, p. 114.

112. S. Bourn, *Twenty Sermons*, 2nd edn. 1757, pp. 7-8.

113. S. Bourn, *Charge to Job Orton*, p. 58.

Flowers, improving Trade and cultivating Land, than about building up Souls for Immortality.”¹¹⁴

The most succinct account of Bourn’s educational principles is to be found in the Preface to his three catechisms:

The Art of Education is one of the most important, and yet one of the most difficult Arts in the World. It is, *the Art of forming and fashioning the Mind*; by rectifying the Judgment, correcting or improving the Temper, governing the Passions, and directing the Behaviour of Youth, in order to raise them above every vicious and every mean Thought, Sentiment, and Action; that they may think and act suitable to the Dignity of the rational Nature, and to the noble Ends of Christianity.¹¹⁵

Bourn’s guidance included the following injunctions:

Represent a *future Judgment* as very awful, yet very desirable, and not to be feared by good Men...Guard also, with great Care, against educating your Children in the *narrow Spirit and Principles of a Party*...Let your Children know, that Religion is a *nobler Thing*, than Sectarian Bigotry, dry Opinions, and a fruitless Faith; that it lieth in the Image of God on the Soul, a Likeness to God and Jesus Christ in Justice, Kindness and Charity; that it consisteth in Heavenly Dispositions, devout Affections, in Rectitude of Spirit, Purity of Soul, and universal Goodness.¹¹⁶

On the matter of family devotions, Bourn was equally plain: “every Christian Family should be a School of true Religion... Family Religion is the first step towards *National Reformation*, to our becoming a holy Nation, a Kingdom of Priests; if every House swept their own Door, the whole Street would be clean”.¹¹⁷ His *The Christian Family Prayer Book* contains prayers for many seasons and circumstances. Characteristically, he also prepared a book of prayers for his young people at Coseley and Birmingham. Once again, his practical interest surfaces: “all Prayer...is lost, which does not make you live better”.¹¹⁸ He advises the young people as follows: “I do not propose your learning all these Prayers by Heart; but as you have occasion, kneel down, and in a calm, composed frame of Mind, lay before you the Book, turn to a suitable form, and having gain’d a Sentence or Period, lift up your Eyes and Thought to

114. [S. Bourn], *A Vindication of the Protestant Reformation*, p. vii.

115. S. Bourn, *Religious Education*, p. vii.

116. *Ibid.*, pp. xiv-xv.

117. S. Bourn, *The Christian Family Prayer Book: Or Family Prayers for Morning and Evening, with a Variety of Occasional Forms: Prefaced with a Discourse Representing the Reasonableness, Beauty, Pleasure, and Usefulness of Family Religion...Recommended by Dr. Isaac Watts*, 4th corrected edn. 1770, pp. xxii, xxix.

118. S. Bourn, *The Young Christian’s Prayer Book, Dedicated to the Young People in Birmingham and at Coseley*, 1733, p. iii.

Heaven, offer it up to God, and so make it indeed your own Prayer. If the fervours of your Mind at any time rise and grow, you may quit the form, and pursue your own Meditations, in the aptest Words you are able."¹¹⁹

In prayer as in everything else, the natural order of things is heeded in a typically eighteenth-century way. Of his prayers he writes that "A few of them...are fitted for such as are of superior Sense, Family and Fortune, more than to those of a lower Class."¹²⁰ Thus, the "Prayer of a Young Lady in Town" has this:

I no longer affect to shine at Balls and Assemblies, and to make a Figure amongst the Well-Dress'd.

Her country contemporary prays:

I wou'd be far from any undue Affections for platted Hair, Gold and Pearl Ornaments, or any costly Array, but (as becometh Young Women professing Godliness) may I be adorn'd with modest Apparel, Shame-facedness, Sobriety, and Good Works...¹²¹

The "Young Men in Courtship" petitions thus: "May I never carry on so serious an Affair by Intrigue or Deceit, nor make *Professions* beyond my real Affections."¹²² Meanwhile, the "Young Woman in Courtship" prays, "Indue me with a distinguishing Judgment, and dispose and enable me to weigh and Measure a Man rather by the *Qualities of his Mind* than by the Mien of his Person, the Air of his Address, or the Bulk of his Fortune...I beg thy gracious Hand will prevent my being ever Yok'd with a Fool, a Sot, or a Knave".¹²³ Finally, the "Poor Servant" may thus address the Almighty: "though my *Station on Earth* be never raised higher, yet may I by faithfully serving the Lord Christ, adorn the Religion of God my Saviour, and obtain an *Inheritance in Heaven*".¹²⁴

It was one of the pastor's privileges to lead the prayers of the people in worship. But how should this be done? The question of free *versus* set prayers was keenly debated in some eighteenth-century dissenting circles. Bourn, ever down to earth, is somewhat more lenient on this point than Taylor. He wrote,

Where I find Societies of Christians round me...(supposing no Usurpation of unjust Authority, no Imposition by unlawful Dominion) I shou'd rather choose to join with a Society where the work of publick Prayer is carried on by the free use of a Man's Talents, who is well qualified for his office...than with a Society who

119. *Ibid.*, p. iv.

120. *Ibid.*, p. ix.

121. *Ibid.*, p. 78.

122. *Ibid.*, p. 80.

123. *Ibid.*, p. 82.

124. *Ibid.*, p. 29.

are content with Prayers pre-composed, which cannot fit all Cases either of the Society in general, or of its particular Members, and which must grow dry and tasteless by frequent Repetitions.

On the other hand, were all other Circumstances equal, I think I shou'd choose stately to join with a Society where pre-composed Forms...are used, which are proper, grave, methodical, apt and moving, and are seriously offered up to God, than with a Society, where a Man is stately employ'd, who fills his Prayers with fantastical, conceited Expressions, private Notions, senseless Sounds, tedious Babblings, and affected Heats.¹²⁵

Taylor, on the other hand, protested against the plan of some Liverpool ministers to introduce set forms of prayer. He makes it clear that he is "defending *free Prayer*, only so far as it is rational; not any extravagant effusions, which bring a reproach upon religious worship".¹²⁶ The fact remains, however, that "Reading of Prayers cannot give a Minister any character of esteem in a Dissenting Congregation, where it is considered a very low manner of performing the office."¹²⁷ He reviews the history of prayer in worship, concluding that written prayers came in with scandalously ignorant ministers. In any case, the noble army of Lancashire dissenters of the past managed without set forms - why betray them now? Moreover, a liturgy presupposes a confession of faith, for "People pray as they believe"¹²⁸, and those who use a liturgy are constricted, and are tempted to utter what they do not believe.

To Alexander Gordon, Taylor's account of prayer was "by far the most impressive of his writings",¹²⁹ and T.S. James was constrained to confess that "No right-minded man can read his remonstrance to the Lancashire Socinians in favour of free prayer, appealing to the memory of the confessors ejected in their country, and cherish an unkind feeling towards him".¹³⁰

Bourn spoke for all three divines when he outlined the motive and objective of all Christian nurture: "Let us live in View of a parting Hour; and in the Exercise of those Virtues and Duties which will prepare us to meet one another in Heaven."¹³¹

125. *Ibid.*, p. viii.

126. J. Taylor, *The Scripture Account of Prayer*, p. 5.

127. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

128. *Ibid.*, p. 71.

129. See DNB, Taylor, John.

130. T.S. James, *Presbyterian Chapels and Charities*, p. 126.

131. S. Bourn, *The Christian Family Prayer Book*, p. 222.

IV

Conclusion

Disappointing though the result may be to those who thrive on stereotypes, the conclusion of a suitably candid account of the life and writings of three eighteenth-century divines is that they did not set out to be "troublers of Israel", to spread poison, to attenuate the gospel. Whether, whatever their motives, a truncated gospel actually resulted from their efforts is a question which must be answered with some care.

Bourn was the most pugilistic - as certainly he was the cheekiest - of the three. Towgood emerges as the most gracious and reticent, Taylor as the most learned - though a whiff of controversy, or the need to defend conscientious rights will readily draw him from his books, and turn him into a pamphleteer. Though very much his own man, even Bourn could take advice. Toulmin records that *The Christian Family Prayer Book* included a recommendation by Isaac Watts, "to whom the author was, at the same time an entire stranger; in deference to whose request, and yielding a little to the prejudices of some well-disposed christians, as the doctor expressed it, several of the doxologies were altered into the more common, or trinitarian, form; though Mr. Bourn himself thought it best suited a volume of christian prayers, either to use or imitate the scripture doxologies, which even Dr. Watts said, 'he much preferred'.¹³²

It is particularly noticeable that as compared with their books and pamphlets, the sermons of the three are for the most part non-controversial - "practical" they would have called it. One need not cynically suppose that this was a consciously-adopted policy designed to maintain numbers and, hence, stipend; and while it is true that Towgood in particular had no desire to offend, there is something to be said for those who refuse to ride roughshod and publicly over the convictions of the (often less well-educated) faithful. The inevitable result, however, was that certain doctrines, notably that of the Trinity, were not so much attacked in the pulpit as consigned to oblivion. This could only assist later Unitarianism. On the other hand, the ethical injunctions of Christianity needed to be asserted over against hyper-Calvinistic antinomianism.

As ever, justice demands that one acknowledges their intentions. Bourn, Taylor and Towgood had a strong desire to be faithful to the Bible. They are not to be blamed for having lived before the full rise of modern biblical criticism (neither, of course, are their opponents), but they could be as literalist in their own way as some later-day fundamentalists are in theirs, in their reading of the text. They did not find the term "Trinity" in the Bible - or many of the terms associated with classical trinitarian theology, and they too quickly concluded that the concepts were not there either.

They were children of their age - the Enlightenment age of the autonomous individual. Believing what they did about individuation, their "Arianism"

132. J. Toulmin, *Memoirs of Bourn*, p. 57.

appeared to them as the best option if they were to avoid an unknowable Godhead on the one hand, and tritheism on the other. That theirs was an unstable resting-place only gradually became apparent; but at least they did not settle for Jesus as the first among equal *men*. Enlightenment individualism blinded Bourn in particular to the realisation that in the Chalcedonian formula "person" does not mean "discrete individual"; and it prevented their evaluating the worth of Chalcedon, not as an "explanation" of that which defies explanation, but as at least a set of warning lights against Nestorianism, Eutychianism and Apollinarianism. It is not that these divines are culpable here: it would be anachronistic to complain that they did not heed insights which have only become current after their time. For the same reason one cannot complain that they did not explore the analogical nature of all trinitarian language. To deny this, as Donald MacKinnon has forcefully reminded us, "is to plunge into the sort of anthropomorphism that involves either an almost overt tritheism or an ultimately monadic conception of the divine mind mitigated only by the sly introduction into the characterization of its activity, of the concepts of different intellectual dispositions which though very properly distinguished in analysis of human awareness, can hardly be extrapolated to the level of the divine without the most rigorous qualification".¹³³

In their approach to the Bible Bourn, Taylor and Towgood were in many ways traditionalists. Materialism and anti-supernaturalism overtook some of their theological heirs, but they were spared this fate. They upheld miracles as special divine interventions just as they maintained the historicity of Adam. Towgood, the longest-lived of the three, came closest to engaging with the new wave of thought, but did so only to resist it:

His religious opinions were as opposite to those of Dr. PRIESTLEY, as to those of Mr. WHITEFIELD and Mr. WESLEY; but this did not prevent his entertaining a very high opinion of his abilities and integrity, as will appear from the following letter, written about the year 1779.

I had never before the pleasure of seeing Dr. PRIESTLEY, and I am glad to see a head filled with so much knowledge, connected with a heart adorned with such apparent modesty and benevolence... As to the materiality of the soul, its sleep between Death and the Resurrection, the pre-existence of the Logos, the liberty of moral agents, &c. I totally differ from him. He is rather too bold a partizan in the republic of literature...¹³⁴

This evidence supplements what we have adduced earlier - for example, in the "lower" sacramental views of Bourn as compared with those of Taylor - that

133. D. MacKinnon, *Themes in Theology. The Three-Fold Cord*, Edinburgh 1987, p. 161.

134. J. Manning, *Sketch*, pp. 128-9.

differences of opinion *among* the "heterodox" are not insignificant: they may not all be tarred with the same doctrinal or philosophical brushes.

The commitment of Bourn, Taylor and Towgood to the principle of the sufficiency of Scripture, coupled with their maintenance of the rights of conscience, prompted them to oppose all, whether in Rome, the Church of England, or dissent, who would unwarrantably add to the terms of Christian communion by requiring subscription to particular statements of man-made doctrine. In their view the true catholicity of the Church was fractured by such sectarian intrusions - a point which has yet fully to be taken within the modern ecumenical movement.¹³⁵ I feel however, that their individualism prevented their giving due place to the idea of the church as the covenant *people* of God - as witness Bourn's barren understanding of baptism even as compared with Taylor's.

The Enlightenment influence is supremely seen in their underlying view of the created order, and of the orders of society, and of the moral order on which all else was based. This moral order, to which access was gained by the use of God-given reason, inspired both repugnance at a God who would from eternity predestinate some to damnation, and the prayers of Bourn for use by each one in his or her station.

Of Taylor, Belsham said "He thought much himself, and he taught others to think; and though he did not advance so far as others have since done, yet the most enlightened of modern divines would probably not have known so much, or understood the Scriptures so well, if Dr. Taylor had not gone before them to clear the road".¹³⁶ From the other side comes the verdict of Bogue and Bennett upon Towgood - but it is one which they would have applied equally to Bourn and Taylor. Whilst applauding Towgood's apology for dissent, they could not but "regret that his superior powers were wasted in vain attempts to give warmth and animation to a theological system, which is essentially cold as death; presenting a melancholy warning to ministers, that the cause of dissent may find in them ardent champions, while their own souls and their flocks may be fatally injured for want of the vital flame or redeeming love".¹³⁷ This comment requires to be balanced by the admission that even without Arianism (and occasionally because of it), some *Independent* congregations died. F.J. Powicke has provided evidence of this, and has justly concluded of the Arians that "spiritual decay was not peculiar to them; and I deny that it was in any special degree the effect of their opinions. Their opinions had as much, or as little, to do with it as those of the orthodox. Spiritual decay was a characteristic of the church generally. It sprang from a prevailing unbelief in the reality and nearness of things divine. It

135. See A.P.F. Sell, "Dubious Establishment? A neglected ecclesiological testimony", *Mid-Stream* XXIV, Jan. 1985, pp. 1-28.

136. Quoted by A. Gordon, *Addresses*, p. 293. For Belsham (1750-1829) see DNB.

137. D. Bogue and J. Bennett, *History of Dissenters*, IV, 1812, p. 272.

was the *nemesis of an essentially irreligious temper*".¹³⁸ Powicke also reminds us that by the end of Towgood's Exeter ministry the two Arian congregations in the city "were visibly the strongest Nonconformist light in Exeter".¹³⁹ It would therefore seem (however incomprehensible this may seem to an Athanasian) that on occasion the appropriate horticultural noun to attach to "Socinian" is not "blight" but "fertiliser".

Taylor may have the last word. In *The Defence of the Common Rights of Christians* (1737) he writes:

If the Dissenters stand firm in liberty and love; if they list themselves under no other head and leader but Christ alone; if they refuse all party-schemes, and stand upon the single basis of universal Christianity; if they allow the free study of the Bible, and encourage the labours of their honest and learned men; if they are stedfastly determined to establish their faith, practice and worship upon the Word of God alone, as it shall from time to time be made known unto them; and upon this bottom, and no other, have true affection to one another, and to all men; then they will act up to their own principles...But if ever they abandon liberty and love; if they stiffly adhere to party-names and schemes; if they set bounds to Scripture-knowledge, and presumptuously say, Hither shalt thou go, and no further; if they discourage the honest and learned, that would throw in more light and truth among them, they will become weak, and waste, and dwindle into nothing.¹⁴⁰

The cruel truth is that some congregations which strove hardest in these matters nevertheless failed - even if in some cases for sociological rather than for theological reasons. They are blessed who can believe, as Bourn, Taylor and Towgood assuredly did, that God's providence is over all, and that however it may go with their temporal success or failure, the obedience of the faithful is not ultimately of no account.

ALAN P.F. SELL

138. F.J. Powicke, "An apology for the nonconformist Arians of the eighteenth century", *Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society*, I no. 2, 1918, p. 111.

139. *Ibid.*, p. 106.

140. J. Taylor, *The Defence of the Common Rights of Christians*, pp. 19-20.

ANDREW PARMINTER AN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL¹

Andrew, the son of a well-to-do Devon merchant Richard Parminter, was a student at Philip Doddridge's Academy in Northampton. He is mentioned several times in Doddridge's letters including some written during the summer of 1741 when Parminter accompanied Doddridge on a tour of East Anglia.²

Doddridge obviously held Parminter in high esteem and in 1743 wrote of him, "were all students for the ministry like him, I should expect that Christ was about to erect his kingdom among us with a glory hitherto unknown."³

In July 1744 when Doddridge and Parminter were again in East Anglia, Mrs. Doddridge wrote to her husband telling him that he should not let Parminter dispose of himself, for the people at Kilsby and Long Buckby were "quite in Love with him."⁴

Some six months after this, Andrew Parminter wrote to seek financial support from the Presbyterian Fund for the Long Buckby congregation. It would appear that he had settled at Long Buckby as minister about that time. According to a letter written by Philip Doddridge to Samuel Clark of St. Albans, Buckby was among those congregations "Where young Gentlemen who were once my Pupils are settled with united large and growing congregations."⁵

However, the ministry at Long Buckby did not continue to be happy. To understand how things went wrong we must remember the religious tendencies of that time.

Eighteenth-century Christians did not find it easy to love God with both mind and heart. There was a polarization between Dissenters who were inclined to depend on Reason, and Moravians and Methodists who made much of religious feelings within the heart. Among traditional Dissenters there were those who enjoyed sermons of a philosophical nature which emphasised the reasonableness of the faith, whilst among Moravians and Methodists there were those who responded to evangelical appeals to the heart and delighted in the "feeling" aspect of the relationship of believer and Lord.

1. In 1957 Long Buckby Congregational (now United Reformed) Church celebrated its 250th anniversary. I was asked to produce a brief historical sketch of the church. This necessitated reading through the local minute books and the standard works on Northamptonshire Congregationalism by Coleman (T. Coleman, *Memorials of the Independent Churches in Northamptonshire*, 1853) and Stephens (T. Stephens, *Album of the Northamptonshire Congregational Churches*, Wellingborough 1894). There was no mention of Andrew Parminter in any of these. Since then Dr. G.F. Nuttall has alerted me to Parminter and what follows enlarges my *Long Buckby Congregational Church 1707-1957* where Parminter should be placed between Thomas Cartwright and John Walker on p. 6.
2. G.F. Nuttall, *Calendar of the Correspondence of Philip Doddridge DD (1702-1751)*, H.M.S.O., 1979.
3. *Ibid.*, Doddridge to John Ball, 2 July 1743: 901.
4. *Ibid.*, Mercy Doddridge to Doddridge, 3 July 1744: 984
5. *Ibid.*, John Barker to Doddridge, 9 October 1744: 1009 David Jennings to Doddridge, 21 February 1744/5: 1040. Doddridge to Samuel Clark, 22 March 1744/5: 1046.

There were some traditional Dissenters who showed concern about the rationalist tendencies of some preachers. John Barker, the leading layman who procured an allowance for Parminter's ministry at Long Buckby, expressed concern in a letter to Philip Doddridge:

[Dissent] is not like itself: I hardly know it. It used to be famous for faith holiness and Love ... Now I hear prayers and sermons I neither relish nor understand. Evangelical Trust & Duty are quite old fashioned things... One's ears are so dinnd with Reason...⁶

On the other hand, Andrew Parminter's father was one who gave pride of place to reason. He subscribed to a book of sermons by Henry Grove who saw Christianity from a rational point of view.

Andrew, unlike his father, felt that feeling within the heart was the all important experience. In a letter to Philip Doddridge he wrote:

when my heart was touched in a peculiar manner by our Saviour's Grace & I saw... that the Blood of Jesus Christ was the only Point of Happiness for Sinners immediately I made this the chief manner of my preaching to the People I was with, but they would not bear with me...⁷

Richard Parminter expressed concern at his son's views and actions. In a letter to Philip Doddridge dated 17th. June 1746 he wrote:

He seems to me to be Running into Some Enthusiastick Notions, which he hath imbibed from Some Moravian Books and Persons.⁸

We know from Moravian sources that "The great awakening which took place in many parts of this country during the period from 1730 onwards, made considerable headway in Northamptonshire also..." Obviously, Andrew Parminter was strongly influenced by Moravian teaching. One cannot doubt his sincerity but surely he trod the path of spiritual arrogance when he wrote to Philip Doddridge:

I wish Dear Sir your heart was inclined to give up yourself as a poor Sinner among Mankind, to the light and Salvation of Christ alone, that you would become a Fool for his sake, & that you might be convinced of the real Redemption & happiness that there is in his wounds. You would then find that our Saviour could teach more to a simple believing Sinner Heart in a few days or hours than all the reasoning and studies of the wisest Heads could ever penetrate.⁹

6. *Ibid.*, John Barker to Doddridge, 9 October 1744: 1009.

7. Andrew Parminter to Doddridge, 31 January 1746/7: Bedfordshire Record Office, MO/563.

8. *Calendar* Richard Parminter to Doddridge, 17 June 1746: 1163.

9. Andrew Parminter to Doddridge, 29 December 1746: BRO MO/561.

Of course, there is some truth in what he wrote, but surely he was overstepping the mark to write in such a manner to the author of the hymn "O happy day that fixed my choice..."

The congregation at Long Buckby was very unsettled and asked Parminter "to desist from preaching". Whilst he ceased to preach in the Meeting House, he opened his home and preached there to any who were prepared to listen. This led to the point where (to quote from one of his letters to Philip Doddridge):

They cast me out from preaching publickly and accused me very heavily for preaching privately.¹⁰

It would be easy - two and a half centuries later - to make a simplistic judgement about the emotional faith of the minister and the cerebral religion of his people. Probably the congregation did need to be reminded of what some Puritans called "heart knowledge" whilst the minister would have done well to allow a consecrated intellect to reason about his genuine religious experience.

Parminter cast in his lot with the Moravians. In a letter dated 22/23 August 1746 Philip Doddridge told his wife, Mercy, that Parminter was going to London "to live I suppose among the Moravian Brethren".¹¹ It has not been possible to trace all his subsequent ministries. However, in the archives of the Bristol Moravian Church there is a reference to a funeral ode performed at his funeral love feast. The full title is:

On the happy departure and funeral of our beloved Brother
Andrew Parminter, who died in the Lord, July (Aug) 4th. 1799.

It is thought that he was buried at Tytherton near to Chippenham.¹²

LESLIE IVORY

10. Andrew Parminter to Doddridge, 31 January 1746/7: BRO MO/563.

11. *Calendar* Doddridge to Mercy Doddridge, 22/23 August 1746: 1181.

12. There is, however, correspondence from and about Parminter in the Bedford Record Office which sheds further light on his transition to Moravianism. One letter (22 December 1745, BRO MO/511) is annotated "He entered Moravian church service and ministered many years in Bedford". He made his will 14 April 1785 ("It is my special Desire that my Remains may be buried in the Brethrens Burying Ground") and five codicils were subsequently added, all stipulating bequests to Bedford's Moravian Community. His estate was wound up 2 December 1799. His legacies, expenses and debts amounted to £123.18.10: he left £110.14.0 BRO MO 566, 567.

DISSENT IN NAILSWORTH

Nowhere in the West of England is more favourable to Dissent than Nailsworth in Gloucestershire, set in its wooded valley, its streams turning the wheels for its numerous clothworkers. In 1794 a chapel was erected (though left unconsecrated) for use by the Church of England, but Nailsworth was not a parish till 1894: part of it was in Horsley, part in Avening, and part in Minchinhampton. At Horsley the living was worth only £8 per annum in the seventeenth-century and had no parson for several years; in the nineteenth-century the Rector of Avening was non-resident for years at a time. Nailsworth was also under more than one lord of the manor: the one best known, the economist David Ricardo, not only had no hostility to Dissent having been born a Jew, but was noted for his benevolence.

The district, and Gloucestershire generally, had a tradition of Dissent. The Rector of Avening and the Vicar of Horsley were among those who signed the Presbyterian manifesto *The Gloucester-shire Ministers Testimony* (1648). Three of the signatories turned Independent, and there were soon more Independents in livings in Gloucestershire than in any other county except Norfolk and Suffolk; Baptists were also numerous, though not as incumbents. One of the three, after ejection in 1660, lived for a time at Horsley and preached there, "and there was a great Resort, and a very large Place was provided, which was afterwards call'd Nailsworth Meeting".¹ The Quakers had in fact found a meeting there many years earlier, "a seeking people to know the way of truth".² Several who joined Friends were put into prison after the Restoration; but "by the Reason of a moderate Justice, Liveing nere to Naylsworth"³ conditions were much easier than in most places. In 1660 George Fox attended "a very large meetinge of many hundreds",⁴ and it was a Nailsworth Quaker clothier who provided Fox with scarlet cloth for his wife to make up into a mantle.

After 1689 there was the usual separating out of strands. Nailsworth Meeting was replaced by a Congregational church at Forest Green in Avening parish, and from this fifty members soon withdrew to form a Baptist church at Shortwood in Horsley parish. The Quakers continued to meet up the close in Nailsworth in their (now much admired) period meeting-house.

In the eighteenth century Gloucestershire became a nodal point for the Evangelical Revival. The Gloucestershire Congregational minister, whom Whitefield, a native of Gloucester, nicknamed his curate, included Avening among the places where he set up a fortnightly lecture. Rodborough, close to Nailsworth, where a Tabernacle was built in 1750 by a convert of Whitefield, became a lively centre of the Revival, lending its name to the Gloucestershire Association of Churches as a whole. In the early nineteenth century the

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1. E. Calamy, *Continuation of the Account*, 1727, p. 502.
 2. N. Penney ed., *First Publishers of Truth*, 1907, p. 106.
 3. *Ibid.*, p. 109.
 4. N. Penney ed., G. Fox, *Journal*, Cambridge 1911, II, 152.

Rodborough Association's superintendent, Rowland Hill, was still busily itinerating, and Nailsworth was among the places he visited.

Despite this, the meteoric increase of the Shortwood Baptists - between 1760 and 1787 the meeting-house was enlarged three times, till the congregation was one of the largest outside London - would not have taken place, had not the Revival been welcomed with both hands throughout his long ministry (1758-99) by their pastor, Benjamin Francis. Francis controverted Arminians and Unitarians, composed elegies for Whitefield and other Evangelical leaders, and wrote hymns which are still sung in his native Wales. But he was above all a preacher, not only at Shortwood and at meetings of the Baptist Western Association (in 1764 it met at Shortwood) but in tirelessly evangelizing the dark places roundabout. In 1774 he was invited to an important London church, but could not bring himself to leave the pleasant house he had built at Tickmore End, or his people and their children; for forty of these he ran a pioneer Sunday School, with two schools elsewhere in the parish - though "the poor children, living at a distance, & being almost naked, cannot well attend in the cold weather".⁵

Effective itinerant evangelism continued, but in the early nineteenth century, when the Shortwood Baptists again had a notable minister, his reputation was more for his political sentiments. This was William Winterbotham, a friend of Southey, who for sermons preached in 1792 had been prosecuted for sedition and spent four years in prison. Later the Baptists moved into Nailsworth, and in 1969 they merged with the Congregationalists to form a single church there. Apart from St. Andrew's, Cheltenham (which has a different history), the Nailsworth United Reformed Church is today the largest congregation in the Gloucester District of the West Midlands Province. The present (1990) minister, appropriately, is a Baptist, and both Francis and Winterbotham are commemorated by mural tablets. Truth also prospers in Quakers Close.

GEOFFREY F. NUTTALL

5. G.F. Nuttall, "Letters by Benjamin Francis", *Trafodion*. Cymdeithas Hanes Bedyddwyr Cymru, 1983 p. 7.

THE PUBLIC FACE OF DISSENT: STROUD 1830-1852.

In the early nineteenth century the Stroud district of Gloucestershire was one of the most important seats of the West of England woollen industry. Although overtaken by the industry of the West Riding, it still offered employment to many inhabitants of the area.¹

Dissent was well established in the district, five congregations dating from the seventeenth century, four Independent (three formerly Presbyterian) and one Baptist. The eighteenth century saw frequent visits by Whitefield and Wesley, both attracting considerable local support. About 1766 Whitefield's local followers built Rodborough Tabernacle, which was to become the chief meeting of his followers in the county. The forty years from 1790 to 1830 were years of intense, and competitive, evangelism in the area, the Bishop of Gloucester granting 133 licences of places for Dissenting worship during this period, with 22 chapels built or rebuilt: at least one in almost every parish.²

The character of the resident minister was of course a most important factor in a denomination's success. The leading Stroud minister was John Burder, minister of the Old Meeting from 1810. Son of George Burder, Secretary of the London Missionary Society, he graduated at Glasgow in the year when he came to Stroud. His first priority was the extension of Independent activity in the area and his signature appeared on ten of the certificates of dissenting places of worship licensed during his thirty-three years in Stroud. He was also a force elsewhere in the county, as at Cirencester. There the Congregationalists established themselves in 1834 and built a chapel in 1839, owing much of their early success to Burder. Outside his denomination, Fisher, the Stroud historian, notes that he was interested in more than forty religious and philanthropic societies. In the town he seems to have been held in wide esteem; he was a member of its newly created Town Improvement Commission in 1825 along with two Anglican clergy.³

After 1830, Dissent continued to make advances, the most notable the building in 1837 of a second Stroud Independent chapel in Bedford Street, a

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1. The author wishes to thank Professor John Vincent of Bristol University, the Revd. Arthur Macarthur, O.B.E., and Mrs. Betty Mills of Nailsworth for help and encouragement in the preparation of this article. Abbreviations. *GJ Gloucester Journal*; GCL Gloucester City Library; GRO Gloucestershire Record Office; HO Home Office; *JHC Journal of the House of Commons*; *JHL Journal of the House of Lords*; *SFP Stroud Free Press*. The Stroud district of this study covers the area of the parliamentary borough of Stroud, created in 1832, consisting of Stroud itself and twelve adjacent parishes.
 2. The licences are recorded in the Hockaday Abstracts of Gloucester Diocesan Records.
 3. *Obituary Congregational Year Book 1868*; J.J. Beecham, *History of Cirencester*, 1887, p. 142; P.H. Fisher, *Notes and Recollections of Stroud, Gloucestershire*, 2nd ed. 1891, p. 325.

splendidly classical building complementing the adjacent Subscription Rooms, recently erected to give a central meeting-place to the parliamentary borough created in 1832. To the new chapel Burder brought part of his Old Meeting congregation.⁴

In the 1830s a perceptible change was taking place in Dissent's concerns and public face. Its national influence was increasing after the 1832 Reform Act and it was adopting a militant stance to remove its grievances. In such a district as Stroud, in which a number of the leading citizens were Dissenters, this situation encouraged them to press their claims and interests with greater urgency. Also a new generation of leaders arrived, John Burder now sharing his prominence with younger ministers, of whom the most active was Benjamin Parsons of Ebley.

The son of a local small farmer who became a toll-gate keeper when ejected from his farm, and who died when his son was six, he had a pious upbringing by parents influenced by George Whitefield. After attending two local schools he was apprenticed as a tailor, and following his apprenticeship moved to Stroud. Although he does not appear to have undergone evangelical conversion, he had been a Sunday School teacher from the age of eighteen, and after joining Rodborough Tabernacle in 1821 was sent to Cheshunt College to train for the ministry. The seeds of his later enthusiasm for education were sown in the self-education he imposed upon himself in these years, during his apprenticeship reportedly making himself a good Latin scholar.⁵

Soon after leaving college in 1826 he became minister at Ebley, a small village west of Stroud. There he took over a small congregation, a debt of £88, and a chapel out of repair. He was to remain there until his death twenty-eight years later.

The Ebley Independents had built the chapel in 1798, and in 1811, when passing through a period of difficulty, had joined it to the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion. In the course of his ministry there Parsons increased the congregation, repaired the building, and built a school. In 1851 the chapel claimed a morning congregation of 450 and an evening congregation of 520, making it one of the largest congregations in the district.⁶

Ebley had recently grown as a factory village. Only a cluster of houses in 1803, it had greatly increased in size after the building of the large new mill before 1820, and the expansion of the village provided Parsons with his opportunity. The account given by Hood in his biography of Parsons is no doubt partisan but sketches the range of the latter's activities:

4. M. and A. Hoy, *They Met in a Barn, The Story of Congregationalism in Stroud, 1687-1987*, Stroud 1987, pp. 25-8.

5. The main source for the life of Parsons is E. Paxton Hood, *The Earnest Minister: A Record of the Life, and Selections from Posthumous and other Writings of the Revd. Benjamin Parsons, of Ebley, Gloucestershire*, 1856. See also *Dictionary of National Biography* vol. xv, pp. 397-8; *Gloucestershire Tracts No. 15. Benjamin Parsons, The Friend of the People*, Cirencester nd.; Fisher, *op. cit.*, pp. 51-3, 173.

6. *Victoria County History of the County of Gloucester* vol. x, p. 270; HO 129/338/1/4/7.

Ebley Chapel will hold a thousand people, and it is well attended, always full, and on extraordinary occasions crowded. We have frequently seen twelve hundred people within its walls. It is surrounded by a happy band of villagers; its British School is as certainly flourishing as any in similar circumstances; its Sabbath schools attended by three or four hundred children, and the class of Mrs. Parsons of from twenty-five to thirty girls and young women varying from seventeen to thirty-five years of age is one of the most interesting sights we have known. For these schools the Ebley congregation has annually raised sums varying, as occasion required, from £55 to £70. The organisation of the church and congregation is complete and perfect to a most interesting degree. It has its own benefit societies, its literary society in good working condition, library, discussion classes, elocution classes.⁷

Such a range of activities explains why he was later called the Oberlin of Gloucestershire.

But Parsons differed from the Alsatian pastor in that he was also an active politician and propagandist. His entry into this arena took place in the 1832 confrontation in Stroud between the pro-slavery advocate Peter Borthwick and his local opponents. His biographer plays down this aspect of his career, but there were few subjects of public interest, national and local, on which he did not make public expression, in sermon, lecture and pamphlet. He was clearly a publicist of considerable talent. Special occasions at Ebley Chapel and School were often reported in the *Gloucester Journal* and *Stroud Free Press*. In 1851 he preached on "The Great Exhibition and the Gospel, or the Crystal Palace a mirror affording a glorious retrospect of the past success of Christianity, and a brilliant prospect of its future triumphs", and in January 1852 gave two lectures in Stroud on "French Revolutions, and the lessons they are adapted to teach the people of England". There is no complete list of his publications: the Dictionary of National Biography lists thirteen and Paxton Hood twenty. These cover a wide range of topics - theology, church government, temperance, education, Stroud politics and Chartism.⁸

Parsons's opinions on most subjects were predictable given the calling and character of the man and the time in which he lived. An opponent of church rates, champion of temperance, strongly sabbatarian, and an exponent of free trade, he yet showed in certain aspects an independence which is worth further consideration.

7. Hood, *op. cit.*, p. 397.

8. Hood, *op. cit.*, p. 260; *GJ* 2 November 1839, 8 October 1842, 14 August 1847, 18 August 1849; *SFP* 2 January, 25 April, 24 October 1851. The content of the lectures on French Revolutions is indicated by a report of an 1849 sermon on "the evils of the Revolutions in France traceable in wicked rulers, state religion, government education, and ignorance of the word of God". *GJ* 18 August 1849.

There is no doubt that in the multiplicity of his interests and enthusiasms education came first. He was a born teacher. Hood claimed that he lectured to the people on everything he read and listed twenty subjects of his discourses, including mechanics, animal physiology, philology, the constitution of the country, and provident societies. He also gave lessons in more elementary subjects, reading, English grammar and mathematics. Like many of his contemporaries among Anglican clergymen, he had a group of paying pupils in his parsonage, primarily to supplement his income. At the centre of his activities was the Ebley British School, built in 1840.⁹

His organisation and curriculum at the school reflected current practice and showed little originality. The teacher was William Webb, an Ebley boy who had attended the Borough Road Normal School. The monitorial system was in use, Parsons stating that at Ebley it worked well. The subjects in which the children were tested at the annual examination in 1842 were "sacred geography, the characters of the principal females recorded in the sacred volume, and the music and musical instruments of scripture". Seven years later, the history of Samuel had replaced sacred geography whilst the other subjects remained. Yet in two respects he was in advance of many of his contemporaries. He believed strongly that girls had an equal right to education with boys, this belief leading to the publication of his pamphlet *The Mental and Moral Dignity of Woman*. An advertisement for this pamphlet states, "In this work the author argues that the mental powers of women are equal and her (*sic*) moral feelings far superior to those of men."

He also believed in the teaching of practical subjects and the provision of play facilities, buying a field to be divided into little gardens and a playground. The gardens were used for the teaching of horticulture and agriculture to boys, though one finds little understanding of children's needs in the laying out of the playground in "serpentine gravel walks, turf edges, flower borders, and evergreens".¹⁰

A major element of Parsons's educational philosophy was his strong belief in self-help, regarded by him as the driving-force of education, and illustrated in remarks quoted by Hood:

It was astonishing to find what a thirst there was for knowledge. I have known mill boys who were employed in the factory all day, rise at five o'clock on cold winter mornings, come and knock for the key of the school-room, and while their teacher was dressing, spend the time in social prayer; and then, on his appearance among them, pass the morning, until the factory bell rang, in improving themselves in writing, arithmetic, English grammar, geography,

9. Hood *op. cit.*, p. 67. When a testimonial was presented to him in 1854, in his reply he stated, "I have wished to work out one great principle, and that has been the elevation of the masses." *Ibid.*, p. 359.

10. Hood, *op. cit.*, pp. 91-2, 78, 71; *GJ* 8 October 1842, 8 August 1849.

etc.; and I have often seen the building lighted up till between eleven and twelve o'clock at night, and occupied with those who were bent on self-improvement. Some of the grown-up people, who had scarcely received any education when they were young, were known to employ the pupils in our school to give them instruction, and parents showed much more anxiety to have their children taught than I had anticipated. I always calculated that with good day and Sunday schools it would be possible to raise up a new intellectual and moral population in twenty years... Our schools have only been opened about fourteen years, but there is every reason to believe, from the beneficial change already effected, before twenty years our highest hopes will be realised.¹¹

Such beliefs made him a strong apostle of voluntarism. In 1839 he had accepted a government grant for the building of his school, but later rejected all government assistance, stating categorically, "It is not the duty of government to educate the country." As his disillusionment with the Russell ministry set in after 1846, he had a further reason for rejecting state aid - it created a population subservient to government. One of his last pamphlets consisted of letters addressed to Cobden on the impolicy of state education.¹²

In politics Parsons was of course a Liberal, but his political attitudes sharpened in the 1840s. He was a strong supporter of the Anti-Corn Law League, and refused to sign the People's Charter in 1842, giving as his reason his preference for the repeal of the Corn Laws. When the Free Trade cause triumphed, however, he became an active campaigner for working-class enfranchisement. It seems probable that his increasingly vehement championship sprang from the qualities he found in the operatives of his Ebley congregation. In 1846, at the annual sermons for the Ebley Sunday schools and day schools, his subjects were "the universal brotherhood of mankind", "the aristocratical character of false religion", and "the democratical character of the gospel of Jesus Christ". Between 1847 and 1849, there were published, in eighteen numbers, his *Tracts for Fustian Jackets and Smock Frocks*, in which he set out his varied political views. The most significant of these was his whole-hearted espousal of the Six Points of the Charter, whilst vigorously attacking physical force as a means to achieve them.¹³

The climax of Parsons's Chartism occurred at the great Stroud meeting of 28 March 1848, which brought together the local Chartists and Dissenters. Not only Parsons spoke in favour of the Charter but also Joseph Partridge of Mount Vernon, Rodborough, the leading local dyer and a Rodborough Tabernacle man. One may doubt how far this represented a real union of hearts and minds

11. Hood, *op. cit.*, pp. 69-70.

12. *Ibid.*, pp. 73, 295; *Tracts for Fustian Jackets and Smock Frocks*, Stroud 1847-9, no. 1, p. 4; *Letters to Richard Cobden, Esq., on the Manchester Scheme of Education*, 1852.

13. *Northern Star* 22 January 1842; *GJ* 14 November 1846; *Tracts for Fustian Jackets*, nos. 2 & 3.

for the branch of the National Charter Association then established had mainly the old Stroud Chartists as its officers. But the Chartists certainly now claimed Parsons as their own and the *Northern Star* advertised his forthcoming sermon at Zion Chapel, Whitechapel, on the brotherhood of man. No doubt in it he expressed the sentiments of the eighth of his *Tracts for Fustian Jackets*, where he stated that mankind's "natural equality and fraternity" stemmed from the mode of creation:

Yonder barbarian and savage is my brother, and so is yonder monarch. Some of our relatives are black, some are red, some are copper colour, and some are pale, but these variations can be accounted for on physiological principles, and do not in the least affect our brotherhood.¹⁴

Parsons's activities did not diminish with the collapse of Chartism as a political force. Much of his time was spent in nation-wide lecturing and preaching tours, though he remained in close touch with the affairs of the district. He wrote two pamphlets attacking Lord Moreton, Whig candidate for Stroud borough in the election of 1852, and at the end of that year took an active part in opposing the enclosure of Selsley Common, called by him a "people's Park". He died in 1855.¹⁵

In retrospect Parsons greatly overshadows the other Dissenting ministers of the district. At the time the contrast was less apparent. Like him, several of them engaged in a wide range of public activities. Thomas Fox Newman, minister of the Shortwood Baptist congregation near Nailsworth, who gave the address at Parsons's funeral, supported the Anti-Corn Law League, spoke at a Stroud anti-Church Rate meeting in 1837, interested himself in the condition of the emancipated West Indian slaves, opposed the Maynooth grant in 1845 and "papal aggression" in 1850, spoke at a meeting in 1846 to protest against French aggression in Tahiti, was a member of the Stroud committee to oppose the Russell government's proposals on education in 1847, addressed a Nailsworth disestablishment meeting in 1851, and gave support to the Protestant Alliance in 1852.¹⁶

In the 1830s and 1840s most of the Stroud Dissenting ministers clearly considered it their duty to take public stances on those public issues in which they found a moral or religious principle to defend, and these covered much of the ground of current political debate. Their public activity was an extension of their prophetic role as preachers, as Parsons himself made clear:

A crafty aristocracy and a hireling priesthood have wished to impress on the public mind that Moses and the prophets were only

14. *Northern Star* 8 April, 6 May 1848; *Tracts for Fustian Jackets* no. 8, p. 2.

15. Hood, *op. cit.*, pp. 142, 254-6.

16. *GJ* 22 January 1842, 6 December 1845, 29 November 1846, 3 March 1847; *SFP* 22 November 1850, 6 December 1852.

spiritual instructors, and thus have laboured to frighten religious men from engaging in the political renovation of the world... The Almighty intends that all his *real* disciples shall be *political* as well as *religious agitators*...¹⁷

On leaving Rodborough Tabernacle in 1848, the Revd. Benjamin Backhouse rebutted his attackers:

I repudiate the term political as inapplicable to my conduct. My proceedings in regard to Sir James Graham's Bill, the Dissenters' Chapels Bill, the Maynooth grant, and the late Minutes of the Council of Education etc. have all sprung from a deep religious conviction of the pernicious bearing of those measures on Evangelical Christianity and Protestant Nonconformity.¹⁸

Moreover, an examination of the Deacons' Books of the Shortwood church demonstrates the distinction between the roles of ordained minister and deacon. The minister had to conduct Sunday and weekday services, whilst the deacons were responsible not only for the finances, the buildings, and the material equipment for worship, but also the pastoral oversight of the congregation. When a member had offended against the moral code, that member's name was brought before the deacons' meeting and action decided: this usually entailed an interview with the offender by one or two of the deacons. Newman, the Shortwood minister, like his predecessor Winterbotham, attended deacons' meetings only occasionally. Rather, the minister's primary duty was to preach the Word, and his involvement in politics was an extension of this.¹⁹

Not all ministers took this view. It was said of William Wheeler, minister at the Bedford Street Congregational chapel for thirty years after Burder, that it was as minister of his own church and congregation that he was chiefly known and most highly appreciated. The only extraneous subject in which he proclaimed a public interest was the fate of colonial slaves after their emancipation. Wesleyan ministers also took only occasional action, though their line on colonial slavery was particularly strong. In 1833 the minister James Whitworth's over-zealous conduct of an anti-slavery meeting in his chapel drew a letter of protest in the *Gloucester Journal*. However, their three-year term in a circuit gave them little time to establish themselves as public figures in the locality.²⁰

Each crusade had its lay supporters as well as ministerial. A lay equivalent to Newman in the number of causes he espoused was Thomas Parsons, a Congregationalist of the Old Meeting. He first appears in 1833, when as book-

17. *Tracts for Fustian Jackets*, no. 8, p. 8; no. 9, p. 1.

18. *GJ* 2 December 1848.

19. The five Shortwood Deacons' Books are held by Mrs B. Mills, Nailsworth.

20. J. Stratford, *Gloucestershire Biographical Notes*, Gloucester 1887, p. 312; *GJ* 28 June 1845, 16 April 1833.

keeper to Joseph Partridge he kept in the counting-house a petition in favour of the immediate abolition of slavery for workmen to sign. In the course of the next twenty years, acting as secretary of organisations or chairman of meetings, he promoted British and Foreign Schools, free trade, household suffrage, temperance and Church disestablishment, and attacked the government's 1847 education proposals, "papal aggression", and American slavery. The Anglican critics of Dissenting agitation preferred to represent it as largely the work of Dissenting parsons, but it was inevitably a co-operative enterprise of ministers and the leading laity.²¹

The staple of Dissenting agitation, as of other forms of agitation in these years, was the petition to either house of Parliament. Certainly the Dissenters were the most indefatigable petitioners in this neighbourhood. Although only 35 of 419 petitions from this area between 1830 and 1849 stated that they came from Dissenting congregations, many of the others, of which we know no more than their place of origin, must have been organised by them. Not one of the 73 petitions against Graham's factory bill of 1843, its educational provisions so objectionable to Dissenters, was recorded as their work.²²

The following are the major petitions of these years. The number is shown, with the number specifically from Dissenting congregations in brackets:

Against slavery, 1830-1	7 (4)
Against slavery, 1833	19 (11)
Against dissenters' disabilities, 1833	10 (10)
Against church rates, 1837	28
Against the corn laws, 1839-46	58 (3)
Against the factory bill, 1843	73
Against the Maynooth grant, 1845	26 (4)
Against the educational proposals, 1847	13 (2)

Of course the Dissenters had allies in some of these campaigns, but the sum total of this activity suggests that they can claim to be regarded as the major political interest in the district during these years.

These petitions were part of campaigns which were national in scale, but others, single or few in number, can be connected with local events. The Stroud Primitive Methodist congregation, amounting to 200 in 1851, had its name on only one petition in these years, praying in 1848 that the Jewish Disabilities Bill might pass into law. This can surely be connected with the lecture which Benjamin Parsons had given at Ebley a fortnight before in favour of equal rights for Jews.²³

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- Hoy, *op. cit.*, p. 30; *GJ* 10 December 1839, 8 January 1846, 13 March 1847, 17 June 1848, 6 December 1850, 5 December 1851; *SFP* 20 December 1850, 25 April 1851. The reference to the petition in the counting-house occurs, surprisingly, in the *First Children's Factory Commission Report*, *BPP* 1833, xx, B1, p. 51.
 - Numbers are based on the lists of petitions in the *JHL* and the *JHC*, 1830-49.
 - The PM chapel had an evening congregation of 200 by the 1851 Religious Census. *HO* 129/338/4/1/8. *JHC* 1848, vol. ciii, p. 207; *GJ* 5 February 1848.

A congregation's leaders, minister and deacons (in Methodist chapels, stewards and class leaders) would decide whether to take action. The signing of the petition might be preceded by a meeting addressed by a speaker with knowledge of the subject. In 1846 the Revd. J.J. Jesson from Tahiti addressed a meeting at Rodborough Tabernacle on the plight of Queen Pomare and her people. This was followed by the drawing-up of a memorial to the Foreign Secretary, and congregations were requested to sign it the following Sunday, petitions often being signed before or after services. In many congregations women outnumbered men by two to one and they played their part in gathering signatures. On completion, the petition would be dispatched to a compliant peer or member of parliament for presentation to Parliament.²⁴

The longest and most continuously sustained campaign of these years was that against the corn laws, which began with a petition by the inhabitants of Stroud in August 1838, a month before the founding of the Anti-Corn Law Association at Manchester, and ended with the celebrations of repeal in June 1846.²⁵

From 1841 the most prominent champions were the Dissenting ministers, who made the question a simple one of ethics. Benjamin Parsons said that he never looked upon the repeal of the corn laws as a "merely civil and political question". He always looked upon it as a question of justice, and therefore of religion. Thomas Fox Newmon thought that the problem of the corn laws was a question of simple humanity, and quoted scripture, "He that withholdeth bread, the people shall curse him" (Prov. 11.26). Couched in these terms the message of the Anti-Corn Law League had powerful appeal for the working classes.²⁶

Their public activities far outstripped those of the local manufacturers. Eight local ministers indicated their intention to be present at the Anti-Corn Law League's ministerial conference at Manchester in August 1841, though in the event only five attended. These included Burder, a member of the conference executive committee, and Parsons who moved one of the conference resolutions. Six months later, Burder and Parsons were deputies at the great meeting at the Crown and Anchor, and after his return Parsons wrote a letter to the *Anti-Bread Tax Circular* proposing a national boycott of excisable articles. At the beginning of 1843 Parsons was a member of the General Committee of the Great League Fund.²⁷

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24. *GJ* 11 November 1846. There were 237 male members and 461 female members of the Shortwood Baptist congregation in 1832. GRO D2424/5. At Stroud Old Meeting in 1839, 55 of the members were men and 95 women. Hoy, *op. cit.*, p. 30. A writer to the *GJ* complained that the Anti-Slavery Society had used women to get up petitions. *GJ* 4 May 1833. In 1843 an Anti-Corn Law petition was sent to the House of Lords by "the female Inhabitants of Stroud". *JHL*, vol. lxxv, p. 256.
25. *JHC* 1838, vol. xciii, p. 849; *GJ*, 20, 27 June 1846.
26. *GJ* 25 July, 10 January 1846.
27. *Anti-Bread Tax Circular* 12, 19 August 1841, 10, 24 February, 24 March 1842, 7 February 1843. The other ministers at the Manchester conference were Henry Griffiths of the Old Meeting (Independent), Thomas Maund of Stonehouse (Independent), and William Yates of Stroud (Baptist).

Numerous lectures were given in Stroud and the surrounding villages, the lecturer Paulton on his visit in December 1841 reporting that this activity resulted from the zeal of Parsons and Burder.²⁸

Dissent was certainly on fire for the cause. When a Temperance Society lecturer on a tour of Gloucestershire arrived at Nailsworth, he changed his subject, and weekday religious services were cancelled so that congregations could attend his lectures on the workings of the corn laws, notice being given in the chapels on the previous Sunday.²⁹

This enthusiastic campaign lasted until the spring of 1843. After the motion for repeal was defeated in that year, much of the heart seems to have gone out of the campaign. A cause of greater urgency had now appeared - the need to defeat the education proposals of Graham's Factory Bill.

The petition was a clumsy and ineffective weapon in the efforts to change the law or influence government policy, though it could be efficacious as in the hurricane of hostile Dissenting petitions which forced Graham to abandon the education provisions of his 1843 bill. However, after Stroud became a parliamentary borough in 1832, the local Dissenting leaders soon discovered a more limited target by directing their petitions at the two local members, particularly just before a vital vote in the Commons.

In 1832, W.H. Hyett of Painswick House had been elected as one of the first MPs for the constituency. He had refused to commit himself to support for immediate abolition of slavery in the colonies. Yet on election, a petition was sent to him by 61 "electors and inhabitants of Stroud", including four ministers from the town, requesting him to call upon Lord Althorp, the leader of the House of Commons, to press upon him the need to produce a measure assuring total abolition when the relevant bill was introduced.³⁰

The procedure often followed was that, before a vital vote, a public meeting would be held in Stroud, at which resolutions were passed, and a body instituted to press on the MPs the views expressed therein. Representatives would then visit London in order to present the petition and urge their views.

An anti-Church Rate meeting of 1837 drew up a memorial for Lord John Russell, then Home Secretary and a Stroud MP since 1835. It was known that the cabinet was preparing a new church rate measure. The meeting warned Russell that a new version of the scheme of 1834, which had proposed to transfer church repair costs to the Treasury, would be "infinitely more objectionable to them than the present mode of levying it". The Stroud Association for the Protection of Religious Liberty was set up, to correspond with the London Church Rate Abolition Society and the Society for the Protection of Religious Liberty in

28. *Ibid.*, 20 December 1841.

29. *Ibid.*, 21 October 1841.

30. GCL.H(E)6; GCL RX.239.7,239.8. No Anglican clergy signed the petition. Of the fourteen laymen whose religious affiliation can be identified, seven were Independent, three Baptist, one Wesleyan and three Church of England (P.H. Fisher, the future Stroud historian, and two of his brothers). Most of the leading Anglicans held aloof.

London, and two delegates were to attend a forthcoming London meeting. Russell could be in no doubt about Dissenting views on the matter. In fact, the government's 1837 scheme was to run along completely different lines, and was soon dropped when it became clear that it was unacceptable to the Church.³¹

In 1838 there was a meeting at the Subscription Rooms to press for the immediate emancipation of the now apprenticed former slaves. The result was a memorial collecting 683 signatures in two days, after which two leading Dissenters, S.S. Marling and Joseph Partridge, met the two Stroud members, Russell and G.J.P. Scrope, on behalf of the Stroud Anti-Slavery Association, and emphasised the feeling of the constituency. Russell assured them of his regret at this disagreement with government policy, which was in fact to be reversed in the following year.³²

A development of the 1840s was the hostility of the Dissenters towards the extension of State education. In 1839, a large meeting "very respectably attended" had heard a lecture on the government plans of that year for the extension of state support for education. With Thomas Parsons, secretary of the local branch of the British and Foreign Schools Society in the chair, the leading ministers including Burder and Parsons gave their approval. The latter accepted a government grant for the building of the Ebley school in the next year.³³

All had changed by 1847. The proposals of that year would allow grants to be made to denominational bodies including the Roman Catholics. Stroud Dissenters, ministerial and lay, met and a committee was appointed to organise opposition. In little more than a month a memorial signed by 356 electors was presented to the two borough members, G.J.P. Scrope and W.H. Stanton, and the Conservative members for East Gloucestershire. Scrope and Stanton made clear their intention to support the scheme, Scrope pointing out in his reply that nationally the Dissenters were divided, notably by the Wesleyans' acceptance of it. Yet he gained some credit with Dissent by mentioning his vote for the Clay amendment, which caused considerable dissatisfaction with its members of Parliament, though Scrope's capacity for temporizing caused him to be more acceptable than Stanton. Previously, Dissenting support had looked forward to a national scheme acceptable to all.³⁴

By this time much of the local Dissenting interest felt it had been taken for granted by the Liberal candidates at elections, though before the 1835 election, when the candidates Scrope and Col. Charles Fox were challenged by the Cheltenham radical J.C. Symons, the Dissenters held a meeting at which they drew up a statement of their grievances which was forwarded to the candidates.

31. HO.52/33.261; O. Chadwick, *The Victorian Church*, vol. 1. pp. 146-7.

32. *GJ* 28 April, 26 May 1838.

33. *GJ* 10 December 1839; Hood *op. cit.*, p. 73.

34. *GJ* 13 March, 3 April, 8 May, 31 July 1847. The Wesleyans would be the main gainers for the scheme in 1847, as the government, with a general election imminent, decided to delay making an agreement with the Roman Catholics until 1848.

In their consequent addresses, otherwise short on commitment to specific measures, both Scrope and Fox stated their support for the redress of Dissenting grievances.³⁵

However, in the 1847 election Benjamin Parsons and the Dissenters who thought like him were determined to challenge the sitting representation. Unfortunately, the champion who put himself forward on their behalf, the "carpet-bagger" Marcus Merryweather Turner, proved an ineffectual candidate, and Scrope and Stanton were triumphantly re-elected:

Stanton	565
Scrope	541
Turner	177

Nevertheless, Parsons used the opportunity of the nominations to attack the actions of Russell's government, particularly the Education Minutes.³⁶

From this time there were two local groups affirming their hostility to the narrow Liberal oligarchy which controlled the Stroud representation, one the local Conservatives, still a minority, but gradually increasing in support, the other many of the local Dissenters headed by Benjamin Parsons.

Events in 1851-2 reinforced this resentment. Early in 1851 it was reported that Stanton would retire at the next election, and his place be taken by Lord Moreton, heir to the local magnate, the Earl of Ducie. When the election was called in March 1852, both groups produced candidates. The Dissenting Radical candidate was John Norton, from Lincoln, who came with the strong recommendation of John Bright. Among the collection of policies which he supported was hostility to all state endowments, "whether for educational or ecclesiastical purposes".³⁷

His main henchmen in the campaign were the leading local Dissenters, with Baptists particularly active in his support. The chairman at his meetings was William Barnard, a Nailsworth timber merchant, and the proposer at his nomination was Abraham Marsh Flint, a Woodchester mill-owner. Both were connected with the Shortwood Baptists.

The result of the election, held in July, was:

Scrope (Liberal)	567
Moreton (Liberal)	529
Baker (Conservative)	488
Norton (Radical)	315

35. *GJ* 27 December 1834, 10 January 1835.

36. *GJ* 31 July 1847. Parsons limited his attack on the local candidates to Stanton. Scrope showed some astuteness in having himself nominated by Dissenters, S.S. Marling, an Independent, and A. Fewster, a Quaker.

37. This was Norton's only parliamentary candidature, and he seems to have had no previous connection with Stroud. The other policies he supported included "a large extension of the suffrage", the ballot, three-year parliaments, free trade, and the abolition of the death penalty. *SFP* 7 May 1852.

Norton had done respectably, but was far from winning the seat. A sizeable section of the Dissenting voters had voted for the two Liberals in accordance with their long-standing habit. This applied particularly to the Bedford Street Independents: the minister (William Wheeler) and five deacons voted for either Scrope or Moreton, or for both. The two Wesleyan ministers voted similarly. Of the seven ministers who voted for Norton, four were Baptist, and the three others Independent, Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion (Benjamin Parsons) and Primitive Methodist.

There were no concentrations of Norton electors in any part of the borough; in most parishes the proportion of electors casting their votes for him was between 20 and 30 per cent. Although most of these must have been the district's Dissenters, they included some Conservatives who voted tactically against the Liberal supremacy.³⁸

In retrospect, Norton's candidature in 1852 seems a climax to twenty years of effort, in which militant Dissent had fought successive campaigns on behalf of various causes, for it was followed by fifteen years of decreased political activity and uncontested elections. Local Dissent was still fighting its battles, but with the death of Benjamin Parsons in 1855 it lost its greatest leader.

There is no doubt that between 1832 and 1852 Dissent was dominant in the borough of Stroud. Just as the Low Church interest was strong in Trollope's borough of Perivale³⁹, the Dissenting interest had most influence in this constituency. It did not return a Dissenter as member until Henry Winterbotham was elected in 1867, but Dissenters, regarding measures as more important than men, agitated continually to persuade Parliament to adopt their numerous proposals. To enjoy unruffled dealings with their constituents, Stroud's members had to take note of the wishes of their Dissenting voters.

If in these years Dissent claimed, or appeared to claim, that it represented the inhabitants of the constituency it could do so with the greater conviction because of the absence of any political bodies with more than very limited support. In 1837, a Liberal Reform Association was set up in Stroud, but quickly died. The Stroud Conservative Association was formed in 1834, but it counted for little in so predominantly Liberal a constituency. In these circumstances the initiatives of Dissent could claim to be keeping Parliament, and particularly the local members, informed of Stroud opinion.⁴⁰

No doubt throughout the country Dissent was acting in similar fashion. In this area it secured a special prominence, partly because no other groups showed the same degree of activity, partly because in Benjamin Parsons it had a

38. See *The poll at the Election of Two Burgesses to serve in Parliament for the Borough of Stroud Taken the 7th Day of July 1852*, Stroud 1852. GCL.GA(Lca).3166(11). In Stroud parish, Norton received 123 votes, 29.8% of the electorate. Over all, 93 voted for Baker and Norton, including George Holloway, the future founder of the Holloway friendly societies.

39. *The Belton Estate*, 1865.

40. *Cheltenham Free Press* 23 September 1837; *Gloucestershire Chronicle* 27 September 1834.

leader of exceptional energy and effectiveness. In an age when public opinion was already beginning to count with government Dissent in Stroud showed both the capacity to organise and perseverance in the methods it used to attain its aspirations.

PHILIP M. WALMSLEY

REVIEWS

Humanists and Protestants, 1500-1900. By Basil Hall. Pp. x, 380. T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh 1990. £19.95 ISBN 0 567 09531 2

Something of a Humanist and "Protestant" potpourri, Dr Hall's new volume sets in polished prose addresses, lectures and papers produced over a twenty-five year period to provide readers addicted to Reformation Studies with many a considered insight.

Against a carefully constructed reference frame, the blurb correctly judges the author's assessment of Cisneros to provide "a fresh perspective". In fact, Dr. Hall goes further to afford fascinating focus on the dedicated work of those trilingual scholars who, from 1502, worked on six volumes of the Complutensian polyglot, the great humanist undertaking that was to set forth corrected texts of Holy Scripture in the original languages "to quicken and renew the theology and spirituality of Spain". Another essay on Erasmus affords a balanced analysis of Jerome's influence on the world of humanism. Here *philosophia Christi* gains clear exposition, and for his dedication to source material, Erasmus is portrayed as the finest scholar of his age who, if he saved learning from the sickening pedantry of scholasticism, could nevertheless make serious textual errors of his own.

Dr. Hall finds himself equally well at home in "The Reformation City", his lively historiographical survey undertaking the work of Bacon, Moeller and Ozment. For the rest, essays on Bucer and Laski rank highly; there is an involved discussion of key Catholic-Protestant "Colloquies"; and a rather tedious outline of early Lutheranism in England. But the student world will be pleased to find Dr. Hall's old, but admirable piece "Puritanism: The Problem of Definition" reprinted here; and new work on Defoe, Swift and, surprisingly, Gavazzi, a Friar of the *Risorgimento*, widens the appeal of a most competent and useful little book.

In days when typesetting is "speed-", as well as "word-processed", the tyranny of the trivial can mar many a text. If this frustrates the reader, it can, *de temps en temps*, amuse the reviewer. For if a number of accents are certainly misplaced, that remarkable individual, the troublesome peasant is here again (cf. "the Peasant's *[sic]* War..." p. 118). Otherwise the book is a model of good production, with footnotes as *footnotes*, and the only real error relates to Luther's "swine from Dresden", for Georg was Duke of Albertine, not Ernestine, Saxony (p. 97).

PETER NEWMAN BROOKS

Parliamentary Army Chaplains 1642-1651 (Royal Historical Society, Studies in History, 59). Pp. 199. By A. Laurence. Woodbridge: Boydell Press. 1990.

The popular image of a parliamentary army chaplain during the 1640s is of a religious zealot, exhorting his troops into battle, as elect saints bent on pulling down idolatry and building up God's kingdom; perhaps also as a leading light in the councils of the army, ensuring that the primacy of religion never be challenged. This is not wholly fanciful: an American historian, Leo Solt, has characterised the chaplains of the New Model Army as "saints in arms"; while a contemporary, John Vicars, vividly recorded the chaplains at Edgehill riding among the parliamentarians "through the thickest dangers" to encourage the soldiers "to fight valiantly, and not to flye, but now if ever to stand to it, and to fight for their Religion, Lawes and Christian Liberties". A few, such as Francis Cheynell, even enjoyed a measure of military command; and perhaps the most famous army chaplain, Hugh Peter, spent the war either on active service in England or Ireland and in 1649 was commissioned as colonel of a regiment of foot. He participated in the Putney Debates in 1647, attended the negotiations with Charles I at Newport in 1648, regularly preached fast sermons before parliament, and was an intimate of Cromwell. In 1660, on the return of Charles II, he was exempted from the Act of Indemnity and in October that year was tried and executed. Yet how typical were such careers among the 250 chaplains serving the parliamentary forces? This is the issue that Dr. Laurence addresses in this monograph. The book consists of eighty-seven pages of analysis, followed by a hundred-page long biographical dictionary of army chaplains. There are also no less than twenty-three tables setting out her findings. The result is a very rich mine of information, as well as a clear interpretation of the institution.

Dr. Laurence argues that army chaplains were not usually the apostles of religious or political radicalism. They were appointed not to proselytise but to maintain morale and the commitment to continuing the war. Chaplains were chosen by regimental colonels and commissioned by the general; most had a university education, and a significant minority had been in trouble with the episcopal authorities before 1640. Very few were to conform to the restored episcopalian church after 1660. Perhaps most significantly, most served for a year or less, and then resumed a conventional career in the parochial ministry. Moderate Presbyterians and Independents were far more representative than more radical elements, and some chaplains only developed heterodox views after leaving the army; an obvious example is Laurence Clarkson, "captain of the Rant" and strident antinomian. Indeed, Laurence cautions against easy equations between religious and political radicalism; and adds that a number of prominent army preachers, such as the Baptist Paul Hobson, were in fact laymen. As for the New Model Army, the view that its chaplains promoted religious radicalism has been effectively challenged by Mark Kishlansky in a monograph of 1979; Laurence endorses his argument, but on independent grounds. She observes that the New Model contained at least forty-three chaplains between 1645 and 1651, rather than the nine mentioned by

Kishlansky; and argues that religious pluralism best expresses the complexion of the chaplaincy in these years.

The biographical dictionary is the fruit of many years' careful assembly of scattered documentary evidence. Its strengths, naturally, are for the years 1640-60; and earlier details are sometimes inaccurate or unnecessarily concise. To take just one example, the entry for John Stalham, a reference to Wrightson and Levine's analysis of his ministry at Terling would have been useful (*Poverty and Piety in an English Village*, 1979, pp. 160-64). What is deplorable is the absence of both a bibliography and an index, no doubt a false economy imposed by the publishers.

KENNETH FINCHAM

CHESHUNT COLLEGE : THE EARLY YEARS. A Selection of Records edited with an introduction by Edwin Welch. Pp. xviii, 345. Hertfordshire Record Society 1990. £16.75. From Miss E. Hunter, Rose Cottage, Chequers Lane, Preston, Nr. Hitchin, SG4 7TX.

Edwin Welch, the honorary archivist of the Cheshunt Foundation, to whom the Foundation and numerous historians are immensely indebted for his work over many years on the Cheshunt College archives, has now increased their indebtedness by editing a selection of the early Cheshunt records.

Dr. Welch is engaged on a new biography of the Countess of Huntingdon, something badly needed by all those interested in the religious history of eighteenth-century England, and the present volume serves as *apéritif* to what will surely be a delightful and nutritious meal.

It is undeniably a useful volume. The bulk of it is devoted to the minutes of the Apostolic Society from 1787 to 1793 and the Governors from 1793 to 1799, the means by which the Countess's creation was enabled to survive and indeed flourish after her death. These main offerings are supported by other records - lists of subscribers and students, accounts, notices of meetings, and so on. Other writers can be expected to draw extensively on these resources.

What might not have been expected is that the contents are fascinating and indeed entertaining as well as informative. There are aspects of the early life of Cheshunt which seem quite contemporary and others which reflect a context and principles which sound strange to-day. Right at the start the move from Wales to Hertfordshire raised financial problems for the students required to transfer; a letter was read "respecting the inability of the Students to pay their expense to Town". The Trustees found it necessary to provide two guineas for each student to cover the cost. (1 February 1792, p. 31). A ban on smoking would have seemed quaint for much of the period between then and now, to-day perhaps not so peculiar, though the justification would be different: it was resolved "That a notice in large Letters on a board be placed in some conspicuous part of the College, prohibiting smoking of Tobacco by any of the Students as an idle custom tending to promote indolency in many, by an almost continual use of it when masters of their own time." (25 July 1792, p. 46).

Some references sound quite strange to-day. Presumably the allowance of 26s, a year "for washing each Student" is simply poorly expressed (29 August 1792, p. 49); but the need to hold a special meeting because someone tried to set the college on fire would be surprising to-day (18 September 1792, p. 50), as also the firing of a gun into the parlour. (2 April 1794, p. 81). The changed character of British society is indicated by the rejection of a Welsh applicant because of his inadequate knowledge of English (13 June 1792, p. 41); another gave a satisfactory account of his religious experience "as far as we could understand (for he speaks but little English)" (29 July 1793, p. 64). An application from a married student was naturally turned down (3 April 1793, p. 60); while one aged 34 showing little evidence of sufficient capacity was judged unlikely to acquire it at such an age - a far cry from the clientele of many colleges to-day. (2 May 1798, p. 134).

Another feature which would still be surprising in most Nonconformist seminaries, but less so than midway between then and now, was the installation of equipment for brewing beer, the supplies obtainable locally being found unsatisfactory. But perhaps most surprising of all is the paucity of business recorded for some meetings : all that the minutes for 4 June 1788 say is: "Read the minutes of the last Monthly Meeting" (p. 10), while the meetings of 4 March and 6 May 1789 were short on both attendance and business : the first records an attendance of two, the second of one, and the minutes in each case read: "No business done." It is difficult to imagine a church-body meeting to-day without transacting business, even if hardly anyone was present.

The worries and hitches inevitably attached to the establishment of a college, and to the early stages of its history, make their appearance. We have the minutes recording the taking possession of the house at Cheshunt (7 March 1792, pp. 33f.). We read of the appointment as tutor, after several disappointments, of Isaac Nicholson - "in every respect qualified for the office - a gracious and judicious man" (4 July 1792, p. 43). The accounts for 1792 include £950 for the purchase of the estate at Cheshunt and £87 for furniture (3 April 1793, p. 60). A little later the students renewed their request for an alarm clock, to call them up in the morning, which sounds not altogether representative of student behaviour throughout the generations (6 November 1793, p. 68).

One notable occurrence turned out to be a myth : the students were reported to be strongly sympathetic to the French revolution, to the alarm of the trustees, but enquiries showed that this report was a fabrication; student radicalism had not yet arrived (1 January 1794, p. 77).

Two problems, each with parallels in other college histories, which confronted the Trustees simultaneously, were some kind of immoral behaviour on the part of one student - judged not too grave and dealt with sufficiently by suspension followed by penitence - and trespass by a neighbouring farmer, who broke through the wall of the grounds and erected a cowhouse, which he was required to remove (6 August 1794, pp. 85f.). Managing affairs at a distance must have been troublesome at times : when a local gardener was commissioned to

plant trees he presented a bill which was "rather unpleasant... he having planted more Trees and Shrubs than ordered." (1 June 1796, p. 114).

There are some important records, significant for the continuance of the college in later years, and indeed not without some force still in the affairs of the Cheshunt Foundation. Perhaps the Rules and Regulations to be observed hardly come into that category: bells to awaken students are no longer rung at 5 o'clock, and a provision of a total of one hour for consumption of the three meals provided in the day sounds hasty. As for telling them to be in bed by 10, it would perhaps be as effective as laying down any other bed-time: That books should not be borrowed from the library without permission and that they must be kept clean still seems reasonable; but hardly that every student must give an account of how he spends his spare time, which is to be in "wholesome bodily exercise and profitable conversation with each other, and with their neighbours" (p. 167).

Finally it may be noted that this volume is a convenient source for the celebrated Fifteen Articles forming the theological basis of the college, in the original form (modified early in the twentieth century), denominating the Pope as "that Antichrist, the man of sin, and son of perdition."

Dr. Welch is to be congratulated in a first-rate piece of editorial work, and the Hertfordshire Record Society on a valuable addition to an important aspect of their county's history.

STEPHEN MAYOR

Unity and Variety - A History of the Church in Devon and Cornwall (Exeter Studies in History no. 29). Ed. Nicholas Orme. Pp. xiii, 242. University of Exeter Press. £9.95 pbk. ISBN 0-85989-355-3.

This is the first ecumenical church history of the South West. Its range is considerable - from Piran, Nectan, Samson and other saints of the Celtic twilight to Arthur Wallis and the "Restoration" churches of the 1960s and 70s. It grew from papers presented at a symposium of the Centre for South Western Historical Studies at Exeter University in 1989, and therein lie its strengths and weaknesses. Teamwork is a strength, so Bruce Coleman's detailed statistical study of nineteenth century nonconformity compliments John Thurmer's anecdotal approach to Anglicanism. Ragged seams are the inevitable weakness. Jonathan Barry's argument for a large measure of similarity between dissent and the established church in the eighteenth century cries out for a comparison with the nineteenth century, which it does not receive because of the justly different parameters adopted by Thurmer and Coleman.

That said, this useful study clearly probes the relationship between the national and the regional. It bears ample testimony to the singularity of the South West - the Celtic saints, the episcopate of Leofric, the development of cathedrals and dioceses, the Prayer Book Rebellion, the Exeter debates, Cornish Methodism, Joanna Southcott, Henry Phillpotts and the Gorham case - yet all within the context of national and international concerns.

Nicholas Orme helps the student distinguish fact from fantasy in a chapter which begins with the earliest evidence of Christianity in the South West - a shard of fourth-century black pottery marked with the "chi-rho" symbol - progresses through Celtic saints and Saxon minsters and ends with the installation of Leofric as bishop of Crediton and Cornwall in 1046. Christopher Holdsworth takes up the story as Leofric transfers his seat to Exeter in 1050. He explores socio-economic and ecclesiastical influences on the development of the diocese, and is particularly helpful in emphasising the heavy financial burden for both counties of the prodigious growth of monasticism in the early middle ages. Orme takes up the story again with an analysis of the influence of the Reformation simplifying the complex pattern of devotional life (liturgical reformers may take comfort that the Prayer Book rebels of 1549 complained that the new liturgy was "but lyke a Christmas game"!). This was Thatcherism in reverse - a reduction in individual choice with unexpected benefits - an increase in parochial solidarity and renewed communal influence as the parish became a unit of secular as well as ecclesiastical government.

Readers of this *Journal* will be particularly interested in Jonathan Barry's revisionist study of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. He eschews models of difference and looks rather for the similarities between parish church and chapel - in the importance of preaching, the structure of liturgy and the formulation of doctrine, but above all in the common assumption that Christianity was *the* fundamental basis for society. The differences, he argues, were consequent upon the demise of Calvinism and the spread of Arminian and Unitarian doctrines, particularly after the Exeter debates. Equally stimulating is his construction of the social geography of South Western denominationalism, based on "rings of involvement", and the consequent thesis that "the variety of religious experience lay within each church, rather than between churches." He notes that this fits ill with models developed by historians of the nineteenth century, suggests tentative reasons, but is unable to develop them fully because of the limitations of the essay format.

The two nineteenth century essays also present the reader with valuable insights, John Thurmer's study of the developing styles of Anglican churchmanship reveals the Victorian diocese of Exeter to have been anything but a backwater, and Bruce Coleman's precise definition of the sub-regional complexity of nonconformity revealed by the 1851 Census will be of lasting value. Michael Winter and Nicholas Orme bring the story up to date with studies of twentieth century Cornwall and Devon respectively. My only regret is that Orme omits John Huxtable, surely Devon's most significant gift to the ecumenical movement, from his generous assessment of ecumenism.

This book is amply illustrated with 33 photographs and 17 maps and tables. It is beautifully printed on high quality paper. The only error I discovered was the omission of footnote 22 on p. 222. That Exeter University Press can provide such quality for only £9.95 must surely offer an object lesson to some of our more illustrious university presses.

DAVID CORNICK

Pilgrimage: Making a local witness and the first 35 years of Pilgrim Church. By A.T.J. Baker. Pp. 106. Pilgrim United Reformed Church, St. Levan Road, Milehouse, Plymouth. 1986. £2.00 plus postage.

Pilgrim in fact has predecessors - Princes Street, going back to 1751; Wycliffe, going back to 1808; Whitefield, which began in 1931, picking up where Princes Street left off - but it was the Second World War which made the present pilgrimage possible. The buildings of Wycliffe and Whitefield were destroyed in 1941. The two churches united prospectively in 1941, in practice in 1947, and formally in 1950. A new name and a nissen hut followed. Pilgrim was born. It was the first church to be rebuilt in Plymouth since the blitz and in the words of its first church secretary it has been "a restless, searching, demanding church." With Ralph Ackroyd and Fred Kaan among its ministers it cannot easily have been other and *Pilgrimage* has benefited accordingly: not many church histories pay due attention to the organ (as here George Chrissydoes does) or even to the building (as here Ralph Ackroyd does), those "outward signs of something that is happening to this Church". This one does - and those far-off 1950s and 1960s come to life accordingly.

JCGB

Fifty Years of Continuing Worship, Jubilee Book 1940-1990. By Ivan Brown. Pp. 102. Banstead United Reformed Church, Woodmansterne Lane, Banstead, 1990.

Banstead, like Pilgrim, is a church which historians of the United Reformed tradition will need to know about. Its life, too, was fired in the crucible of world war. It too has had notable formative ministries, rich and determined in liturgical insight - Caryl Micklem to Pilgrim's Fred Kaan - and the Banstead Covenant of 1946, drafted by Daniel Jenkins, the church's first stated minister, has its place in Congregational and United Reformed history alike. This *Jubilee Book* succeeds Ernest Tickner's *In the Beginning, The Story of a Church* (1966). *In the Beginning* was a sensible narrative. *The Jubilee Book* is less helpful in that respect but very few other accounts will provide future historians with so useful a picture of what it was like to be a (fairly) representative church member in the first two decades of United Reformed Church life: building (and organ), worship and daily activity, people, the poolside felicities of Surrey's white highlands, the insistent requests of 86 Tavistock Place, conferences and Europe (especially Germany), all are covered and related to each other. This account will be deceptively useful to commentators who live far from Banstead.

JCGB

The Baptist Evangelical Society - an early Victorian Episode. By Geoffrey R. Breed. Pp. 40. The Fauconberg Press, 38 Frenchs Avenue, Dunstable, Beds. CU6 1BH, 1988. £1.95 plus postage.

This was first delivered as the Strict Baptist Historical Society's Annual Lecture in March 1987. It is of interest to readers of this *Journal* for two reasons. First, the society's secretary for much of its short existence (J.C. Woollacott, 1848-66), was a strict communionist from a family with increasing numbers of open communionists, and with a strong Congregational branch, and secondly

because it is an account of what led to the opening in 1866 at Bury of a Baptist theological college on strict communion principles. This college, housed at first in Robert Peel's birthplace, moved to Manchester in 1873. It united with Rawdon College in 1964 and the buildings of the merged colleges today shelter in scholarly federation the Methodists of Hartley Victoria, the Congregationalists, Moravians and United Reformed students of Northern College, and the Unitarians. The Strict Baptist Society, as the Baptist Evangelical Society was originally known, could not possibly have approved such a transformation - though it has occurred in fidelity to Baptist principles.

JCGB

Church Heritage, Vol. 6 No. 3. March 1990, the Journal of the Church Records and Historical Society (Uniting Church in Australia - N.S.W.) contains an interesting article by David Hilliard on "A Seeker for Truth: Alfred Depledge Sykes" (pp. 1-17). Sykes (1871-1940), a Paton and Western man, ministered at Romford Road, Forest Gate in its Edwardian prime. In 1904 he moved to South Australia where as a Congregationalist he combined the liturgical Congregationalism of John Hunter with the New Theology of R.J. Campbell. So he became an Anglican, returning in his last years to Adelaide's Congregationalism, a step attributed in part at least to the influence on him of the Oxford Group.

JCGB

Fun in the Bush. By Ernest Gray. Pp. 94. The United Reformed Church, East Midlands Province, Edwards Lane, Sherwood, Nottingham NG5 3AA. 1989. £2.50

This memoir of a life which (or so it will seem to readers who lack a missionary's temperament) must have been no fun at all to lead is nonetheless great fun to read. It is unassuming and undemanding but its readers will leave it with affection and respect for its author. Like David Livingstone Ernest Gray was a yarn-spinner. From 1930 to 1956, however, he served the Churches of Christ in what is now Malawi. One of his first associates had gone out in 1912; his own last visit was in 1987, when he was eighty-five. Between 1912 and 1987 the concepts and conditions of overseas mission have been transformed; the word "missionary", unadorned, is probably obsolete and certainly frowned upon. Only the perils of the calling - and the call - remain unchanged. It is this which gives Ernest Gray's account its value as well as its fun. We too can share the feelings of this "grandfather of Churches of Christ in Malawi" who parted from Malawi in August 1987 "with a sad heart, knowing that in this life I shall never see these my children and grandchildren again."

JCGB

As we go to press, we have heard with regret of the death of our Research Secretary, Mr F. Keay, on 18 April, 1992. A full appreciation will appear in our next issue.

The Baptist Quarterly (XXXIII, 5-8, 1990)

No. 5: G. Williams, "Welsh Baptists in an age of revolution"; B. Bowers, "Proportionate pecuniary co-operation: Baptists and money"; A.C. Smith, "The spirit and letter of Carey's catalytic watchword"; S. Grenz, "North American report: secular saints: civil religion in America"; A.P.F. Sell, "English Dissent: dissoluble or dissolute?" No. 6: R.E. Davies, "Persecution and growth: a hundred years of Baptist life in Romania"; P. Brewer, "Ministry in a West Indian town: John Law in Port of Spain 1845-1870"; J.H.Y. Briggs, "The visit of a potter to Salendine Nook in 1723". No. 7: K. McNeish, "Hawick Home Mission, 1873 to 1985"; H.O. Russell, "Baptists and liberation"; G.F. Nuttall, "Another Baptist vicar? Edmund Skipp of Bodenham"; T.J. Budge, "Date of 'Deathless sermon' "; D.J. Jeremy, "Businessmen in interdenominational activity: Birmingham Youth for Christ, 1940s-1950s". No. 8: W.M.S. West, "The young Mr. Aubrey"; N. Dickson, "Brethren and Baptists in Scotland".

Bulletin of the Strict Baptist Historical Society (No. 17, 1990)

S. Wright, "John Fawcett and the education of ministers"; "The diary of John Giles of Eythorne" [extracts]; K. Dix, "Anabaptist suffering".

Calvin Theological Journal (XXV, 1-2, 1990)

No. 1: M.L. Klauber and G.S. Sunshine, "Jean-Alphonse Turretini on biblical accommodation: Calvinist or Socinian?"; R.C. Zachman, "Jesus Christ as the image of God in Calvin's theology". No. 2: T.F. Torrance, "Calvin's doctrine of the Trinity"; R.A. Muller, "*Fides and cogito* in relation to the problem of intellect and will in the theology of John Calvin".

Church History (LIX, 1990)

No. 2: K. Penzel, "Philip Schaff: a centennial appraisal". No. 3: E.B. Bronner, "Moderates in the London Yearly Meeting, 1857-1873: precursors of Quaker liberals".

Enlightenment and Dissent (VIII, 1989)

J. Graham, "Revolutionary philosopher: the political ideas of Joseph Priestley (1733-1804). Part One"; J. Money, "Joseph Priestley in cultural context: philosophical spectacle, popular belief and popular politics in eighteenth-century Birmingham. Part Two"; D.O. Thomas, "Richard Price and the Freedom of the City of London"; M. Philp, "The significance of William Godwin's *Damon and Delia*"; A. Ruston, "A servant's view of Joseph Priestley".

The Expository Times (CI, 1989-90; CII, 1990-91)

Series: "Starting with oneself: spiritual confessions": no. 6 by H.D. Rack, "John Wesley's 'Journal' ", May 1990; no. 7 by D. Cornick, "Richard Baxter: 'Autobiography' ", June 1990; no. 12 by J. Punshon, "George Fox's Journal", November 1990.

Faith and Freedom (XLIII, 1990)

Pt. 3: J.R. Clark, "Priestley's integration of science and theology".

Historical Journal (XXXI, 1988)

No. 4: J. Fielding, "Opposition to the personal rule of Charles I: the diary of Robert Woodford, 1637-1641".

International Review of Mission (LXXIX, January 1990)

B.G. Thorogood, "Apostolic faith - an appreciation of Lesslie Newbigin, born 8 December 1909".

Journal of Church and State (XXXII, no. 3, 1990)

W.S. Crowley, "Erastianism in England to 1640".

Journal of Ecclesiastical History (XLI, 1990)

No. 3: N.J. Griffin, "Possible theological perspectives in Thomas Reid's Common Sense philosophy". No. 4: C.J. Podmore, "The Bishops and the Brethren: Anglican attitudes to the Moravians in the mid-eighteenth century".

The Journal of the Friends' Historical Society (LV, nos. 7, 8, 1989; LVI, no. 1, 1990)

No. 7: W.N. Oats, "The campaign against conscription in Australia - 1911 to 1914"; M. Sykes, "Unfinished pilgrimages: Geoffrey Maw and Jack Hoyland in India"; K.G. Robbins, "John Bright - Quaker politician: a centenary appreciation"; G.F. Nuttall, "Early Friends in North Cumberland". No. 8: H.L. Ingle, "George Fox as enthusiast: an unpublished epistle"; N.L. Matar, "Some notes on George Fox and Islam"; L.Loft, "Quakers, Brissot and eighteenth-century abolitionists". No. 1: M. Grubb, "Tensions in the Religious Society of Friends in England in the nineteenth century"; J.R. Carter, "The Quaker International Centre in Birmingham, 1920-1942"; W.R. Aitken, "'Stands Scotland where it did': some thoughts on Quakers in Scotland during the last half century".

The Journal of Religious History (XVI, no. 1, 1990)

J.F. Maclear, "Restoration Puritanism and the idea of liberty: the case of Edward Bagshaw"; G. Robb, "Popular religion and the Christianisation of the Scottish Highlands in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries".

The London Journal (XIV, no. 2, 1989)

J. Christodoulou, "The Freethinking Christians and the Millennium".

Montgomeryshire Collections (LXXXVI, 1988)

G.H. Jenkins, "The Friends of Montgomeryshire in the heroic age".

The New Mercersburg Review, (VIII, autumn 1990)

A.P.F. Sell, "J.H.A. Bomberger (1817-1890) versus J.W. Nevin: a centenary reappraisal".

Oceania (LXI, no. 1, 1990)

F. Merlan, "The sixtieth anniversary index". [A useful resource for the region's history of mission]

Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society (LXXVI, 1987)

L. Phillipson, "Quakerism in Cambridge before the Act of Toleration".

Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society (XLVII, 1990)

Pt. 4: R.E. Davies, "The training of the Methodist ministry 1932-1973: a personal account". Pt. 5: "Essays in honour of Frank Baker" including "An appreciation" of FB by J.C. Bowmer, and a "Bibliography" of his published works by E. Hart; C.J. Podmore, "The Fetter Lane Society"; P.S. Forsaith, "Portraits of John Fletcher of Madeley and their artists"; G.E. Milburn, "Charles Wesley in the rude populous North"; S. Hatcher, "The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in early Primitive Methodism".

Records of Scottish Church History Society

XXIII pt. 3, 1989: R.B. Knox, "Establishment and toleration during the reigns of William, Mary and Anne"; A.C. Cheyne, "Church reform and Church defence: the contribution of Principal John Tulloch (1832-1886)". XXIV pt. 1, 1990: S.J. Brown, "The social vision of Scottish Presbyterianism and the union of 1929".

Reformed Theological Review

XLVIII no. 3, 1989: W.S. Reid, "Church history as a Reformed theological discipline".

XLIX no. 2, 1990: M.E. Osterhaven, "Education within a Reformed context: the Sarospatak story".

Restoration Quarterly (XXXII, 1990)

No. 2: W.H. Howden, "The kingdom of God in Alexander Campbell's hermeneutics".

Scottish Journal of Theology (XLIII, 1990)

No. 2: A. Spence, "John Owen and Trinitarian agency".

The Seventeenth Century (V, 1990)

No. 1: J.H.F. Hughes, "The Commonwealth divided" Edmund Ludlowe, Sir Henry Vane and the Good Old Cause 1653-1659".

ALAN P.F. SELL