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Association Records of the Particular Baptists

Association Records of the Particular Baptists of England, Wales and Ireland to 1660. Edited by B. R. White. Baptist Historical Society. 215pp. Part 1. South Wales and the Midlands. 1971. 75p. Part 2. The West Country and Ireland. 1973. £1. Part 3. The Abingdon Association. 1974. £3.

The slight, unprepossessing appearance of these three pamphlets may well mislead. Together they make a work of considerable importance, deserving a place not in Baptist history only, but in seventeenth-century religious studies more widely, comparable with that of Albert Peel's edition of *The Seconde Parte of a Register* (1915) for the Elizabethan period. Librarians and teachers beset by the growing demand for "grass-roots" information on what ordinary people talked about, as well as on the way the radical Puritans organized themselves, their geographical distribution and inter-communication, how they interpreted and applied Scripture, their social and economic attitudes, and so on, should now direct research students to this new source-material. Despite the inflated price of Part 3, at £4.75 the whole is of more value than a good many secondary works which cost more.

While less substantial than Peel's two volumes, these *Association Records* have a more objective and representative character, in that their assembling is not that of a contemporary, with a contemporary's purpose and presuppositions, but is Dr. White's own work. While the documents in *The Seconde Parte of a Register* were already collected and ready for publication, Dr. White has gathered materials from a wide variety of sources, both printed and manuscript, and has skilfully worked them into five successive sections, which preserve their separate character, yet together form a unity of the kind a historian understands.

The labour must have been great. For the first section (South Wales) the source is the church book, now at Brown University, Rhode Island, of the extinct church at Ilston, Glamorganshire. This is supplemented by material no longer extant used by the Welsh Baptist historian Joshua Thomas in his *History of the Baptist Association in Wales* (1795) and in the manuscript "History of the Baptist Churches in Wales" preserved in the Library of the Baptist College, Bristol, which is a translation into English by Thomas, with additions, of his *Hanes y Bedyddwyr ymhlith y Cymry* (1778).¹ For the second section (the Midlands) the sources are the church books of two churches still in existence, those at Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire, and at Leominster, Herefordshire, with one additional piece of information from a historical survey (1796) in the church book of the church at Worcester.

For the third section (the West Country) the sources are two rare undated (?1658) tracts by Thomas Collier, together with a *Confession of the Faith* (1656). These are supplemented by the church book of the church at Lyme Regis, Dorset; a manuscript sheet from the extinct church at Andover, Stoke [Charity] and Whitchurch, Hampshire, preserved in the Angus Library at Regent's Park College, Oxford; and a manuscript in the Bodleian Library (included in Thurloe's *State Papers*, edited by Thomas Birch in 1742). For the fourth section (Ireland) we return to Ilston, with material in the church book, now in the National Library of Wales at Aberystwyth, of the extinct church at Llanwenarth, Monmouthshire. For the fifth section (the Abingdon Association) the source is a contemporary transcript (87 pp.) of the Association's own account of its meetings, save for the first two of these, which are recorded in the church book of the church at Longworth and later at Coate (now Cote), Berkshire. Both these documents are also in the Angus Library at Regent's Park College.

To this complex material Dr. White has added notes of identification and elucidation, some 360 in all. Because of serial publication the notes are printed after each section, with enumeration starting afresh five times;² and there is no index (not even a reproduction in Part 3 of the index which the Abingdon scribe is said to provide). This makes over-all study difficult; but pagination is continuous, which allows Dr. White some cross-referencing as the work progresses, and *amor vincit omnia*.

Leaving aside the Irish section (pp. 110-24), which is limited to evidence of a single meeting, in 1653, at Waterford, of the churches in Dublin, Waterford and Kilkenny and to two documents, one of them describing the state of these churches, together with those in Cork, Wexford, Clonmel, Limerick, Galway, Kerry and "in the north neere Carrick Fergus", the sections grow progressively fuller and more significant. The section on South Wales (pp. 2-17) records meetings between 1650 and 1656. The foundation members, Ilston, Hay and Llanharan (which in 1652 moved to Llantrisant) were joined in 1651 by Carmarthen and in the following year by Abergavenny. In six years the Association met eight times, either at one or other of the places named or at Aberavon or Brecon. At the Brecon meeting, in 1656, Ilston, Carmarthen and Abergavenny were joined by Bredwardine, Clodock and Tredunnoch (three churches originating from Hay) Llangorse (originating from Abergavenny) and Hereford³ (which a year later is found making approaches to the Midland Association).

The section on the Midlands (pp. 18-50) records meetings between 1655 and 1659 by seven churches which started off, and continued, together: Warwick and Alcester, Moreton-in-Marsh, Bourton-on-the-Water and Tewkesbury, in Gloucestershire; Hook Norton, Oxfordshire; and, rather strangely, the isolated church of Derby and Burton-on-Trent, Staffordshire, which earlier, in 1654, had looked Northwards to join Hexham, in Northumberland, and a Yorkshire church⁴ in signing a letter of loyalty to Cromwell. The Association met most

frequently at Moreton or Alcester, but also at Warwick. In 1659 it was joined by the church at Worcester.

Dr. White shows this Association as meeting in 1657-8 at Gloucester and Cirencester as well as at Alcester and Moreton; but the churches at Gloucester and Cirencester were not members of the Association, and there is evidence of dislocation at this point in the manuscript account, which records a meeting in June 1658 *before* one in April of that year. Dr. White supposes "a scribal mistake", but confesses himself puzzled. I venture a possible solution. In May 1656 the Abingdon Association describes its meeting on that occasion as being, by "blessed providence", "at one and the same time upon one and the same account" as others meeting at Poole and "Ciceter", three "choise servants" of "our precious Master" being "at the three meetings, one with us, and one at Ciceter and one at Poole". But the Midland Association, as Dr. White observes, was not then meeting, at Cirencester or anywhere else; it had met at Warwick in April, and it met again at Moreton in June. Now at its meeting at Alcester in September 1657 the next meeting, also to be at Alcester, in April 1658, was "Agreed upon by the messengers of 7 congregations and likewise by messengers of 2 associations". One of these two other Associations was Abingdon, whose messenger, Benjamin Cox, added his signature at this point (and again in April). May the second Association have consisted of (or included) Cirencester, "the church at Leominster and Hereford that walkes distinct from Mr. Tombs" (which applied to join the Midland Association at the first of these two meetings), Gloucester and Bewdley (each of which "propounded for association" at the second)? Geographically, this makes sense: Hereford, Leominster, Bewdley, Gloucester, Cirencester (and perhaps Sodbury—see below) are each West of all the churches in the Midland Association except Tewkesbury.

This Association would then be the one meeting at Cirencester in May 1656; and on this hypothesis the Cirencester Association had regular meetings at Gloucester in October 1657,⁵ at Cirencester in June 1658 and at Gloucester in October 1658, while the Midland Association had equally regular meetings at Alcester in September 1657 and again in April 1658, and in September 1658 at Moreton. In any case, it is well to remember that other Associations did exist besides those whose records are here printed. The records themselves mention, for instance, "the severall churches of Christ in London", which in 1653 issued a covering letter to accompany an epistle from Ireland; "the severall churches (which give the right hand of fellowship to each other) in and about London", which wrote to Abingdon in 1657; and churches associated in Northumberland and County Durham.⁶

The section on the West Country (pp. 53-109) differs from the previous accounts, in that it records not only the business transacted at meetings (pp. 54-69) but also, in a subsequent series (pp. 70-95), the epistles issued by these meetings and signed, almost always, by

Thomas Collier, either alone or with one or two others. Several of these churches had been evangelized, or gathered, by Collier, whom in May 1654, at Bridgwater, the Association ordained "to the worke of the ministry to the worlde, and in the churches". Between 1653 and 1659 fifteen meetings were held, four times at Wells, thrice at Bridgwater, twice at Taunton and twice at Chard, once each at Dorchester, Exeter and Tiverton. But churches from a wider area came to meetings of this Association. In April 1656, at Wells, representatives from as many as twenty-nine churches were present, not counting a messenger from the Abingdon Association: churches in Cornwall, Wiltshire, Hampshire and Gloucestershire as well as in Somerset, Devon and Dorset. A list of the churches attending is recoverable, however, only on this and four other occasions, and many churches are mentioned only twice or even once. The churches whose names recur at all five meetings are Bristol, Bridgwater and Lyme. The Somerset churches at Chard, Hatch [Beauchamp] and Stoke [St. Mary], those at Luppitt in Devon and at North Bradley in Wiltshire appear four times; the Somerset churches at Taunton, Wells, Wedmore, Ryden and Somerton three times, with those at Kilmington/Dalwood and Totnes, Devon and at [Chipping] Sodbury, Gloucestershire. As the title of one of Collier's tracts indicates, this was an Association predominantly of Somerset churches.

The section on the Abingdon Association, as Dr. White has decided to call it (he does not say whether the Association's own manuscript account bears any title) is much the longest (pp. 125-215), fullest and most systematic. It records as many as twenty-four meetings held between 1652 and 1661; the epistles sent out by the meetings are intercalated at the points at which they were issued; and at three successive meetings reports are given on "the state of the churches". In some ways this last type of information is the most valuable of all. Its indicatives balance the interrogatives of the queries brought to the meetings and the imperatives and optatives of the epistles. Here we are in C Major and on rock.

This Association differed from the others in that for its meetings it did not visit different places. After meeting twice at Wormsley, a house in the heart of the Chiltern Hills, it met invariably at Tetsworth on the highroad between Oxford and High Wycombe. Wormsley was where the regicide Colonel Adrian Scrope, later Governor of Bristol, had his home⁷—which perhaps explains why the Association met there, though the record does not say so. At Tetsworth the place of meeting was perhaps a hostelry. The Midland Association certainly met once "at the sign of the King's Arms at Morton hinmarsh",⁸ and the Western Association at the George at Dorchester.

The Abingdon Association began modestly enough with only three member-churches, one in Oxfordshire at Henley and two in Berkshire at Reading and Abingdon. At its second meeting it was joined by the churches at Kensworth, then in Hertfordshire (but since 1897 in Bedfordshire), and at Eversholt, in Bedfordshire. At the eleventh

meeting, in June 1655, four new names were added: Wantage, Berkshire; Watlington and Kingston [Blount], Oxfordshire; and Haddenham, Buckinghamshire. At the twelfth meeting Pirton (now Pyrton), Hertfordshire, joined the Association; and at the thirteenth Oxford and [Hemel] Hempstead, Hertfordshire. In March 1658 the churches at Kensworth, Eversholt, Pyrton and Hemel Hempstead were, at their own request, "lovingly and solemnly, as in our Father's presence," committed and commended "to be henceforth a distinct association". Of their separate meetings, at Hemel Hempstead and at Dunstable, we have no records, but they continued to send messengers to the Abingdon Association to represent them corporately, and these still provided a good deal of information. The "associated churches of Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire", as they called themselves, were in time joined by Newport Pagnell and Stewkley in Buckinghamshire, Watford in Middlesex, Luton in Bedfordshire, and Bedford (a church distinct from that now known as Bunyan Meeting).

In the Abingdon Association the place of the churches no longer members was taken by fresh recruits: the church at Longworth, Berkshire (formed from Abingdon on 12th December 1656); and two Hampshire churches, that at North Warnborough (now Warnborough, near Odiham) and that at Andover, Stoke [Charity] and Whitchurch; and by the twenty-first meeting, in April 1659, two more churches had joined the Association: Newbury (formed from Andover) and Wallingford, Berkshire. All or most of the considerable number of churches in this Association were regular in their attendance, though on three occasions the representatives of Oxford are complained of as being late. The foundation-members, Abingdon, Reading and Henley are usually named first on the roll-call; but Henley owned to being in "a sad condition by reason of a dull and low and flat spirit in them", and the Association resolved to send seven brethren from various churches to give "counsaile and advice".

It will be seen that a considerable number of churches are mentioned in these documents: in all, if we include some churches not in any of the Associations studied, about a hundred. In several cases the records provide evidence for their existence at an earlier date than has previously been known. In some cases they provide the only evidence so far to hand that churches existed at all: nothing more is known, for example, of North Warnborough, a church which in April 1660 "by reason of their general povertie . . . sent no messenger" to the Abingdon Association. At that meeting the Association considered

the condition of the disciples⁹ at Hempstead [Hampstead] Norris in Barkshire who having formerly, with others there, stood up as a church, did desire now to be enabled to stand up so againe and find counsell and help herein. It was agreed unto by the messengers that some able brethren should be desired to visit them and, upon full knowledge of their state and condition, to give them from scripture grounds the best advice they could and to encourage and help them as God should enable etc.

Which brethren were chosen, and what their advice was, is not stated, and again "nothing further is known of this group". Perhaps the advice given was against "standing up" as a church.

In any case, it was no more than advice and would not necessarily be followed. In March 1656 the Association's advice to Kensworth was clear:

there being a considerable number of your members some of them endued with competent gifts for the worke of a church living together in and neare Laighton which is sixe or seven miles from you. We being made acquainted herewith by your messengers and beeing mooved to seeke the Lord in your behalfe and to give advice in this case . . . : We judge it most expedient and tending to the glorie of God that the members who mett [?meet] at Laighton, stand distinct from you as a church of themselves.

Whether or not Leighton Buzzard did in fact become "a church of themselves" is, again, not known but seems unlikely, for in 1676 the church still called Kensworth, though only four members then lived there, had thirteen members living at Leighton. In these years churches were forming and re-forming like clouds. Despite changes in its boundaries, a church might keep its name, like Kensworth; it might change its name, like Kilmington/Dalwood in Devon or North Bradley/Southwick in Wiltshire; or it might be known by a dual name, like "Stoke and Andover" in Hampshire.¹⁰

Kensworth was always a strong community but many churches were very small, and one purpose of association was to keep such small churches in being, by financial aid as well as by the ministry of gifted brethren from other churches. When in April 1659 the church at Watlington asked "whether because they were, as was alleaged, weake in gifts and few in number being onely seven brethren and eleven sisters, they might not cease to stand up as a distinct church and might not sit downe with an adjacent church as namely the church of Kingston or the church of Wallingford", the Association's answer was "It is judged not good for them so to doe sith they are not so few nor so weake but that the work of the Lord both may be and is, comfortably caried on among them". Eighteen members does not seem many, but was fifty per cent above the requisite minimum; for when in September 1657 the Midland Association was asked "whether disciples may sit downe as a church under the number of 12 or 13", its answer was: "it is judged necessary they should amount to the number of 12 or 13".

Perhaps because of its smallness, Watlington suffered some doctrinal unsteadiness. In April 1659 the church reported "much trouble by a sister . . . sometimes hearing the free-willers to whom now at last she is joyned as the church was informed the last first day". These "free-willers", or General Baptists, predominated in Lincolnshire and the South-East, while Particular Baptists, as these records show, were stronger in the West of England (roughly, to the West of the A6).

The Buckingham-Oxford-Berkshire area, where the two interests met, was disputed territory, and Watlington lay within it.

This church was also troubled, as were those at Oxford and Wantage, by "those that hold the Seventh-day Sabbath". Together with Kingston Blount and Haddenham, Watlington had earlier held communion with a Buckinghamshire church which had not joined the Abingdon Association, that at Bledlow. In April 1659 Kingston asked the Association whether the three churches should respond to a fresh overture from Bledlow, "most of which doe now hold the 7th day Sabbath". "In case nothing else should be found amisse", the Association was prepared to be tolerant. As things worked out, it looks as if Bledlow proved the stronger. A year later Kingston reported, "One is gone off to the 7th day Sabbath and two more are inclined to the 7th day", and by 1669 both Kingston and Watlington had capitulated to Seventh-day observance,¹¹ to which Watlington was still faithful more than a century later.¹²

Of Bledlow no more is known, and very little of Watlington or Kingston—the Seventh-day Baptists have still to find their historian; but the combined inroads on Watlington of General and Seventh-day Baptists are a reminder that these Particular Baptist churches were not the only churches to practise believers' baptism. Nor were they the only churches to practise association. Open-membership churches, which welcomed Baptists and Independents alike, were in epistolary communication, and associated with one another on the occasion of the ordination of ministers, thus offering mutual recognition and fellowship. The General Baptists had their own regular Associations, leaving records published by W. T. Whitley, which should now be compared with those under review: so should the published *Records* of the church at Fenstanton. The Quakers soon practised a form of association in their General Meetings for distinct geographical areas. Presbyterian classes were yet another, more formal and authoritative kind of association. In many parts of the country Voluntary Associations of clergy were assembling, after the model of those in Cumberland & Westmorland and in Worcestershire formed by Richard Gilpin and Richard Baxter respectively. The different groups were in frequent and lively controversy with one other, but within their own borders the bonds were close. Not the least of Dr. White's services in publishing these records is to expose the tale that the churches were isolated and nastily self-sufficient for the myth it is.

He also shows that the Associations themselves, as well as their constituent churches, were in contact with one another. The records of the Midland Association open with the "Articles unanimously agreed unto by all the messengers of the churches mett at Warwick on the 2nd day of the 3rd month 1655"; but the records of the Abingdon Association include an epistle "To the church of Christ at Warwick" dated the previous December (in response to one from Warwick), rejoicing at Warwick's "entring into a solemne association with other churches", enclosing papers "to intimate unto you on what

grounds and after what manner we ourselves did enter into our association", and hoping to send messengers "that they may both partake of the benefit of the light which shall appear in you and may also impart what God gives in unto them"; and at the Midland Association's second meeting the exposition of "our duty to hold a close communion each to other" clearly follows, though not slavishly, the Abingdon Association's earlier exposition of the subject. The Abingdon records also include an epistle composed on 18th September 1656 and sent to the Midland Association in time for its meeting on 15th October: Abingdon knew the date. Another letter, composed on the same day, carried remembrance and encouragement "To the churches of Newcastle, Eedes-bridge and Dotland-parke".¹³

Again, in September 1655 the Western Association issued an epistle, "as fellow members of one body, though in distinct congregations", calling for prayer "with fasting before the Lord for the powring forth of his Spirit which he hath promised in the last dayes" and for diligent enquiry "what special word of prophesie is now fulfilling upon the saints". That this epistle was intended for others besides the Western churches is suggested by the fact that it is signed not only by Thomas Collier but by John Pendarves, who will have been present as a messenger from the Abingdon Association; and in the following month the letter appears, duly transcribed, in the Abingdon records. Abingdon then went so far as to propose for consideration the establishment of "a mutuall correspondence" between the two Associations. Whether this proposal was adopted is not stated, but at the Western Association's next meeting in the following April Pendarves again joined Collier in signing the epistle.¹⁴

Though it does not appear that either the Western Association or the Midland Association reciprocated by sending messengers to meetings of the Abingdon Association, the three Associations were thus inter-related. In all three, queries arose, or were brought for resolution, and answers were given. In an examination¹⁵ some years ago of the Western Association's printed records I suggested that the subject-matter of these queries might be roughly divided into the following categories: the gathering of churches, believers' baptism, communion with the unbaptized; the ordination of ministers, the maintenance of the ministry, the place of the magistrate, missionary activity; liturgical usages, such as vocal ministry, breaking bread, psalm-singing, foot-washing, anointing the sick; ecclesiastical discipline, the grounds and manner of exclusion; domestic duties and relationships. The same subjects, with minor variations, were considered by the churches in the other Associations. Their presentation by Collier is rather more formal and summary, as was fitting in a published tract. Nor does Collier state from which churches the queries came, whereas the church books used by Dr. White sometimes do; and in the Abingdon Association's own account a dozen different churches are named as responsible at one time or other for one, two or even three queries—thus filling out our picture of these churches and their circumstances.

Thus in September 1658 the church at Kingston Blount asked the Abingdon Association "whether saints in gospell dayes may lawfully take an oath before a magistrate, yea or no", and the church at Andover what it should do "in case a member in church fellowship withdraw from or refuse the use of the Supper", a practice which in the following April was disturbing Henley,¹⁶ while a year later at Stoke and Andover one brother "withdrawne from" "hath increased his sin by going naked". From these queries and reports one might guess that the Quakers were at work. In these months Kensworth lamented that "the people called Quakers have by craftie instruments much divulged their tenets among them" and Newbury feared that "some members are inclining to the Quakers", while at Oxford "two members are lately fallen to the Quakers and not yet dealt with; one sister is under dealing"—a phrase¹⁷ carried over into Quakerism (with much else) by those "dealt with" and still in use a hundred years later across the ocean in New England.¹⁸

Nothing, in fact, is more characteristic of these churches than the strict discipline to which they devoted so much attention. In June 1656 the Midland Association considered the question "whether there be a distint difference betwene notteing and casting out".

Answer: agreed unto by the messengers of the churches of Warwick, Alcester, Tuexbury, Morton hinmarsh, Borton-on-the-water and Hooke Norton as their present judgment that the withdrawing, noting and haveing no company with, spoken of in 2 Thess. 3 is all one with casting out.

At the meeting of the Abingdon Association in April 1658 there was likewise "some loving debate touching the difference betwene noting and cutting off"; but, though here also reference was made to II Thess. 3.6, "some judged noting and withdrawing from to be a full casting off. And some judged otherwise. It was agreed that hereafter the question should be further enquired into."

It is worth noting that on this as on some other occasions unanimity was not reached, and that the lack of it was faithfully recorded. To the query from Tewkesbury whether Seventh-day observance was justified the Midland Association replied "The messengers answere in the negative, only one brother declaring himselfe to bee enquiring and not yet fully satisfied". To the question whether it was unlawful for preachers "to take tythes, augmentations, or any other sallery or pension from the world" they again gave an honestly hesitant answer: "some are in the negative and some in affirmative". On the issue raised by Haddenham "what is to be done by bretheren that are troubled and sued at the law by a nationall minister for tythes" the Abingdon Association similarly "did not all unanimously agree in a particular positive answere and resolution"; and on the issue whether it was "the duty of everie elder as well to teach as to rule in the church whereof he is an elder", when "some scruple" was found "in one of our brethren which makes him not fully free as yet to consent to this proposal", subscription to it was "respited by consent"

from one meeting to the next, and only at the next but one "the respited proposall was confirmed". Here we have excellent examples of the government in small church groups by consent, with sensitiveness to the tender conscience of a minority, in which A. D. Lindsay found the roots of the English democratic tradition.

It is also worth noting that those dissenting are not named. They were not necessarily leading members of the Association. The churches' representatives varied from meeting to meeting, and leaders were few. The several Associations owed much to John Miles, to Daniel King, to Thomas Patient, to Thomas Collier and Nathaniel Strange, to Benjamin Cox and John Pendarves, about several of whom Dr. White has written illuminating articles,¹⁹ and also something to ministers in London; but the fascination of these documents is that they record the honest-to-goodness conclusions, worked out on the spot, after close study of Scripture, by ordinary church members who often remain anonymous.²⁰

If I may end this review on a personal note, I should like to say how much benefit I have received through spending several weeks (as it were) in these people's company. A historian is, of course, invited by such documents to "higher critical" investigations. Can any significant variations be detected in the language of the epistles issued in the name of the different Associations? Does, for instance, the frequency of the word "Zion"²¹ in the Western Association's records and its relative absence from those of the Midland and Abingdon Association point to a difference between radical and less radical Baptists? Does the fact that in the dating of the meetings of the South Wales and Western Associations the months are always indicated (as by the Quakers) by their numbers, but by the Midland and Abingdon Associations are sometimes (as by the world) called by their names, point in the same direction? The Midland Association could announce a meeting on "munday in ester week", whereas the Western would tolerate only "the day commonly called Easter-Monday" and the Abingdon "the time called Easter or Whitsuntide".

But in and through the pursuit of such details I have been constantly aware of being with the Lord's people seeking to know, and to be obedient to, His will, within "churches in the blessed primitive patterne". We may be surprised that it was found necessary for Stoke St. Mary to ask the Western Association "whether a man in any case in ruling over his wife may lawfully strike her" (the Association could find no "pretext or example that we read of in the holy scripture") or for Reading to ask the Abingdon Association how sexual relations between those as yet only engaged were to be judged (answer: "a great sin"). But how moving it is, as the Commonwealth experiment collapses and the shadows close quickly round, to read from Newbury in April 1660 that "they are resolved through grace to continue steadfast unto death" and from Kingston Blount in June that "they have not bene dismayed by the persecution and troubles of the time but rather have got more strength and courage", while Abingdon reports

that "the cloud that hath hung over them and the beginnings of persecution have bene of advantage to the strengthening of their faith and to a quickning of them unto prayer". These are churches which only twelve months earlier had complained of "lukewarmnesse and indifference in the things of God", of being "sensible of their falling short", of being "low in spirit, wanting that heat of zeale that is desired".

The concentration on ecclesiastical constitutions, agreements and discipline expressed these Christians' obedience. But what they longed for was a time of refreshment from the presence of the Lord, and in their meetings with one another they sometimes found it. "Give us leave to cry unto you," wrote Collier and Pendarves in the general epistle issued by the Western Association in September 1655, "Oh, awake, awake, it is high time to seek the Lord who is ready to rain down upon you with his holy, sweet and blessed Spirit. Having tasted a little of this honey we have been made to say, Oh, how are our eyes enlightened, our hearts united, enlarged, quickened and greatly comforted". This epistle came, as we saw, to Abingdon. As if in response, in the following May Abingdon wrote to its constituent churches: "Oh, dearely beloved, the Lord hath opened the treasures of heaven to us . . . We did enjoy a most blessed presence of the Lord with us. Then was our mouth filled with laughter and our tongues with singing and a great number of the Lord's servants then present had their soules filled with joy . . . Then were we as in the mount with God. Then were our hearts broken and our soules melted, our faith strengthened, our love increased! O, what shall we render to the Lord for his goodness? O, that you and we may blesse his holy name". Something of their "sweete experiences" shines still in these records.

NOTES

¹ For the complex character of this supplementary material, see *Dict. of Welsh Biography*, s.v. Joshua Thomas. Dr. White does not claim to have collated the *Hanes* of 1778 with the manuscript "History" (which he does not date), or this with the translation of it (with additional information) into Welsh published in 1885.

² In the text of the Abingdon section the note-number 113 appears twice, so that the note-numbers 113 *bis* -127 need correcting to 114-128.

³ In this case the evidence which churches were represented is on the title-page of *An Antidote against the Infection of the Times* (1656) issued by the "elders and messengers", and is repeated in the reply published by George Fox in *The Great Mistery of the Great Whore* (1659).

⁴ "Wharton near Bradford", which Dr. White leaves unidentified; Whitley (item 18-654) reads Horton, where in 1672 Thomas Walker was licensed as a Baptist teacher in his own house (*O.R.*, ii. 665).

⁵ An epistle issued from this meeting at Gloucester had two signatories, John Michell and John Nobb. Michell was of Bourton and could have been present as a messenger from the Midland Association, which he attended regularly. Since James Nobs was among the representatives which earlier another Gloucestershire church, that at Chipping Sodbury, sent to the Western Association, John Nobb was perhaps from that church. If so, Sodbury was now reasonably associating nearer home with Cirencester and Gloucester.

⁶ The Kent Association of Particular Baptist churches was not formed till 1700, by secession from the General Baptist Association: Frank Buffard, *Kent and Sussex Baptist Associations*, Faversham [1963], p. 29.

⁷ For an illustration of the house, see E. A. Payne, *The Baptists of Berkshire*, 1951, facing p. 19. Scrope was executed in 1660, but there was still worship at Wormsley in 1669 (O.R., iii.824). Wormsley, formerly in Oxfordshire, is now Buckinghamshire.

⁸ For an illustration of the house (if the same as the White Hart Royal, which boasts a "King Charles Room"), see *Tales of Old Inns* (published by Trust Houses Ltd.), 2nd edn., 1929, p. 108.

⁹ The use of this New Testament word for those not yet embodied as a church is worth noting.

¹⁰ Since "Cole-Harbour in Thames Street", where "the messengers at London" met "weekly at brother Spilsberie's house", was at the foot of Dunstan Hill, "the church using to meet at Dunstan's Hill in London", which in September 1658 sent a messenger to the Abingdon Association, may be identified with the "church in London meeting at a place called Coal Harbour, Mr. John Spilsbury being pastor".

¹¹ See G. L. Turner, *Original Records*, iii.823-4, the Episcopal Return for the diocese of Oxford, which is printed out of its place in the main geographical sequence and appears to have escaped Dr. White's notice.

¹² W. H. Summers, *History of the Congregational Churches in the Berks., South Oxon and South Bucks. Association*, Newbury 1905, p. 307.

¹³ Eades-bridge (now Eddysbridge) would appear to be an alternative name for the church at Muggleswick, Co. Durham, from the name of a house which still stands, close to the South bank of the Derwent. Dotland (now Doteland) is on the outskirts of Hexham and would appear to be an alternative name for that church.

¹⁴ Pendarves had been with the Western Association earlier, at Collier's ordination in May 1654, but as a representative of the church at Abingdon to which he ministered, not of the Abingdon Association. A messenger unnamed from Abingdon, who in the following April joined in signing an epistle from the Western Association, was likewise from the Abingdon church only.

¹⁵ *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, xi (1960) p. 213-18.

¹⁶ About this time, the Henley Quakers record, Joseph Coale had "a conference or dispute with ye Baptise, wch proved of sum sarvice": *First Publishers of Truth*, ed. N. Penney, p. 218.

¹⁷ To a request for definition from Warwick, the Midland Association replied, "Wee understand by the word 'dealing' to signify rebuke or reproof".

¹⁸ I owe this information to Arthur Worrall, who is preparing a history of Quakerism in New England.

¹⁹ See his articles on Miles in *Welsh Baptist Studies*; on Patient in the *Irish Baptist Historical Society Journal*, ii (1969/70); on Collier and on Pendarves, and also on the Reading and Barnstaple churches, in these pages; and more general reviews of these records in *Journal of Theological Studies*, n.s., xix. (1968) and in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, xvii (1966).

²⁰ Where they do not, only rarely can anything be added to Dr. White's efforts to identify them.

²¹ Are the spellings, Zion, Zyon, Sion, Syon no more than a writer's, transcriber's or printer's variants? It is difficult to be sure.

GEOFFREY F. NUTTALL.

THE WILL OF STEVEN HAWTHORNE

THE Baptist church at West End, Stevington, was formed in 1655. It worships in one of the oldest and best preserved of historic meeting-houses, its main features little changed since its erection in 1721. The first Church Book, which contains entries from 1673 to 1721, is now on deposit loan in the County Record Office, Bedford. The contents have been carefully transcribed by Mr. H. G. Tibbutt and are printed in *Some Early Nonconformist Church Books*, Publications of the Bedfordshire Historical Record Society, Vol. 51, 1972. Mr. Tibbutt provided the church with a brief history at the time of the tercentenary, *Stevington Baptist Meeting, 1655-1955*.

From 1655 until his death in 1694/5 the Stevington church was led by Steven Hawthorne, a yeoman whom the Church Book describes as "their beloved brother and teacher". Among the papers possessed by the church is a photostat copy of his will.

In 1691 Hawthorne's son - of the same name - and Daniel Negus were appointed Elders "with prayer and fasting and laying on of hands" by pastors from Eversholt and Tring. Edward Bull, of Pavenham, joined the church in July, 1674, was "chosen for a deacon" two months later and was more than once sent to visit members of the church living in distant places, some as far away as Rushden and Blisworth in Northamptonshire. Elizabeth Woodward joined the church in April, 1693.

The name Shepherd does not appear on the Stevington roll, but there were several of that name in the church at nearby Carlton, which became a separate fellowship in 1688 and for some years, under influences from the Independent church at Rothwell in Northants, practised infant baptism. Carlton is now a Strict Baptist church.

ERNEST A. PAYNE

IN THE NAME OF GOD AMEN, the 29th day of September 1694, I Steven Hawthorn of the parish of Steventon in the County of Bedford do make & ordain this my last will & testament in manner & form following First I bequeath my soul into the hands of God my maker hoping that through the death of Christ Jesus my redeemer to receive pardon of all my sinns & for my body to be buried at the discretion of my Executor hereafter nominated.

Item I give and bequeath unto Mary my beloved wife all the money which I had with her upon bond & also whatsoever I had with her upon surrender, & if what I have of my wives upon surrender shall be found according to law to fall to my son, then my will is that my son shall put my wife into full possession of the same she had it before her marriage with me, or also that he shall give her the full value of it in money.

Item I give and bequeath moreover unto my said wife fourty pounds of lawful money of England to be paid unto her within three months after my decease.