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

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CONTENTS

Editorial	373
George Whitefield and the Secession Church in Scotland: An Unpublished Letter from Ralph Erskine. by <i>Kenneth B.E. Roxburgh B.A., M.Th.</i>	375
Army Chaplains and the English Presbyterians by <i>John H. Thompson C.B., C.V.O., M.A., Ph.D.</i>	383
The Presbyterians in Liverpool. Part 2: A Survey 1876-1900 by <i>Alberta Jean Doodson M.A., Ph.D.</i>	393
"We Are Hardly Prepared for This Style of Teaching Yet": Samuel Davidson and Lancashire Independent College. by <i>F. Roger Tomes M.A., B.D.</i>	398
Thomas Hardy's Schooling: Some Congregational Links to his Life and Work by <i>Alan Argent B.Sc., M.Th., Ph.D.</i>	415
An Obituary Footnote: Sir Edgar Williams C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O. (1912-95) and the Revd. J. Edgar Williams (1877-1938) by <i>Clyde Binfield O.B.E., M.A., Ph.D., F.S.A.</i>	431

EDITORIAL

We welcome as contributors John Thompson, formerly of the Cabinet Office, who is an elder at Highgate United Reformed Church, and Roger Tomes who has combined ministry in Gomersal, the King's Weigh House, Whitefield's Tabernacle and St. Albans with teaching at Yorkshire United, New and Northern Colleges. It is particularly appropriate that one who for sixteen years lectured in Old Testament Studies at Northern College, first in Whalley Range

and then in Brighton Grove, should revisit one of Victorian Nonconformity's academic *causes-célèbres*. The "Davidson Controversy" was to nobody's credit; had Davidson's personality been easier the outcome might have been different. As it was, Manchester Congregationalism shuddered, several of its leading ministers found their futures in the balance and the affair's last echoes lingered until 1992 when the University of London did away with the chair named after him. That too, one fears, was to nobody's credit. Roger Tomes judiciously assesses Davidson's place in the wider world of scholarship.

Such interaction informs the other contributions in this issue. Ralph Erskine's previously unpublished letter to George Whitefield (here published by permission of the National Library of Scotland) is a useful reminder of the Evangelical Revival's British dimension: certainly Congregationalism in Braintree, at the heart of Essex Old Dissent, was immensely strengthened by the consequent arrival of Edinburgh's Thomas Davidson. Contemporary Essex Congregationalism also depended on that representative pillar of the rural middle classes of unreformed England, the county voter: the prosperous farmer, certainly yeoman (everybody seemed to know what that imprecise word meant), increasingly a gentleman or, at least, gentlemanly. Such were the Vaizeys of Star Stile, near Halstead, and their kinsmen the Dawsons of Aldcliffe near Lancaster and the Woods of Athelhampton, near Dorchester. Such families, now largely forgotten even by historians of Dissent, were commoner throughout the country than is realised, and for longer. Something of their style is disconcertingly captured by what Joseph Vaizey wrote when his brother-in-law, G.J. Wood, of Athelhampton, proposed a farming partnership in 1836. It is an essay in rural Thatcherism, at odds with Athelhampton's romantic allure:

My primary object in entering into business is the *profit* I expect to obtain from the employment of my *capital, time and industry*, on which *I must depend for my livelihood*, and I can *afford* no *expensive habit or pleasure*, and if you think fit to live on a higher scale than I think myself am justified in, *you must pay for it*. Unless by gaining or saving I can increase my property my aim and object is defeated.¹

The Woods are part of Alan Argent's *dramatis personae* for theirs was Hardy's Wessex and Dr. Argent's article is as interesting for what it suggests about Nonconformity's intermediate role in country and country-town life as in what it reminds us about Thomas Hardy. Such a role, more recent this time and wholly urban, is further suggested in Clyde Binfield's "Obituary Note". That note also illustrates the impact of war on the interplay of Free Churchmen (not necessarily Nonconformists now in any real sense) and society. So, by implication, does John Thompson's article. The English Presbyterians took army chaplaincy seriously and battled accordingly with military bureaucracy. Did

1. Letter of 25 June 1836 quoted in C. Aslet, "Athelhampton, Dorset-II, *Country Life*, 17 May 1984, p. 1375. That put paid to the partnership but Wood prospered.

they also take seriously the ambiguity in *any* chaplain's role - the pressures to fit in, to be pastor rather than priest or prophet?² With prophets we come to Gladstone's birthplace, Liverpool, England's most Presbyterian, as it is also England's most Roman Catholic, city; Dr. Doodson continues her survey of its Presbyterianism.

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2. See Alan Wilkinson, "The Paradox of the Military Chaplain" *Theology*, July 1981. I am indebted for this reference to Judge D.P. Pugsley.

THE MARQUIS FUND

The Marquis Fund exists to support research into the history of nineteenth-century Nonconformity and is administered jointly by the Society and Westminster College, Cambridge. The size of grant which can be made is limited but anyone wishing to apply should write to the Treasurer, Dr D.M. Thompson.

GEORGE WHITEFIELD AND THE SECESSION CHURCH IN SCOTLAND: AN UNPUBLISHED LETTER FROM RALPH ERSKINE

In 1741, George Whitefield made the first of twelve visits to Scotland, preaching in Dunfermline on 31 July in the "seceding meeting-house" which had been built for Ralph Erskine.¹ Whitefield had been in contact with the Erskine brothers for over two years before his arrival in Scotland.² The correspondence had been instigated by Whitefield who had heard of the success of the Secession in Scotland³ and had written to Ralph Erskine, detailing events surrounding his own ministry in England and Wales. By 4 August 1739, Ralph Erskine was satisfied with the enquiries he had made concerning Whitefield and wrote in his diary that he was praying for him and his colleagues, thanking

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1. G. Whitefield, *Works*, (Edinburgh, 1976), Volume 1, p. 304.
 2. The first extant letter from Ebenezer Erskine was written on 18 May 1739 and from Ralph Erskine 6 July 1739. See *National Library of Wales Journal* Vol. XXVI, No. 3, Summer 1990, pp. 251-280.
 3. Whitefield was particularly struck by the way in which the Seceders were preaching in the open air. He writes of receiving a letter from Ebenezer Erskine telling him of "preaching to fourteen thousand people... there are other field-preachers in the world beside myself." *George Whitefield's Journals*, (London, 1960), p. 275.

God "for what he has done to them and by them."⁴ The correspondence between Ralph Erskine and Whitefield enabled Whitefield to come to a distinctly Calvinistic understanding of the *ordo salutis*.⁵ Although Erskine attempted to influence Whitefield to leave the Church of England, he balked at their "insisting only on Presbyterian government, exclusive of all other ways of worshipping God."⁶ Nevertheless, with hopes that Whitefield could be persuaded to join them as someone "on the way of reformation,"⁷ the Associate Presbytery issued an invitation to Whitefield to come to Scotland,⁸ with the proviso that he would only preach within the confines of the Associate Presbytery.⁹ Whitefield was unwilling to accede to their request, believing that his calling was "simply to preach the gospel" to people "of whatever denomination."¹⁰

Whitefield arrived in Edinburgh on 30 July 1741, and although he was met by ministers of the Church of Scotland, he fulfilled his promise to the Erskine brothers by proceeding immediately to Dunfermline, being "determined to give them the first offer of my poor ministrations."¹¹ Ralph Erskine was impressed by Whitefield, and in letters to both his brother Ebenezer and Adam Gib, seceding minister in Edinburgh, he notes "the Lord is evidently with him."¹² Whitefield returned to Edinburgh on 31 July, where he preached "to many thousands."¹³ On 5 August, as previously agreed, Whitefield returned to Dunfermline for a meeting with the Associate Presbytery, whom he described as a "set of grave

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4. Donald Fraser, *The Life and Diary of the Rev. Ralph Erskine*, (Edinburgh, 1834), p. 287. In a letter dated 23 July 1739, Erskine sent the greetings of all of the seceding brethren to Whitefield as those who "love and respect you in the Lord." *Ibid.*, p. 210.
 5. Arnold Dallimore, *George Whitefield*, (London, 1970), Volume 1, p. 405.
 6. Fraser, *Ralph Erskine, op.cit.*, p. 311.
 7. Luke Tyerman, *The Life of Whitefield*, (London, 1890), Vol. 1, p. 504.
 8. Letter written by Ralph Erskine on 10 April 1741. *Ibid.*
 9. Erskine expressed his fears that if Whitefield preached for ministers within the Church of Scotland then their "persecutors" would use his "success" within the establishment against their secession. Erskine also gives an interesting insight into the growth of the Secession when he tells Whitefield that their Theological Hall had "more candidates for the ministry... than most of the public colleges, except Edinburgh." *Ibid.*, p. 505.
 10. *Ibid.*, pp. 505-6.
 11. G. Whitefield, *Works*, Vol. 1, p. 304
 12. Donald Fraser, *Life and Diary of Ralph Erskine*, (Edinburgh, 1834), pp. 326-7. Ralph Erskine to Ebenezer Erskine, 31 July 1741, National Library of Scotland, Ms 10782, f.23.
 13. Whitefield speaks in a letter to John Cennick of Ralph Erskine accompanying him to Edinburgh, although in his letter to Adam Gib, Erskine merely speaks of "coming along with Mr. Whitefield to the Ferry." It appears that Erskine travelled with Whitefield as far as North Queensferry and then came to Edinburgh on Tuesday 4 August to accompany Whitefield back to Dunfermline. It was on this occasion that Erskine came into the pulpit at Canongate. See Whitefield, *Works, op.cit.*, pp. 305, 309. cf also Andrew Waddell, *Satan's Ape Detected*, (Glasgow, 1742), p. 11, and John Lewis, *London Weekly History*, No. 20, p. 4.

venerable men!"¹⁴ According to the account which Whitefield later gave to Thomas Noble in New York, the discussion centred on the question of church government and the covenants, matters which Whitefield did not consider to be of primary importance to the faith. There appears to have been a difference of opinion between members of the Associate Presbytery, Ebenezer suggesting that they exercise patience, whereas a presbyter "immediately replied that no indulgence was to be shown to me." The result was "an open breach" of fellowship between Whitefield and the Seceders.¹⁵ It appears that some members of the Presbytery took offence that Ralph Erskine had entered the pulpit of an established church. In a letter to Whitefield,¹⁶ Ralph Erskine denies that his "brethren" had rebuked him, and indicates that he continued to have a high regard for Whitefield.¹⁷ While admitting that some "harsh words" had been spoken to Whitefield, Erskine reveals his disappointment that Whitefield was now associating with ministers of the established Church "wherein the affairs of our Associate Presbytery will be represented to the worst disadvantage," which led him to believe "that you are quite lost to us."¹⁸

The following letter from Ralph Erskine to Whitefield, dated 17 August 1741, has never before been published and indicates that Ralph Erskine was initially more conciliatory towards Whitefield than the rest of the Associate Presbytery. However, it appears that following this letter even Ralph Erskine became more and more hostile in his attitudes until he spoke of his former colleague as "a stranger to our God, and setting up another God."¹⁹

14. G. Whitefield, *Works, op.cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 307.

15. *Ibid.* James Fisher recounts his memories of the meeting in *A Review of a Narrative, op.cit.*, pp. 65-6.

16. Donald Fraser notes that he could not find this letter, although it was mentioned in a letter to Adam Gib written on the same day. *Ralph Erskine, op.cit.*, p. 335. Ralph Erskine to George Whitefield 17 August 1741, National Library of Scotland Ms 91.

17. Erskine writes "I am weary to be so long out of your company... you shall keep company with none that have a heart more inflamed with love to you than mine is and however you have disappointed me in some things, yet neither my love to you, nor hopes about you, are abated." In a letter to David Erskine, son of Ebenezer, written on 13 August 1741, Whitefield speaks of how "I wish all were like-minded with your honoured father and uncle; matters then would not be carried on with so high an hand. I fear they are led too much." *Works, op.cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 314.

18. Ralph Erskine had told his brother Ebenezer that when Whitefield arrived in Edinburgh he only spent an hour in the city. What he did not tell him, and perhaps did not know, was that Whitefield had been "met and entertained at Edinburgh by [Alexander] Webster, and some of his brethren. From them he learned the state of church prejudices and parties in Scotland". *Scots Magazine*, LXVI (1802), p. 279. Whitefield obviously felt the pressure from both sides when he wrote to John Willison on 10 August "I wish you would not trouble yourself or me in writing about the corruptions of the Church of England. I believe there is no church perfect under heaven... I think there is no need of casting myself out. The divisions in Scotland are affecting, and undoubtedly they will occasion great searchings of heart." *Works, op.cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 310.

19. R. Erskine, "The True Christ no New Christ," *Works, op.cit.*, Vol. 7, p. 443.

Whitefield remained in Scotland until 29 October, his ministry of three months taking him as far north as Aberdeen and down into the borders to visit Henry Davidson in Galashiels.²⁰ Almost from the beginning, the revival came under the critical eye of ministers within the Established Church,²¹ Episcopalians,²² as well as Seceders²³ and members of the Reformed Presbytery.²⁴ Henry Davidson expressed the disappointment of many evangelical ministers within the Church of Scotland when he informed Thomas Davidson in Braintree that “the associate presbytery are raging against Mr. Whitefield, and the work in the west ... What ingratitude and unkind usage is the Holy Ghost meeting with, even in the house of his friends.”²⁵

The basic premise, from which the Seceders and the Reformed Presbytery began their opposition, was the conviction that the Church of Scotland must be reformed before the Spirit would be outpoured in revival. The Cameronians were convinced that God would not “honour men to be extraordinary instruments of an extraordinary Work of Conversion, who have so many Ways dishonoured and despised him, as at the present Time-serving Erastian Ministers in Scotland have done.”²⁶ John Willison declared his conviction that

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20. He stayed in Edinburgh in the home of Thomas Davidson, an Edinburgh merchant, in James's Court. Davidson was a close friend of Thomas Boston, Henry Davidson, and the Gillespie family. Thomas Davidson had changed from Presbyterianism to Independency and it may have been Henry Davidson who had some influence over him. When Whitefield was invited to take up the pastorate of an independent church in Braintree in Essex, he suggested Thomas Davidson who became the pastor in 1742. See *Ms. 91* in the National Library of Scotland; West, *History of Nonconformity in Braintree and Bocking*, (London, 1891), p. 12; H. Davidson, *Letters, op.cit.*, pp. 61-64, 107-114, 168-174, 206-212, 247ff; *Life of Ralph Erskine, op.cit.*, p. 301 who speaks of Davidson sending some books of Thomas Boston to Whitefield in 1739.
 21. John Bissett, *A Letter to a Gentleman in Edinburgh containing Remarks upon a late Apology for the Presbyterians in Scotland*, (Glasgow, 1743), G. Whitefield, *Works, op.cit.*, Vol. 1, pp. 328-9. There were others who, although not sympathetic towards the revival, hoped that it would “effectually destroy the Seceders, who are already greatly diminished, and are every day losing ground.” *A Short Account of the Remarkable Conversions at Cambuslang*, (Glasgow, 1742), p. 14.
 22. *Some Observations upon the Conduct of the Famous Mr. W...field by a True Lover of the Church and Country*, (Edinburgh, 1742).
 23. *Act of the Associate Presbytery anent a Publick Fast at Dunfermline, the fifteenth Day of July, 1742*, (1742).
 24. *The Declaration of the True Presbyterians within the Kingdom of Scotland concerning Mr. George Whitefield and the Work at Cambuslang*, (August 1742).
 25. Letter dated 23 August 1742 in *Letters, op.cit.*, p. 62. Alexander Webster expressed the same sentiment in a letter written to George Whitefield on 20 April, 1742 when he wrote “Amidst all the Approaches of Emmanuel's Kingdom the Enemy does not cease to rage, and some, of whom better Things might be expected, join with Infidels in blaspheming the Operations of the Holy Ghost.” John Lewis, *London Weekly History*, (London, 1741/2), No. 60, p. 2.
 26. *Declaration of the True Presbyterians, op.cit.*, p. 31. See also Ralph Erskine, *Fraud and Falsehood Discovered*, (Edinburgh, 1743), p. 40; James Fisher, *A Review of the Preface to a Narrative*, (Glasgow, 1743).

to place reform before revival was “contrary to the method of God’s preventing free grace ... He must pour out his Spirit to cause us *mourn and reform*, before we can do either.”²⁷

The earlier antipathy shown towards George Whitefield was defended by several accusations which they now levelled against him. In particular, both the Seceders and the Cameronians spoke of him as “an abjured prelatick Hireling”²⁸ who should never have been allowed to “preach, exhort, serve communion-tables, and to take the Bread and Wine.”²⁹

John Willison was convinced that the real ground of their hostility was their fear that the act of secession “may be diminished if these changes should be real, seeing you had given it out that the Spirit had left the Ministers and Ordinances of the established Church at your Secession.”³⁰ James Robe believed that the Seceders opposed the revival in order to “maintain and increase their Party against the Church of Scotland.”³¹

The effects of the Cambuslang revival on the bodies of those who came under conviction of sin were severely condemned as being “nothing else, but the Effects of a strong Impulse upon the Imagination, and cannot possibly be the immediate Effects of any Acting of the superior Faculties of the Soul, such as the Understanding and Will; These can produce no such Effects as are mentioned here.”³² The Seceders knew that such bodily manifestations have been recorded in earlier examples of revival, although they maintained that such instances attended the ministry of those “who were honoured to be most instrumental in carrying on *Reformation Work*.”³³ Whereas the Seceders used these instances of enthusiasm to oppose the revival, James Robe never claimed that “convulsions, bitter outcryings... are... considered in themselves as Evidences of Persons being under any Operations of the Spirit of God”. Rather, he simply maintained that

27. John Willison, Preface to *Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God*, by Jonathan Edwards (Edinburgh, 1742). See also John Willison, *A Letter from Mr. John Willison, Minister at Dundee, to Mr. James Fisher, Minister at Glasgow. Containing Serious Expostulations with Him Concerning His Unfair-Declaring in His Review of Mr. Robe's Preface* 2nd Edition (Edinburgh, 1743), pp. 18-19; McCulloch Mss., 1:162.

28. *Declaration of the True Presbyterians*, *op.cit.*, p. 6; Adam Gib, *A Warning*, *op.cit.*, p. 3; *A Conference betwixt a Conformist, or one in full Communion with the Established Church and a Nonconformist, or one in Accession to the Associate Presbytery*, (Edinburgh, 1741), p. 9.

29. *Ibid.*, pp. 8, 16. Other issues which were raised relating to Whitefield included his manner of collecting money *Declaration*, *op.cit.*, p. 20 and the way in which he seemed to promote himself through the publication of various journals and letters. See Adam Gib, *A Warning*, *op.cit.*, p. v and Fisher, Preface to *A Review*, *op.cit.*, p. 8.

30. John Willison, *A Letter*, *op.cit.*, p. 23.

31. James Robe, *Christian Monthly History*, (Edinburgh, November 1743), No. 1, p. 27.

32. Erskine, *Ibid.*, p. 25.

33. Fisher, *A Review*, *op.cit.*, p. 26.

“they are not inconsistent with a Work of the Spirit of God upon the Soul... and even flow naturally from it.”³⁴

At the time of his initial division from the Associate Presbytery, Whitefield had expressed the hope that the outpouring of the Spirit in revival would “break down the partition wall of bigotry.”³⁵ As we have seen, rather than breaking down sectarian animosities, the revival raised them.

It would be in July 1750, on a further visit to Scotland that Whitefield could write “I have met, and shaken hands with Mr. Ralph Erskine. O when shall God’s people learn war no more.”³⁶

KENNETH B.E. ROXBURGH

THE LETTER

To the Rev^d Mr. George Whitefield to be found in Mr. Tho: Davison’s in James’s Court in Edin^r

My very D s^r

I weary to be so long out of your company while you are in this Country. If I were in more youthful & vigorous circumstances, I w^d attend you more. I see falsehood published in the late prints, that my Bⁿ found fault w^t & reprov’d me for attending you to the Cannongate church; whereas not one of them to this hour ever open’d their mouth to blame me for any such thing. When I parted last w^t you, & reflected upon your spiritual conversation, & at the same time upon your declining converse w^t my Bⁿ upon the subject of Ch Gov^t, you was represented to my mind as a young worker in the Garden of God, occupy’d as yet only about the Doctrines of grace, the flowers of the garden, but unwilling to turn your thought so far from these as to take any care of the hedges, by which the flowers of the garden should be fenc’d. Your refusing a close communing on this Head seem’d to me so far unlike the disposition of q^{ch} our former epistolary conversation made me think you was of, that I was willing to ascribe that refusal rather to the hurry of a temptation at the time, amidst the ringing of bells for sermon, and some rash words utterd in your hearing &c than to any contrary bias that now you have got, or any deliberate purpose to reject the means of light on that Head. for to plant a vineyard & not set a hedge about it, or to be unwilling to know what hedge of Discipline & gov^t God in his word w^d have set about his vineyard, is certainly wrong. D s^r, I suppose you could not be

34. James Robe, *Third Letter*, *op.cit.*, pp. 4-5, 14; Alexander Webster, *A Letter to Ralph Erskine containing a Vindication of Mr. Webster’s Postscript to his second Edition of Divine Influences in answer to Mr. Erskine’s Charge of Fraud and Falsehood*, (Edinburgh, 1743), p. 17.

35. Letter of 10 August to James Ogilvie in Aberdeen in *Works*, *op.cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 310.

36. *Works*, *op.cit.*, Vol. 2, p. 368.

surprised, that the subject of conversation, the Bⁿ proposed to have w^t you, should be the same I had writ of to you so fully several times, & wherein you seem'd once & again so willing to be informed. I was indeed sorrowfull that I was in any measure dissappointed, and that, among us, you seemed to be previously harnessd w^t a resolution to stand quite neuter in these matters, at least till you should see what good men on both sides have wrot pro & con on that subject. But as since your conversion, you have learned the doctrine of the Gospel mostly by reading the Bible on your knees, so may'nt I hope you might learn what relates to the Disc: & Gov^t God has appointed in his word that same way, (not slighting what light God may give by conversation). But, to refer the determinar of this matter till you shall peruse the volumes of differing partys, you may thus propose to come to the end of your life, before you come to the end of books. I can't imagine D B that, when you said you w^d ly open to light, & thro' grace be faithful to what light appear'd, you meant such a tedious or endless disquisition of the cause, especially when your speedy work in planting vineyards (wherein may the Lord prosper you more & more) requires also speedy care to set hedges about them. Meantime, D S, if I believed you to be as credulous as some before your coming here, asserted; your lying now so open to company wherein the affairs of our associate pry will be represented to the worst advantage, would make me fear you are now quite lost to us. You alledged y^t the Rev^d Mr Tennants &c in America, found the advantage of your first preaching promiscuously w^t all sorts; & now, agst our advice by letters, you have taken the same way here, not w^tstanding our vastly different circumstances and situation from these Bⁿ abroad: & If these consequences, as to Religion, & publick Reformation, prove not so advantageous here as there, but hurtfull to the witnessing work among our hands; you can't but know in what strong terms we premonish'd you of the danger. I won't indeed forget your kindness in giving me the first visit: but I was desirous you should have made my habitation your home, & that, whatever circumference you made, my house might be the center, but your being preingadgd to return so soon to Edr was uneasy to me, Tho' I doubt not but it contributed more to your advantage in other designs, wherein Im glad to hear of the encouragm^t you meet w^t. It could not indeed have been so great in country places, & among most of our adherents, who are generally of the poorer sort, & not only much at under by the late dearth, but also by contributing their outmost for building Kirks & raising stipends for their deposd & persecuted Min^{rs}. meantime, you are now conversant w^t some of the ministry that dwell in their cieled houses & yet however good and sound some of 'em be, are at best suffering the house of the Lord to ly waste, strengthening the hands of Church Robbers, by their sinfull mixtures w^t them in Judicatories, that refuse to be reform'd and lifting up no judicial Testimony agst them, & yet reckoning our doing so now, their greatest grievance and an intollerable schism. These are the greatest bars and impediments, at present, in the way of witnessing work agst the errors and defections of our Church Judicatories; because their reputation as good men & sound preachers, & yet making no such appearance, bring the work

under greater disparagm^t than anything else. These things my D B you, tho' a Stranger, have been apprised of and glad shall I be if you come forth from all companys without a stain or wrong impression of matters. but if you shall be tincher'd so far as to have light thoughts of the G Assemblys sin, not in deposing us only, but in rejecting our Testimonys for Reformat, & light thoughts of their sin that are at ease in Zion, & find your self so intangled w^t your views, & chain'd so as not to be at liberty to give the certain sound of a testimony in publick agst these as well as other evils; if that, I say, were the case I w^d fear, that whatever gain you obtain one way, you should go off w^t greater loss another, & w^t less inward peace. My dear, dear B^r, be not offended that I continue my wonted freedom in writing, which I can do more than in speaking. may not he be most friendly to you, that deals most plainly w^t you? Pardon me if I have groundless fears. Sure I am you shall keep company w^t none that you have a heart more inflamed w^t love to you than mine is. &, however you have disappointed me in some things, yet neither my love to you, nor hopes about you, are abated. However cautious my fraternity at present find themselves oblig'd to be w^t respect to you in their present situation as I told you before; yet, I expect, after you have made your circuit, you'll seek after a more quiet & composd conversation w^t them, in conjunction w^t such of them as you have not yet seen. I w^d be loath to think of your going away under a suspicion, among us, of your being unwilling to know what Gov^t Christ has appointed in his word, unwilling to converse on that subject, as if it were a matter of moonshine, unwilling to try whether the Oath of God, that Britain is under, be a lawful oath or not, & consequently whether we are guilty of perjury in breaking it, & whether God shall be just in sending a sword to avenge that quarrel; yea whether we can be faithfully adhering to the Doctrine of Gods Cov^t of grace, in this nation, while we are breaking the bands of our Cov^t of duty & service to him. Dear s^r excuse this long letter. If you come to this side I can by no means allow you to change your quarters, my wife & family salute you kindly & long to see you again. I doubt not but your Orphans will be remmemberd here by some that are not exhausted w^t other things. If some of your sermon's last printed y^t you wrote of to me were here I suppose a parcel of 'em w^d be bought. I am

R^d and D s^r

Yours as formerly in our dearest Lord Jesus

Ralph Erskine

Dunfermline

Aug: 17. 1741.

ARMY CHAPLAINS AND THE ENGLISH PRESBYTERIANS

The subject of this paper¹ is the distinctive contribution of the Presbyterian Church of England, and its predecessor, the Synod of the Presbyterian Church in England, to the provision of chaplains for the British Army in the nineteenth century. This contribution, though small in itself, was out of proportion to the size of the denomination, separate from that of Scottish and Irish Presbyterians and in contrast to what English Nonconformity chose or was allowed to offer. Changes in the way the Army was organised, however, helped to determine the high and low points of the English Presbyterians' achievements.

The British soldiers who so frightened the Duke of Wellington before Waterloo were, a great many of them, swiftly discharged after the war. For the peace-time army, duties amounted to little more than garrisoning the British Isles and the Colonies. Troops were moved about fairly frequently. The regular arrival of Scottish and Irish regiments in England, for the most part without chaplains of their own since the abolition of regimental chaplains in 1796, gave English Presbyterian ministers who happened to be in the right place the opportunity to attend to the needs of the large number of Presbyterian soldiers among them. It became the business of the denomination's Soldiers' Committee to make sure that this opportunity was taken and payment duly received. The presence of garrisons and camps became a factor in church planting. In the last quarter of the century, when each infantry regiment was based in one particular town and the only significant movements of troops were abroad, English Presbyterian chaplaincy work lost its earlier momentum.

The prior question is how the ministers of a small, unestablished and essentially new church could successfully claim the right to serve as chaplains. The complement of commissioned army chaplains had been exclusively Anglican since 1796 when, as a new departure (at least since Cromwell's Model Army), chaplains were organised under a Chaplain General to serve the Army as a whole full-time. But few Anglican ministers came forward to fill the complement. The pay was poor and chances of preferment were far better in civilian ministry.² Wellington complained constantly about the shortage of chaplains in the Peninsula. (He appears to have had two. One never left his side and the other never left Lisbon). An establishment of fifteen in 1809, however, appeared generous in the years of post-war economy. The Army List shows nine in 1833 and five in 1844. On the outbreak of war in the Crimea ten years later

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1. Delivered in a shorter form to the URC History Society's study weekend, 1994, and based on a section of a doctoral thesis, "The Free Church Army Chaplain, 1830 to 1930" (Sheffield University, 1990).
 2. For the reforms of 1796, and their aftermath, see the *Seventh Report of the Commissioners of Military Inquiry*, 1808.

only one serving chaplain was fit, young and able enough to be sent out. Volunteers had to be sought - and their pay supplemented - to support him.

Given so few commissioned chaplains, the Army had to look to the parochial clergy to take the service which, Sunday by Sunday, formed part of the compulsory Church Parade. The casual use of civilian ministers for this purpose was a deliberate part of the economies which underlay the reforms of 1796 and which were intensified after the Napoleonic Wars. The clergy received ten shillings a sermon if a separate service was required. More might be paid for hospital duties. Although the records show some payments to a handful of parish ministers in Scotland, and to the odd Episcopalian³ (probably by oversight), almost all payments were to Church of England clergy. To encourage Irish recruitment, Roman Catholic soldiers had been allowed to fall out from Church Parade since 1802, and their right not to attend Church of England services and to attend their own was put into King's Regulations in 1811. But if they were marched to Mass, no payments appear to have been made to their clergy.⁴

The Church of England's near-monopoly of chaplaincy work was broken at the end of the 1820s. The Chaplain General of the day, Dr. Hodgson, was anxious that English troops stationed in Scotland should be served by Anglican ministers. Palmerston, Secretary at War, took the contrary and high-principled view that troops should be served by ministers of the Established Church of the country in which they happened to be stationed. The Treasury settled the argument in 1827 in Dr. Hodgson's favour, and from 1828 Church of England ministers engaged for the purpose attended English regiments in Scotland. In line with this precedent, the War Office found it impossible to deny payment to an Irish Presbyterian minister for services to a Scottish regiment in Galway in 1835. Payments had also been made to a Roman Catholic priest in England and to four priests in Ireland for hospital duties in 1833, though these seem to have been regarded as aberrant and were not repeated the following year.⁵ However, by 1836 the Treasury had concluded that the decision of 1827 made it "incumbent on the Government to adopt the same principle... in other cases in which it shall... appear to be just that religious services rendered to the troops by the clergymen of other denominations should be remunerated by the public."⁶

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3. A.C. Dow, *Ministers to the Soldiers of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1962), p. 260. Provision was made "forever" for three specified garrison chaplains under the Act of Union, 1707. The posts appear to have been filled by parish ministers, not commissioned officers.
 4. C.M. Clode, *Military Forces of the Crown* (London, 1869), vol. 2, pp. 384-5, and footnote.
 5. War Office papers, Public Record Office, Kew, (WO), 4/347, p. 95.
 6. The War Office and Treasury minuting is conveniently set out by a twentieth-century Chaplain General, A.C.E. Jarvis, writing about his predecessors in the *Royal Army Chaplains' Department Journal*, January 1931, pp. 445 *et seq.*

Payments now started to be made, on application, to Presbyterian and Roman Catholic clergy for religious and hospital services to the troops and of course continued for Anglicans. Capitation payments, in place of set fees for services, were introduced in 1854. The Army accounts for 1857-58 show that, while Anglican clergy at home and overseas received £9,692 in casual fees, Presbyterian ministers received £2,387 and Roman Catholic priests £3,864 – an impressively swift advance, especially as non-Anglicans received a lower rate of payment. In 1858, in the reforms of the Army following the Crimean War, common scales of payment were introduced for Anglican, Presbyterian and Roman Catholic clergy. In the same year, the Establishment of the Chaplains' Department was increased and extended to include six Presbyterian and nineteen Roman Catholic commissioned chaplains in proportion to their respective numbers in the Army. It became the custom for the War Office to speak of the three "religions" recognized by the Army. There was never any attempt on the part of the War Office to distinguish English Presbyterians from Scottish and Irish Presbyterians in the treatment they received (other than in one respect discussed later), or to regard them as Nonconformists, whose soldiers' religious persuasion was not recognized and whose ministers were ineligible to receive capitation payments even when they voluntarily acted as chaplains.

The Synod of the Presbyterian Church in England, formed in 1836, appointed a Soldiers' Committee in 1839.⁷ The Committee was instructed to collect information and "in the meantime... to do what they can to procure for Presbyterian soldiers the same religious privileges as are possessed by Prelatists and Papists". Over the years the Committee reported, was stood down, was reappointed, reported, and so on. Parliament was on occasions petitioned and the Government "memorialised" but, as already noted, these were the years in which the authorities were in the process of recognising Presbyterian religious rights in the Army in any case. The English Synod were perhaps doing little more than apeing the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland which periodically passed resolutions on religious liberty in the Army, purporting to find the privileges of Roman Catholic soldiers disturbingly greater than Presbyterians. Certainly, Roman Catholics' religious rights alone were enshrined in King's Regulations. However, in 1844, using very similar language, these rights were extended in what were now Queen's Regulations. The same words had been used in an earlier General Order of 1839:

7. The following summary of English Presbyterian chaplaincy work may be traced in Levi, *Digest of the Actings and Proceedings of the Synod 1836-66* (London, 1866) and *Synods of the Presbyterian Church of England 1876-1905* (London, 1905). Manuscript records of the Soldiers and Sailors Committee were also consulted in the Society's Library, Tavistock Place.

Commanding Officers of Regiments are to be particularly attentive that no soldier, being a Roman Catholic, or of any religious persuasion differing from the Established Church, is to be compelled to attend Divine Service of the Church of England but that every soldier is to be at full liberty to attend the worship of Almighty God according to the forms prescribed by his own religion when military duty does not interfere.

It should be noted that, broad and liberal as this Regulation reads, the last six words kept the marching of soldiers at the discretion of Commanding Officers. Moreover, like the payment to civilian chaplains for their services, the Regulation was read as relating only to the three churches recognized by the Army. In 1861, Wesleyan soldiers were allowed to declare themselves as "Other Protestants" in a new column in the Army returns and it became difficult for Commanding Officers to deny their right, if articulated, to be marched to their own service on Sundays. From the sort of high-level agitation in which the Wesleyans had to engage to win even this modest concession, the comparatively tiny Presbyterian Church in England was spared.

It is not until the appointment in 1877 of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Committee by the Presbyterian Church of England that one sees how much was achieved on the ground by its predecessor body. The first report of the new Committee is a quite extraordinary document. It contains a detailed and precise account of the size and disposition of the Army in every locality in England. To those brought up on John Buchan, it defies imagination how the evangelical clergymen compiling this meticulous account of military dispositions escaped suspicion of being gentlemen spies. The main purpose of the report is to record the existing provision for the religious needs of Presbyterians, and to draw attention to unmet needs. The report comments sharply when Presbyterians are not pulling their weight and notes when the presence of soldiers suggests opportunities for the planting of new churches.

The Channel Islands were still heavily fortified at this time and Presbyterian troops enjoyed the services of two ministers and a missionary. By contrast, the report notes that a single minister has to cover Plymouth, with its three naval and military bases and its eight forts, the military centres at Exeter and Bodmin, the Naval College at Dartmouth, as well as the "great convict prison on Dartmoor... where there are few Presbyterians among the convicts, but a considerable number among the staff." Only one man, the report says, would be needed to serve Sandhurst Staff College, the Royal Albert Asylum and Broadmoor Prison "at all of which there are Presbyterians but no provision for their instruction." (The provision of chaplains in all kinds of public institutions, previously another Anglican monopoly, was another denominational objective at the time). With church planting in mind, the Committee notes that Presbyterian troops are marched to Independent churches in Wiltshire (including Salisbury), Weymouth, Christchurch and Northampton. At

Canterbury, the report notes that "the settlement of a minister there in connection with our own Church will lead to a proper arrangement". At Chichester, the report so far forgets its remit as to observe simply that "there is a large number of Scotch farmers and Scotch stewards...who might be gathered into a congregation in the town". Newcastle upon Tyne is reported for not having "even a preaching station at the beautiful sea-side town of Tynemouth", which as an afterthought is mentioned as having troops stationed there. The strong London, Manchester and Liverpool Presbyteries are bluntly told to "attend to the wants of our uncared for soldiers".

The report notes the presence of Scottish and Irish Presbyterian chaplains in the main bases. Church of Scotland chaplains are at Windsor, Aldershot, Winchester, Dover and Chatham. A Presbyterian Church of Ireland chaplain is serving at Sheerness. The Committee notes that because Presbyterian soldiers are already being looked after in these places there is no prospect of payment to any local Presbyterian Church of England ministers for services to the troops. While permission has been granted for troops to elect to be marched to the English Presbyterian Church in Aldershot, no payment will be made to the minister.

Following this survey, the Committee starts to urge ministers to apply for capitation fees for chaplaincy work. These civilian chaplains the Committee calls "Acting Chaplains" - a confusing usage as the War Office term for a civilian chaplain receiving capitation payments was "Officiating Chaplain" and for the War Office Acting Chaplains were full-time temporary chaplains on the strength of the Army Chaplains' Department awaiting a chance to apply to be established and commissioned. The Committee sent a survey to thirty-two places in 1881, and had replies from thirty. These revealed fourteen "Acting Chaplains". A fifteenth, at Woolwich, is described as a "stipendiary chaplain", that is he received a fixed payment from the War Office, an arrangement which applied when a minister devoted all, or almost all, his time to the troops. (This particular minister, William Thomson, had originally been a Church of Scotland minister. The Woolwich church was built on land given to the Church by the War Office, which attempted to deny him use of the premises for a Sunday School when he joined the Presbyterian Church of England.⁸ This is an illustration of the confusion which could arise in nineteenth-century Presbyterianism but his Church of Scotland origins may be the explanation of his stipendiary arrangement). Established Church of Scotland ministers are shown as "Acting Chaplains" - that is, civilian ministers - at Berwick on Tweed, Newcastle upon Tyne, Manchester and Portsmouth. No reason is offered. They had perhaps been called south, or were serving congregations of the Church of Scotland in these places.

The fourteen Presbyterian Church of England "Acting Chaplains" in the 1881 survey were in the following places:

8. Information from the Revd. Dr. D. Cornick.

Alderney	Liverpool
Brighton	Plymouth
Carlisle	Preston
Chatham	Sheffield
Chester	Sunderland
Guernsey	Warrington
Jersey	York

In addition, ministers in Derby, Leicester and Birmingham are reported to hold weekly services in the barracks which are too far from their churches to permit Sunday marching. In the spirit of the times, the "Acting Chaplain" at Plymouth – a recruiting station for sailors and marines – claims that he had "been able to save hundreds of soldiers and sailors to the Presbyterian Church who would otherwise have been reckoned Episcopalians". (The recruit then, as in more recent times, was assumed to be Anglican unless he spoke up; and sometimes even then. And some soldiers' attachment to their church was less solid than a minister might suppose, particularly if it looked like separating him from most of his fellows). The 1881 report also has advice for middle-class congregations uncertain how to handle the rougher diamonds marched to church:

It is a mistake to treat soldiers officially... take them by the hand and make them feel comfortable... They like to be spoken to like men.

Commissioned Church of Scotland chaplains – that is, chaplains on the strength of the Army Chaplains' Department – are shewn in the 1881 report at Aldershot and in London. Concerned at the failure of the War Office to appoint an English Presbyterian minister to the quota of commissioned Presbyterian chaplains, the Soldiers' and Sailors' Committee approached the War Office in 1882. They were rebuffed in these terms:

...as the main body of Presbyterian soldiers doubtless belong to the Scotch or Irish Churches, the Secretary of State thinks it right that the commissioned chaplains of that denomination should be selected from those bodies.

Further unsuccessful applications were made to the War Office over the years. The Committee had no greater success when they corresponded with "the three great Presbyterian Churches in Scotland", or with the Irish Church. The Boer War, one might have thought, would provide a good chance of success, but all their applications to the War Office in 1901 were fruitless. "Feeling the impropriety of being meddlesome", the Committee decided to wait a further opportunity.

This was not their only disappointment. From the mid-eighties onwards, there are frequent references to the shortage of work for the "Acting Chaplains" to do. The continuous call of troops for active service in colonial wars and

expeditions, and for duty in India, denuded home base. English Presbyterian chaplains were still very dependent on Scottish regiments for their numbers. When the Gordon Highlanders left Plymouth in 1885, for example, the Presbyterians in the charge of the "Acting Chaplain" there fell from 427 to fifty-eight. "Owing to the absence of all Scotch regiments from Portsmouth" ran the 1887 report, "the numbers during the past year have been small". Except in the Boer War, there seems to have been no move to secure overseas postings, and that bid was unsuccessful even though the candidate was the then "stipendiary chaplain" at Woolwich, John Cairns, a man with daily experience of soldiers and well qualified.

It was not simply that Scottish regiments were increasingly drawn abroad. Following the Cardwell reforms, each infantry regiment was now based in a single depot to assist local recruitment. Linked battalions allowed one to serve overseas while the other trained. There was thus less troop movement within the United Kingdom and the Army presence was more confined. As the 1883 report put it,

...since the introduction of the territorial system, and of linked battalions, comparatively few Presbyterian soldiers are now found at the military stations in England...

In 1897, the complaint is the same:

With the exception of Aldershot, Plymouth, Portsmouth, Woolwich and Chatham, comparatively few Presbyterians are quartered in other regimental districts.

The formation of new Militia regiments in the 1880s had offered little scope for Presbyterian chaplains, except in the relatively few areas where the denomination was strong enough for sizeable numbers of Presbyterians to be enrolled. The duties here were largely confined to attending Militia training camps with the men and taking the Sunday Parade service. There are occasional reports of ministers attending Militia camps in Cumberland.

Despite these disappointments, the number of "Acting Chaplains" had actually increased by 50 per cent, to twenty-one, by the mid-nineties. Provided ten soldiers presented themselves regularly, the "Acting Chaplain" could claim payment at an annual rate for the average attendance. To function at all therefore the Presbyterian chaplain was not usually dependent on the Scottish and Irish regiments. But his sense of usefulness certainly depended on the numbers they brought.

Matters were not helped by the illness of the convenor of the Committee, James Christie, in 1891. For two years there was no report or central leadership. Christie had served as convenor since 1880 and his continuity of experience was of value. But he was the minister (and the "Acting Chaplain") in Carlisle, a town judged by this time too far away to be effective. In 1897, the London members formed themselves into an executive, meeting monthly, and one of their

number, Alex Thomson, became joint, but effectively sole, convenor. The reports speak of these changes as conducive to efficiency, and perhaps they were, though it is hard to trace any direct or immediate result. John Cairns became (sole) convenor in 1907 on Christie's death and the Church's representative on the War Office Presbyterian Advisory Committee, formed the previous year. He succeeded in increasing the "Acting Chaplains" to twenty-five and the "stipendiary chaplains" to four. But he failed in further attempts to secure commissions. On the eve of the Great War the Committee was still patiently pleading that

without interfering with the privileges of our Sister Churches, our Church may be freed from the disqualification under which it at present suffers, and be included among the Churches invited to nominate candidates for commissions as Presbyterian chaplains.

It must have been of personal satisfaction to John Cairns that he became the first of three Presbyterian ministers to receive a temporary commission – the standard appointment in war-time except for regulars – in August 1914.

The work of the Presbyterian chaplains and the efforts of the Church to extend it was in marked contrast to English Nonconformity. The Baptist and Congregational Unions showed no interest in Army work, until the former appointed a chaplain at Aldershot in 1894. The critical reaction to this appointment within the denomination suggests that voluntarism and a wish not to appear to undermine the separation of Church and State lay behind the earlier indifference to Army work, rather than a pacifist or Peace Society stance.⁹ Wesleyan records suggest that when Baptists and Congregationalists joined the Army they often returned themselves as Wesleyans, rather than as "Other Protestants", the residue category which the Army returns allowed. It was not until 1903 – four years after the Jews – that a column for Baptists and Congregationalists appeared in the Army returns. The Union Year books for 1908 are the first to give the names of ministers available to serve the needs of local soldiers. The Primitive Methodists, though described by their historian as the "most profoundly pacifist denomination",¹⁰ were to produce two of the three most distinguished Nonconformist chaplains in the Great War. But, apart from sending a "special agent" to Aldershot in 1885 and opening a soldiers' reading room there,¹¹ neither they nor the Bible Christians engaged in chaplaincy work. The Army lay beyond their experience and their interests. A War Office perception of Nonconformity and the Army is probably near the mark:

9. See D.G. Fountain, *E.J. Poole-Connor, 1872-1962* (Worthing, 1966), pp. 72-75. (I am indebted to Dr. D.W. Bebbington for this reference.)

10. H.B. Kendall, *History of the Primitive Methodist Church* (London, 1919), p. 163.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 115.

The fact is that Protestant Nonconformity flourishes in classes which do not enlist and can rarely afford to take commissions.¹²

The Wesleyan Methodists were the exception.¹³ They claimed more or less consistently from the 1860s at least five per cent of the Army. They appointed a former missionary, W.H. Rule, as chaplain at Aldershot when the camp was opened in 1858. Though obliged to build his church outside the camp as he was not recognised by the Army, Rule succeeded in getting the men marched to it, as he had done twenty years earlier when he was minister in Gibraltar. The denomination's Army Committee, established in 1863 with Rule doubling as Corresponding Chaplain with those in the field, created the beginning of a chaplaincy tradition by using circuit ministers for local troops and by funding full-time chaplains for the major camps and bases. In 1881, the War Office agreed to recognize chaplains and to make capitation payments to them on the same basis as to other Officiating Chaplains and fixed payments to the full-time chaplains. The Conference after careful consideration agreed to accept "State money". Wesleyan soldiers were now allowed to return themselves as "Wesleyans" not as "Other Protestants". Wesleyan chaplains accompanied every military expedition overseas in the last quarter of the century, somewhat incongruously drawing on missionaries on the spot where necessary. Forty Wesleyan chaplains served in the Boer War alone, some from Colonial Conferences. Wesleyan private wealth also built Soldiers' Homes and Institutes across the Empire. Impressed, the War Office in 1903 offered the Wesleyans five commissioned chaplaincies. But the offer was graciously declined. The Conference was not prepared to surrender their authority over ministers holding the King's commission.

The largest and the smallest non-Anglican denominations in England thus developed chaplaincy services for the Army along parallel lines, and in contrast to the rest of Nonconformity. But they enjoyed markedly different degrees of official encouragement and results. The Wesleyans, at first fighting their exclusion and lack of recognition with righteously anti-Establishment fervour, won through by developing a tradition of service at their own expense (and thus with considerable moral authority) and by demonstrating their practical value to soldiers and commanders in the field alike. It was Field Marshal Lord Wolseley, Commander in Chief, who insisted that "none look after our soldiers better than the Wesleyans".¹⁴ The English Presbyterians began with certain advantages. Their official recognition was never in doubt. They inherited and

12. WO 32/6441, in a minute by A.S. Fleming. October, 1900.

13. The Wesleyan Methodist chaplaincy records are in the Methodist Archive, John Rylands University Library, Deansgate, Manchester. There are accounts of the work in the nineteenth century in W.H. Rule, *Wesleyan Methodism in the British Army* (London, 1883) and O.S. Watkins, *Soldiers and Preachers Too* (London, 1903). The second book was republished by the Methodist Forces Board in 1989.

14. WO 32/6441, 5 October 1900.

shared a tradition of service to the Army which had existed in Scotland for centuries. They had no problems with State money or the virtues of voluntarism. And they had a natural focus of service in the Scottish and Irish troops stationed in England. But beyond a certain point they were hindered by a shortage of soldiers to look after. As a small denomination, there were few enough of their own men in the Army, and their efforts to follow the troops abroad were frustrated. They did not have a wide enough base to develop the professionalism evident in the full-time Wesleyan chaplains, whose entire ministry might be with the Army, much of it on active service abroad; and they manifestly lacked the means to provide amenities for the soldiers which to some extent compensated the Wesleyans for their own relative shortage of men. The Presbyterians' size as a denomination also told against them in the War Office's preference for the larger Presbyterian churches in Scotland and Ireland, particularly in the matter of commissions.

The English Presbyterians' achievements are to be measured against these handicaps, essentially of size, geography and status, not the advantage of official recognition which carried them only so far. Substantial as their achievements appear to be by that measure, it is necessary to emphasise that at the time the Committee was careful not to claim overmuch for the work that was done. It was pleasing, said the Committee's report for 1896, that so many ministers served as chaplains, that they did their duty faithfully and unostentatiously and that their services were invariably appreciated by the men. Not for them, they said, the erection of Presbyterian "institutes", or the massing and display of Presbyterian soldiers at some commanding function. One would not want to claim more in retrospect, but the early record of ministers' service to the soldiers is an honourable one, in line with Presbyterian tradition but still undertaken with sacrifice at a time when the wider needs of the denomination might have been allowed to prevail. It also of course provided the foundation for wider service in two World Wars.

J.H. THOMPSON

THE PRESBYTERIANS IN LIVERPOOL PART 2: A SURVEY 1876 - 1900

With the formation on 13 June 1876, of the Presbyterian Church of England from the union of the Presbyterian Church in England with the United Presbyterian Church, Merseyside's Presbyterian congregations were now for the first time together in one Presbytery – the Presbytery of Liverpool. This Presbytery stretched from Barrow-in-Furness in the north to Shrewsbury in the south, but did not go as far as Warrington in the east. It did, however, include the two Presbyterian churches on the Isle of Man: St. Andrew's, Douglas, and Trinity, Ramsey. All Presbytery meetings were held in Liverpool except for the meeting each year when the new moderator of the Presbytery was inducted. This was held in the moderator's own church, unless that was in the Isle of Man.

The formation of the Presbyterian Church of England seemed to give fresh impetus. In 1876 there were twenty-one churches with a total membership of 7,313, which was an average membership of 348. By 1880 there were twenty-three churches with a total membership of 8,353 and an average of 363 members. In 1890 there were twenty-six churches with a total membership of 9,344, and an average of 359 members. By 1900 there were thirty-two churches with a combined membership of 9,964 and an average membership of 311 members. Thus, although the number of churches and members increased the average number of members per church decreased. This growth remains a remarkable achievement.

The Union gave the churches a new opportunity in other ways. The "rules" of the Presbyterian Church of England combined elements from both the main strands of Presbyterianism in the Union, enshrined in the new *Book of Order* – known locally as *The Blue Book*. This was the "law" by which the Church was run. But it also gave the churches an opportunity to look at themselves. Canning Street mapped out its congregation into districts and each elder was given one to visit. It seems that, many years before, the elders had visited the congregation, but the custom had lapsed. Instrumental music became normal and by the turn of the century every congregation had an organ. A move was made by the Synod for every congregation to use the hymnbook *Church Praise*, instead of books used before the Union.

This was a time of Presbyterian expansion. Nearly every congregation had at least one mission, and they reported that numbers were growing. Each church reported an increase in Sunday school scholars – Canning Street reported 1,036 scholars in the church and missions' Sunday school in 1895, and Egremont reported 1,256 in 1900.

Among the most far-reaching and far-sighted results of Union and the one which most influenced expansion, was the "Union Thanksgiving Fund". This was initiated by the Synod of 1876 as a memorial to the Union. One of its main aims was to stimulate church extension, and congregations were asked to give money to the Fund. A Church Extension Committee was set up by the Liverpool

Presbytery to look at the area "within the bounds" of the Presbytery, and see where new churches might be planted. By the end of the century fourteen new churches had been started, some by the Church Extension Committee, others by neighbouring congregations which passed the work on to the Church Extension Committee. Most of them became large, important congregations, and most of them were still in existence in 1991, though not all on the same site, while the rest have united with other congregations.

The churches which were founded during this period of expansion were:-

UNION (1876). Its name commemorates the Union of 1876, because it was founded in that year. It began when the minister of St. Peter's, Silvester Street, with some two-thirds of his congregation, left St. Peter's to establish the new Church. (This congregation united with Westminster Road United Reformed Church, previously Congregational, on the Westminster Road site after 1972).

SEFTON PARK (1879). After the Union of 1876, it was decided that the event should be commemorated by building a church in one of Liverpool's suburbs. Sefton Park was chosen and the church's founding was helped particularly by Canning Street and other neighbouring churches: Sefton Park's runaway success did considerable harm to those churches. (This church united with the local ex-Congregational Church at Toxteth after 1972, on the Toxteth site).

WALTON (1881). The Presbytery's Church Extension Committee decided that a church should be built on the Breeze Hill area but the session of Derby Road, feeling that it would be too near them, suggested Walton where it could serve the residents of Walton, Victoria and Orrell Parks and the large working-class population of Rice Lane. (This congregation still exists on its original site, as a united Methodist/U.R.C. Church).

EARLE ROAD (1882). Founded by Dr. John Watson, of Sefton Park and his congregation as a mission of the congregation. (This congregation is still in existence).

PEEL ROAD (1884). The Presbytery sanctioned a preaching station here because of the increasing population of the district and its distance from existing churches. (This congregation joined with the other congregation in Bootle, Trinity, on the Trinity site during the Second World War because its building was demolished in the blitz).

WEST KIRBY (1885). Twenty-three people presented a Memorial to the Liverpool Presbytery urging that West Kirby would be a suitable place for a new church, since its population had recently increased and there were many summer visitors to the resort. The Presbytery passed the request to the Church Extension Committee, and services were quickly started. (This congregation still exists on its original site).

TRINITY, BOOTLE (1886). When Derby Road's membership dropped by nearly 200 in one year because of the building of railway, docks and industrial premises, it was clear that something must be done quickly. They bought land in a developing part of Bootle and erected a church, the first congregation to see

that the old situation was untenable and to move. (This congregation still exists in a much reduced building, having received St. Paul's, Peel Road, and Emmanuel Congregational into its fellowship over the years).

SMITHDOWN ROAD (1889). This congregation, founded by Sefton Park, was the only one to be founded by a church for the servants of its members as there was no room for them in the original building. (It closed in the 1940s and the members went to Sefton Park, where there was now plenty of room).

SEACOMBE (1893). Though Seacombe had been founded much earlier as a mission of Egremont, it now became a sanctioned charge and a separate congregation. (This congregation is still in existence).

UPTON (1893) and *HESWALL* (1895). Both founded by West Kirby and the work then transferred to the Presbytery's Church Extension Committee. (These congregations are still in existence).

WALLASEY VILLAGE (1895). An independent and undenominational mission had been here for many years, built by an elder of Egremont but in 1895 they applied to become a congregation of the Presbyterian Church of England. A petition was sent to the Liverpool Presbytery noting the recent opening of the Mersey Railway and the general development of the area. The matter was remitted to the Church Extension Committee and, on their recommendation, the Presbytery took over the mission as a preaching station. (This congregation is still in existence).

WEST DERBY (1896). This cause was started by the Presbytery's Church Extension Committee which noted the rapid development in the district. (This congregation is still in existence).

BLUNDELLSANDS (1897). This congregation too, was started by the Church Extension Committee for similar reasons. (This congregation is still in existence).

Another result of the formation of the Presbyterian Church of England was that most congregations joined the Sustentation Fund. This was a Fund to which each congregation could contribute and from which ministers in poor congregations would receive a stipend. Wealthy congregations were "aid-giving", to this Fund, while "aid-receiving" congregations would pay in an amount agreed with the Presbytery, but their ministers would receive a countrywide agreed stipend.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century the rise of the more prosperous outer suburbs led to residential decline in and near the centre of Liverpool. As the more respectable people moved away, their houses were taken by the poorer, rougher classes. These were not the sort to frequent Presbyterian churches - if churchgoers at all, they were more likely to be from Southern Ireland and, therefore, Roman Catholics. Areas particularly affected were in the city centre and to the north - Scotland Road, Vauxhall Road, and Islington. The result was that such churches as St. Peter's, Vauxhall Road, Islington, Canning Street and Myrtle Street, declined, while others in more salubrious areas were expanding rapidly. Canning Street's decrease in membership was attributed to the erection

of new Presbyterian churches (which Canning Street had helped found), and the gradual connexion of Canning Street families with their more convenient causes.

Perhaps the most dramatic example of a congregation faced with serious decline was Derby Road, where the membership dropped from 900 to 728 in one year - 1883. This was because the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway extended its track and warehouses were built on the surrounding land. The congregation decided that a move was imperative. They soon built on a new site but Presbyterianism in Bootle showed a continuous decline as people moved away.

In an effort to stop the decline the Synod commissioned five evangelists, ministers from other parts of the country, to run a mission in the Liverpool Presbytery in November 1896. Three centres were chosen - Everton Valley Church for the north end of Liverpool, Princes Road for the south end, and Grange Road for Birkenhead. Great preparations were made by visiting people, advertising services and holding prayer meetings, but there is no evidence that it made any difference to the decline.

A marked feature of this period is the recurrence of certain names: wealthy men who, as they followed fashion out of Liverpool, became members of Presbyterian churches in the new districts where they were soon inducted as elders, thus taking a prominent part in several churches during their life-time. Samuel Stitt, Stephen Williamson and Alexander Balfour, for example, appeared in the session rolls of a couple of churches. They not only supported the churches that they belonged to, but were generous to other Presbyterian churches as well.

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, notwithstanding continued economic depression in the country as a whole and the Liverpool area in particular, aggravated by struggles between employers and employees, most of the churches did not seem to suffer. In some a deficit in the finances was made up by a few members who gave big annual subscriptions. That most were doing so well financially is the more remarkable given the church building which was in progress. By later standards such new churches as Waterloo, Union, Sefton Park, Walton, Earle Road, Peel Road, Trinity, Bootle, West Kirby, Smithdown Gate, West Derby and Wallasey Village, were large, and congregations were building large halls and small halls, other ancillary accommodation, and missions too.

They also had weekly, monthly and annual collections for various causes. The weekly collections were usually taken at the door although some of the more progressive churches introduced collection plates during the service. The monthly and annual collections were taken by bags from pew to pew, while "Lady Visitors" went round to the houses of members collecting for missions and the Sustentation Fund. The congregation was divided into districts and the collectors went to the same houses each time. Money for the building work was raised by means of subscriptions, special efforts like bazaars, or from the

denominational "Union Thanksgiving Fund" (£250,000 raised to celebrate the Union of 1876, and to be used for church extension and similar schemes). While the money was being raised wealthy men of the congregation often made a generous loan.

Although poorer churches were dependent on the Sustentation Fund for their ministers' stipends, the wealthy churches usually paid their ministers well. Their standard of living was high and they lived in large houses in good districts. From their stipends they sometimes paid for an assistant minister – often a young unordained probationer – to help, sometimes in the congregation's mission. It was an honour to be assistant to such a "Prince of the Church" as John Watson ("Ian Maclaren") of Sefton Park, who at one time had two. In 1900 Watson's stipend was £1,200; Trinity, Claughton gave its Minister £900, but others in the Presbytery gave only £200 and some of that was paid by the Sustentation Fund. (Sefton Park paid £600 of aid to the Sustentation Fund at this time, but the only other church giving a three-figure sum was Trinity, Claughton). For a minister in one of the wealthier churches there were various perquisites and extras – in Waterloo, for example, any balance in the year's accounts (or, at least, most of it) was presented to the Minister, and when his family had troubles which necessitated residence abroad the congregation raised a subscription. By contrast there was the case of St. Paul's, Peel Road, in arrears of £100 with the minister's stipend of £350. He offered to forego some of this as the congregation was in such difficult financial circumstances. But matters got worse. He wrote to the managers, asking for some more of his stipend, since the shopkeepers were demanding their money and he had none to give them.

As well as missions in the poorer areas nearby, some churches keenly supported foreign missions. Within five years, Waterloo sent eight members of its congregation as missionaries overseas. Another way of helping was by supporting a missionary, paying all or part of the stipend for a number of years.

Mention has been made of the long depression of trade during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Some families were clearly hit by it. Thus, the Missionary Committee of Brassey Street Institute had a Relief Fund, out of which coal and provisions were sent to the needy. During the 1890s this fund was taxed to its uttermost when the only food many had was the hot dinner served from the mission. Other difficulties too beset Brassey Street's constituency. There was "unusual distress" because of particularly cold weather at the beginning of 1895. The mission staff were run off their feet trying to bring warm clothing, provisions and coal to the mission's needy. They were also giving pastoral care at the end of 1899, when there was a severe outbreak of influenza. The churches lost quite a few members through this epidemic.

There was thus a cross-section of classes associated with the churches and missions, ranging from the merchants, shipowners and professional classes whose families were able to go away (often to the Wirral, to Wallasey or West Kirby) for three months in the summer, to those, often out of work, hungry and ill-clad, who attended the missions.

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century the great expansion of Liverpool, Birkenhead and the surrounding towns was responsible for the growth in the number and size of the Presbyterian churches. But this was the zenith. Some in the down-town areas were already starting to decline, and this decline has continued in all but a handful of churches.

ALBERTA JEAN DOODSON

Note: for a bibliography see *JURCHS*, Vol. 5, No. 6, May 1995, pp. 368-9.

**“WE ARE HARDLY PREPARED
FOR THIS STYLE OF TEACHING YET”:
SAMUEL DAVIDSON AND LANCASHIRE INDEPENDENT COLLEGE**

Lancashire Independent College celebrated its jubilee in 1893 with a troubled conscience. Several of the speakers referred to the events of 1856-57, when Samuel Davidson, the College's first Professor of Biblical Language and Literature, had been forced to resign as a result of the controversy¹ stirred up by his contribution to the tenth edition of Horne's *Introduction to the Study of the Holy Scriptures*.² They were expressing the belated recognition that an injustice had been done to him, and were trying to make what amends they could. A.M. Fairbairn, Principal of Mansfield College, Oxford, said that “Dr. Davidson's connection with this college ceased under conditions then deplored by many and now regretted by almost all.”³ Elkanah Armitage, Professor of Philosophy at Rotherham College, referring to both the expulsion of three New College students in 1852 and the Davidson case, said: “The victory in such struggles as these has often lain with the vanquished”.⁴ A.S. Wilkins, Professor of Latin at Owens' College and chairman of the Lancashire College committee 1895-97, wrote to Davidson in 1895: “May I take this opportunity of saying how warmly every reference to your name was received at the jubilee of the college a year or

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1. Recent accounts of the controversy include Willis B. Glover, *Evangelical Nonconformists and Higher Criticism in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Independent Press, 1954), pp. 44-47; R. Tudur Jones, *Congregationalism in England 1662-1962* (London: Independent Press, 1962), pp. 254-56; John Lea, “The Davidson Controversy”, *Durham University Journal* 37 (1975), pp. 15-32; John Rogerson, *Old Testament Criticism in the Nineteenth Century: England and Germany* (London: S.P.C.K., 1984), pp. 197-208.
 2. S. Davidson, *The Text of the Old Testament considered: with a treatise on sacred interpretation; and a brief introduction to the Old Testament books and the Apocrypha* (Vol. 2 of *An Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures*, by Thomas Hartwell Horne, Tenth Edition; London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans & Roberts, 1856).
 3. *Lancashire Independent College. Jubilee 1893. Addresses delivered and papers read...* (Manchester: J.E. Cornish, 1893), p. 28.
 4. *Lancashire Independent College. Jubilee 1893*, p. 72.

two ago? There were many who felt how great a debt was due to your courageous truth-seeking".⁵ Joseph Thompson, in his history of the college published in the same year, judged that Davidson had been the victim of "strong prejudice".⁶

Why had Davidson's book given offence? In it he had given an account of the "higher criticism" of the Old Testament, as it had been practised in Germany for over half a century or more. It was the first time an attempt to do this had been made in England,⁷ and as to many people who knew this biblical scholarship only by hearsay the very word "German" was synonymous with "unbelieving",⁸ the constant reference to German scholars was in itself cause for suspicion.⁹ When they discovered that the Pentateuch was being treated as a compilation made in times later than Moses they felt that the trustworthiness of the Bible was being undermined. As John Kelly put it:

The objections which lie against this hypothesis ... relate, not simply to its improbabilities, great as they are, but to its tendency to destroy the very basis of historic belief. It unsettles everything, and settles nothing.¹⁰

Criticism should work within recognised limits:

There are surely some settled principles by which criticism must be regulated, and its limits ascertained.¹¹

The guarantee that the Bible could be trusted, not only when it told us who wrote what, but when it related historical events, and particularly miraculous events, did not lie so much in its internal consistency or its confirmation of extrabiblical evidence as in the doctrine of plenary inspiration. This premised that God had supplied the "sacred penmen" (a favourite phrase) directly with the truths they could not otherwise know and that he had superintended their use of what they already knew or could find out so that they did not make any mistakes.¹² Thus

5. Cited by J. Allanson Picton, "The College Crisis", in Anne Jane Davidson, ed., *Autobiography and Diary of Samuel Davidson* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1899), p. 69n.

6. J. Thompson, *Lancashire Independent College 1843-1893. Jubilee Memorial Volume* (Manchester: J.E. Cornish, 1893), p. 130.

7. John Kelly, *An Examination of the Facts, Statements and Explanations of the Rev. Dr. Samuel Davidson* (London: John Snow; Liverpool: Archibald Ferguson, 1857), pp. 25-26.

8. Among the students at the Countess of Huntingdon's College at Cheshunt German theology was known as "signifying something very awful, although nobody knew exactly what it was". Catherine Macdonald McClean, *Mark Rutherford: a biography of William Hale White* (London: Macdonald, 1955), p. 65.

9. "Two Graduates", *Dr. Davidson: His Heresies, Contradictions, and Plagiarisms* (London: Wertheim & Macintosh; Manchester: Fletcher & Tubbs, 1857), p. 37.

10. Kelly, *Examination*, p. 20.

11. Kelly, *Examination*, p. 25; cf. p. 11. "Two Graduates", p. 32.

12. See, for example, William Parry, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Extent of the Inspiration of the Apostles*, etc. (London, 1797), p. 24.

any apparent contradictions between different parts of Scripture or between Scripture and extrabiblical evidence could be harmonised, and this remained true in principle even when the attempts in particular instances appeared rather strained.¹³

In England such exegesis therefore concentrated on the “difficult” passages of Scripture, that is, those which were difficult to harmonise.¹⁴ Davidson himself had devoted a considerable part of his *Sacred Hermeneutics* (1843) to this task. He had been welcomed as a defender of the trustworthiness of the Bible by the College committee, and indeed he had seen himself in that light.¹⁵ The 1856 volume also contained a section dealing with the apparent contradictions, but he criticised those who arbitrarily removed them by conjectural emendation of the text or did violence to the natural interpretation of a passage.¹⁶ Readers were concerned to notice that he was more doubtful about success and more willing to admit that there were statements which could not be completely reconciled, for example, the difference between Mark and John over the date and time of the crucifixion.¹⁷

Scattered throughout the book there were also suggestions that Davidson no longer believed in plenary inspiration. He was inclined to agree with those who believed that, while all the biblical writers were inspired, this operated as a safeguard only where it really mattered, where religious or moral truth was in

13. S. Prideaux Tregelles, in the preface to his volume in the tenth edition of Horne, said: “Nothing is a contradiction in Scripture if a solution can be suggested. It may be that the solution proposed is not the true one, but still, if any can be stated which would meet the facts of the case, it proves that they *can* be met, and that therefore the notion of insurmountability is futile”. Cited in *British Banner*, February 19, 1857.

14. Maclean, *Mark Rutherford*, p. 62.

15. *Report of L.I.C.* (1846), p. 9; (1850), p. 11; (1853), p. 10; (1855), p. 10. Cf. T. Nicholas, *Dr. Davidson's removal from the Professorship of Biblical Literature in the Lancashire Independent College, Manchester*, etc. (London: Williams and Norgate, 1860), pp. 7-8.

16. Davidson, *Text of the Old Testament*, pp. 109-111.

17. “Two Graduates”, pp. 38-39, referring to Davidson, *Sacred Hermeneutics developed and applied* (Edinburgh: Thomas Clark, 1843), pp. 563-64; *Text of the Old Testament*, pp. 535-36, 540-41. Cf. “Two Graduates”, pp. 28, 31: “[In 1843] he was cautious, reverent and conservative, ... disposed to consider with candour any fair solution of a real or imagined difficulty. Now it is exactly the reverse: he is suspicious of modes of reconciliation, and ready to admit the supposition of error; ... he now exaggerates difficulties which then he regarded as trifling, and quietly dismisses solutions which then he regarded as quite equal to the necessities of the case. The extent and bearing of the change of view thus indicated can only be appreciated by those who will examine the two chapters on ‘Contradictions’ for themselves, and see how they all spring from the one fundamental change – the admission that an inspired man may have fallen into mistakes and even exaggerations.” Also R. Bruce, *Lancashire Independent College. Jubilee 1893*, p. 87: “My notebooks would show how he then discussed and refuted the very errors (so-called) which he afterwards embraced and published as truths”. (Bruce left the college in 1854).

question. They were not inspired to be teachers of history or geography or science.¹⁸ There are degrees of inspiration too: in the imprecatory psalms, for example, inspiration did not preclude the admission of unmerciful sentiments.¹⁹ All these qualifications seemed to evacuate the concept of inspiration of precise meaning.²⁰ If inspiration did not guarantee that the biblical writers never made a mistake about anything, where did you draw the line? If they were careless or ignorant about trivial matters, how could you be sure they were not wrong about the incarnation or the atonement?²¹

Some readers suspected that Davidson was not as wholehearted in his attachment to evangelical doctrines as they would have liked.²² Although he could not be charged with teaching anything which denied the doctrines enshrined in the College's trust deed,²³ he cast doubt on the meaning and significance of some of the texts which had been taken to prove them²⁴ and

18. Davidson, *Text of the Old Testament*, pp. 503-504.
19. Davidson, *Text of the Old Testament*, p. 766. This assertion is combatted by Kelly, *Examination*, pp. 153-55: "To maintain that the language is that of vengeful feeling and is inspired is beyond comprehension"; and by "Two Graduates", pp. 48-54; "The distinction which Hengstenberg draws between private sentiments of vengeance against the authors of personal wrong and feelings of holy concern in relation to injuries done to the law of God, is a wise and right one"; cf. Robert Alfred Vaughan, "The Ethics of Revealed Theology", *British Quarterly Review* 26 (1857), pp. 307-32: "To say, as some would-be orthodox people are now saying, that the writers of the Psalms were inspired but imperfectly, and that in consequence – to use plain English – they give us good moral lessons in some places and very immoral lessons in others, is simply to surrender the authority of Scripture altogether".
20. According to Alexander Thomson, in his views about the authority of Scripture, Davidson was "all at sea, tossed about by every puff of wind that comes from the German ocean. The man doesn't know his own mind on the subject – much less the mind of the Spirit" (Letter to David Everard Ford, May 29, 1857, in Northern College Archives, Box 29, John Rylands University Library of Manchester). Cf. Alexander Thomson, *Are the Scriptures throughout, or only in part, the inspired Word of God? Three Lectures delivered in Rusholme Road Chapel, Manchester* (London: Whittaker, 1857), pp. 61-62, 149, 153-55; "Two Graduates", pp. 5-13.
21. *British & Foreign Evangelical Review* 6 (1857), pp. 385-414; "Once admit the element of doubt and where can you stop?... If I may not implicitly believe when [the biblical writer] tells me of earthly things, how shall I believe when he tells me of heavenly things?"; "Two Graduates", p. 18: "If John, 'an inspired man and an eyewitness', was wrong in saying that Jesus was crucified about the sixth hour, what is to stop the infidel saying, 'If John erred in this minor point, how can I trust him when he tells me that 'God so loved the world', &c.'"
22. Willis B. Glover, *Evangelical Nonconformists and Higher Criticism*, p. 46.
23. *Lancashire Independent College Reports of Provisional Committee and sub-committees* (1843), pp. 39-41.
24. Kelly, *Examination*, pp. 47.

spoke of the doctrines in “a loose, contradictory and perplexing way”.²⁵ The sub-committee which reported on the book missed “the same evident desire to speak favourably of evangelical doctrine, willing on every opportunity to find it rather than exclude it” which had been apparent in J. Pye Smith’s *Scripture Testimony to the Messiah*.²⁶

It was not a good time to be sowing seeds of doubt, however hesitantly. In 1852 three students had been expelled from another Congregational college, New College in London, for asking some questions “about the formation of the canon and the authenticity of the separate books” in a discussion of the Principal’s inaugural lecture on the authority of the Bible. The story is told by one of them, William Hale White, who later became well known as the novelist Mark Rutherford, in *The Early Life of Mark Rutherford*.²⁷ All through 1856 John Campbell, the editor of the Congregational Union’s weekly publication, the *British Banner*, had been waging a campaign against Thomas Toke Lynch’s hymn book, *The Rivulet*, for its lack of evangelical doctrine.²⁸ Beyond the denomination, W.R. Greg’s book, *The Creed of Christendom*, had shown what failing to give the Bible the benefit of the doubt might lead to.²⁹ F.D. Maurice had been deprived of his chair at King’s College, London, for questioning the doctrine of eternal punishment in his *Theological Essays* (1853).³⁰ A discussion of this case at a meeting held in Lancashire Independent College was reported in the *Morning Advertiser* under the heading “Deplorable Condition of the

25. “Two Graduates”, p. 65. Cf. Alexander Thomson: “I would not charge Dr. Davidson with absolute heterodoxy on what we may term the doctrine of salvation,... but I would maintain that his views as a theologian are evidently so crude, confused and unsatisfactory, as to show him to be an incompetent and dangerous instructor” (Letter to David Everard Ford, May 29, 1857, in Northern College Archives, Box 29); cf. Thomson, *Three Lectures*, xiv-xv.
26. Report of the sub-committee (Box 29, Northern College Archives), p. 4; referring to J. Pye Smith, *Scripture Testimony to the Messiah* (London, 1818-21; Fourth edition, 1847).
27. *The Early Life of Mark Rutherford (W. Hale White)*, by himself (London: OUP, 1913). See also Irvin Stock, *William Hale White (Mark Rutherford): A Critical study* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1956), pp. 38-39; Maclean, *Mark Rutherford* (see n.8 above), pp. 61-79.
28. T.T. Lynch, *The Rivulet: A Contribution to Sacred Song* (London, 1855). “No preaching, no liturgy, no hymnology, is to be considered thoroughly Christian in which [evangelical doctrines] do not appear with the same prominence as in the sacred scriptures”. John Campbell, *Nonconformist Theology; or serious considerations for churches, pastors and deacons: being seven letters to the Principals and Professors of the Independent and Baptist Colleges of England* (Reprinted from the *British Banner*, April and May 1856; London: W.H. Collingridge, 1856), p. 20.
29. W.R. Greg, *The Creed of Christendom* (London, 1851). Reviewed in *British Quarterly Review* 14 (1851), pp. 178-256.
30. F.D. Maurice, *Theological Essays* (Cambridge & London, 1853). See Frederick Maurice, *The Life of Frederick Denison Maurice* (London: Macmillan, 1884), Vol. 2, pp. 163-209; Owen Chadwick, *The Victorian Church* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1966, 1970), Vol. 1, pp. 545-50.

Dissenting Colleges” and reprinted in the evangelical Anglican weekly paper, the *Record*. According to this report, John Kelly, who spoke of “the great mischief which had been done by the Rev. Mr. Maurice” was hissed by the students, while George Bubier, who “eulogised” Maurice, was applauded.³¹ A letter from Robert Vaughan, Principal of the College, to the *Record*, denying that Kelly and his seconder, Enoch Mellor, were hissed, has received less attention.³² Jowett’s exegesis of certain of Paul’s epistles, with its subjective view of the atonement,³³ was regarded as a dangerous precedent. And in 1856 an Anglican clergyman in Liverpool, John MacNaught, had published a book³⁴ reducing the inspiration of the Bible to the level of the inspiration of other great literature.³⁵ Davidson had given Jowett an enthusiastic review³⁶ and MacNaught a qualified commendation,³⁷ which had already brought him to the unfavourable notice of the *Record*.³⁸

It could also be said that it was not a good time to be publishing an introduction to the Old Testament. Criticism of the Pentateuch could produce reasoned grounds for saying that it was compiled from different sources, though not everyone felt that the grounds were strong enough to outweigh the tradition of Mosaic authorship.³⁹ But whether there were two or three major sources was not yet clear⁴⁰ and attribution of these sources to particular periods in Israel’s history was entirely arbitrary.⁴¹ The demonstration that criticism could lead to a convincing rewriting of that history – the work of Wellhausen, promptly taken up in Britain by Robertson Smith – still lay twenty years in the future. Even in 1862, when Davidson set out the case for the documentary analysis of the

31. *Morning Advertiser*, reprinted in *Record*, November 26, 1856; also in *Guardian*, 1856, p. 960 (see Chadwick, *Victorian Church*, Vol. 1, p. 549n.; Lea, “The Davidson Controversy”, p. 26).

32. *Record*, December 5, 1856.

33. Benjamin Jowett, *The Epistles of St. Paul to the Thessalonians, Galatians, Romans* (1855).

34. John MacNaught, *The Doctrine of Inspiration* (London and Liverpool, 1856).

35. “The ancient scriptural and only true idea of inspiration signifies that action of the Divine Spirit by which all that is good in man, beast or matter, is originated and sustained”. John MacNaught, *The Doctrine of Inspiration*, cited in *Record*, May 30, 1856; see also in Campbell, *Nonconformist Theology*, p. 35.

36. “The best commentary of its kind”. *Bibliotheca Sacra* 12 (Oct. 1855); cited *British Banner* February 12, 1857.

37. “The writer has done good service by disproving the infallibility of writings, but he has not well discriminated the word of God and the human. Indeed he has largely confounded the two”. *Bibliotheca Sacra* 13 (1856), p. 670.

38. *Record*, July 30, 1856. Cf. *Clerical Journal*, July 22, 1856; Kelly, *Examination*, pp. 3-4.

39. Kelly, *Examination*, pp. 20-23.

40. Kelly, *Examination*, pp. 15-20.

41. The view that there were two “Elohists” (sources referring to God as Elohim rather than Yahweh) in Genesis had been put forward by Hermann Hupfeld as recently as 1853, and he regarded the priestly Elohist as the earliest of the sources.

Pentateuch much more clearly in his *Introduction to the Old Testament*, he still could not show what exegetical use could be made of the findings. In 1856, writing as one who had himself only recently been forced to concede the force of the arguments that there were at least two, and perhaps three, documents, he could give even less indication of what was to be done with this knowledge, if it was accepted.⁴² When J. Allanson Picton wrote of Davidson's "acceptance of the theory of [the Pentateuch's] evolution in the course of centuries by a process of growth, selection, and combination", he was anachronistically attributing to him a position which no one held in 1856.⁴³

Davidson was also perhaps at a disadvantage in being a Congregationalist. Comparing his experience with that of J.W. Colenso, whose publication in 1862 of the first part of *The Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua critically examined* created an even greater stir, he said: "It was fortunate for Bishop Colenso that he belonged to a Church protected by law. The Dissenting bodies can make short work in cases where one of the members is supposed to hold heretical sentiments. They turn him out of house and home with a brand upon his brow. As the offender cannot appeal to a civil court, he must succumb. The important advantage belongs to a State Church, that those who are attached to it may have recourse to a tribunal which dispenses justice, where neither passion nor prejudice predominates."⁴⁴ A comparison with the William Robertson Smith case twenty years later suggests that Davidson failed to win widespread sympathy because the proceedings were conducted in the relative privacy of the College committee, whereas the debates in the Presbytery of Aberdeen and the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland were public and fully reported in the newspapers.⁴⁵

There were other reasons, not directly connected with the publication of the book, why Davidson forfeited the confidence of the College committee. In an address to the students after his resignation, he suggested that the fact that he had "taken little interest in denominational affairs" had contributed, and said that "some war-advocating ministers of the gospel" disliked him.⁴⁶ He was associated with the peace movement of the early 1850s and presided at one

42. T.K. Cheyne, writing in 1893, was dismissive of Davidson's "timid adhesion in 1859 [when the second edition of Davidson's book was issued] to the critical analysis of the Pentateuch in some not very clearly defined form". T.K. Cheyne, *Founders of Old Testament criticism* (London: Methuen, 1893), p. 196.

43. J. Allanson Picton, "The College Crisis" (see n.5 above), p. 43.

44. Davidson, *Autobiography* (see n.5 above), p. 83. Colenso, the Bishop of Natal, was deposed by a synod of South African bishops, but appealed successfully to the judicial committee of the Privy Council against the decision. See Chadwick, *Victorian Church*, Vol. 2, pp. 90-97.

45. Roger Tomes, "Samuel Davidson and William Robertson Smith: Parallel cases?", in W. Johnstone, ed., *William Robertson Smith: Essays in Reassessment* (Proceedings of William Robertson Smith Congress, Aberdeen, April 5-9, 1994; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, forthcoming).

46. Nicholas, *Dr. Davidson's removal*, p. 38.

session of the Manchester peace conference in January 1853.⁴⁷ He opposed the Crimean War of 1854-56 and the Chinese War of 1857.⁴⁸ The *British Standard* claimed that at a meeting of the Peace Society in 1855 he had “denounced all who could not agree with him as novices who required to learn the very elements of theology”.⁴⁹ In January 1857 he gave three lectures on “The Voice of the Bible respecting War” at the YMCA Institute in Aldersgate Street in London, arguing that “when a Christian endeavoured to vindicate war from the Old Scripture, he committed the error of adopting a defective and temporary for a faultless and permanent system.”⁵⁰ This was a stance which was deeply unpopular in Manchester, and led in 1857 to the unseating of its radical Liberal MPs, John Bright and Munro Gibson. A few Nonconformist ministers in Manchester agreed with Davidson, but most, including the College principal, Robert Vaughan, did not.

Davidson had also been associated in 1850 with the launching of the National Public School Association, which had developed from a Lancashire association founded in Manchester in 1847. It was concerned that the voluntary movement only catered for a minority of children. “In Manchester, within the last 14 or 15 years, the number of children under day school instruction has very much decreased in proportion to the population, from one in ten to one in fourteen and a half.”⁵¹ It therefore advocated a national scheme of free primary education. It maintained that this education should be secular, in the sense that the element of religious instruction should be non-denominational and divorced from the day-to-day routine of the school. Davidson moved a resolution at a public meeting, “That any system of public schools, to be generally acceptable to the people of this country, must be confined to *secular* instruction”, and read a paper at a subsequent meeting.⁵² Very few Nonconformists supported this movement at the time, for example, Robert Halley, whose views on war and peace were similar to Davidson’s, stood aloof from this movement. He thought that, if the national plan were tried in Manchester for ten years, Manchester would be the worst educated town in the country.⁵³ Davidson was criticised for supporting a movement for secular education. He did not think the word meant “ungodly”, “but it had been so spoken of, to make people believe that ministers of religion who supported this plan were framers and abettors of infidelity, either ignorantly or knowingly”.⁵⁴ He regretted that there was so much

47. David Nicholls, “The Manchester Peace Conference of 1853”, *Manchester Region History Review* 5 (1991), pp. 11-21.

48. *Manchester Examiner and Times*, March 16, 1857.

49. *British Standard*, May 29, 1857.

50. *British Banner*, January 22, 1857.

51. *A Few Facts and Figures* (pamphlet published by N.P.S.A.; n.d.).

52. *Report of proceedings ... December 1, 1851*.

53. *Report of the proceedings at a soirée of the Association September 24, 1851*, p. 7.

54. *Report of proceedings at an Educational Conference October 30, 1850*, etc., p. 18.

prejudice against the association: "Prejudice and ignorance were more formidable enemies than argument".⁵⁵

It has been suggested that Davidson might still have kept his post if he had been more conciliatory. It is true that he gave offence by insisting again and again that a true appreciation of the character of the Bible, and therefore of its inspiration, could only be achieved by those who were able to study it in the original Hebrew and Greek.⁵⁶ However, when the College committee asked him to write a pamphlet indicating how he would revise his book in the light of the criticisms he had received, their expectations were unreasonable. To satisfy his critics he would virtually have had to retract much of what he had said, whereas he could only clarify it and thus confirm their worst suspicions.⁵⁷ Although the pamphlet did not do what the critics wanted or his friends hoped, it was not a reckless reply.⁵⁸ It answered the very public accusations of deception that his fellow authors had made; it showed that hesitations about plenary inspiration were no novelty; and it clearly made the point that you cannot decide in advance what kind of book the Bible is but only discover that in the course of reading it.⁵⁹

Davidson had his defenders. The radical *Manchester Examiner and Times* republished the letters Tregelles and Horne had written to other papers, dissociating themselves from the views of their fellow contributor, along with Davidson's reply, and devoted a leading article to explaining the background.⁶⁰ It was well informed – the editor, Henry Dunkley, had been a Baptist minister in Salford and had once won a prize for an essay on the Corn Laws⁶¹ – and decisively on Davidson's side. On the use Davidson made of German scholarship it had this to say:

Among other accomplishments, which stamp him with being one of the very first biblical scholars in Europe, Dr. Davidson is guilty of having a thorough acquaintance with German literature. He has even dared to quote German authorities in his recent work. Here we cannot but chide Dr. Davidson for a lack of ordinary prudence, especially when the remedy was so obvious. Instead of quoting Oehler, he should have ascribed Oehler's opinions to some English

55. *Proceedings ... September 24, 1851*, p. 7.

56. Kelly, *Examination*, pp. 64, 173-74; "Two Graduates", p. 2.

57. Kelly, *Examination*, pp. 6-7.

58. John Lea's verdict, "The Davidson Controversy", p. 25, that "Davidson was a fool", is too harsh.

59. Contrast the standpoint of one of his reviewers: "It may be said that all this reasoning is in support of a foregone conclusion – that we begin with holding the truth of the history of the Bible, and then seek out arguments to defend it – and we plead guilty to this charge". *Eclectic Review*, Sixth Series, Vol. 1 (1857), p. 187.

60. *Manchester Examiner and Times*, December 26, 1856.

61. J.T. Slugg, *Reminiscences of Manchester 50 years ago* (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1971, reprinting an article of 1881), p. 290.

Higginbotham, and all would have passed off in a cloud of laudatory criticism.

And on the condemnation of his views on inspiration:

It is quite true that the views of the *Record* on inspiration are not those of Dr. Davidson. It would be a sad thing if they were. In his opinion, the inspiration of the sacred writers was confined to 'what is properly religious and moral truth'... In his remarks upon the various writers of the Old Testament, he nowhere goes beyond the legitimate application of this principle.

Later the same paper published a "leaked" account of the discussion in the College committee when the report of the sub-committee set up to examine Davidson's book⁶² was discussed. This again was entirely favourable to Davidson.

A resolution was passed, without any opposition, to the following effect:- That the utmost confidence continued to be reposed in the soundness of Dr. Davidson's religious sentiments; that the warmest gratitude was due to him for the great services he had rendered to Christianity and his denomination; and that the sincerest sympathy was felt for him in the trying circumstances in which he had been recently placed; while it was also recommended to him to explain, in his forthcoming pamphlet, certain expressions in his volume connected with 'Horne's Introduction', to which some persons had taken an exception.⁶³

The College committee expressed "its great regret and indignation at the publication, by some person unknown, of a false and injurious report of a resolution passed at the last meeting".⁶⁴ It is unlikely that David Everard Ford was responsible for this leak, as John Lea suggests,⁶⁵ since Ford was responsible for instituting the proceedings against Davidson. The actual resolution was:

That while this Committee expresses its continued confidence in the general soundness of Dr. Davidson's theological views, its appreciation of the value of his services to the College, and its regard to him personally, it is still of opinion that explanations of several parts of his recent work are due to the constituency of the

62. Box 29, Northern College Archives; summarised by John Lea, "The Davidson Controversy", pp. 19-20.

63. *Manchester Examiner and Times*, February 19, 1857; *British Banner*, February 26, 1857, reprinting from *Lancaster Guardian*.

64. *Lancashire Independent College Book of Proceedings*, Vol. 3 (1856-63), March 2, 1857 (Box 33/5, Northern College Archives).

65. Lea, "The Davidson Controversy", pp. 22 n.19.

college, on account of the incautious language which he has there employed, and therefore earnestly requests him to afford such explanation as speedily as may be consistent with due care in its revision, and in a spirit as kind and conciliatory as the exigency of the case may require, and a due regard to his own position may allow.⁶⁶

The paper does not seem to have covered the later stages of the controversy: its attention was monopolised by the general election in March 1857, in which Manchester unseated its radical Liberal MPs, and from mid-June by the Indian Mutiny. The review in the *Nonconformist* suggested that there were many things in the book that were worth weighing, defended him against the imputations of bad faith which had been made by Horne and Tregelles, his fellow authors, and denied that his views on inspiration were either novel or censurable.⁶⁷ Twenty-three former students wrote a letter to the College committee at an early stage, testifying to Davidson's attachment to "those things which are most surely believed among us", and trusting that "a possible difference from the theory received by you or by us on a special and limited biblical question will not be treated as though indicating the slightest departure from that which we alike hold in any other particular."⁶⁸ A general commendation from a Unitarian paper did nothing to help Davidson's cause with members of the College committee.⁶⁹

The opposition was much more vocal. First in the field was the *Record*, which had run a series of articles on the authority of the Bible early in 1856⁷⁰ and had already voiced suspicions about Davidson's suitability as a teacher of candidates for the ministry.⁷¹ In a leading article it said that Davidson "has spoiled and turned into waste paper a large edition of one of the most valuable theological works of modern times".⁷² A detailed review followed on November 21. The cry was then taken up by the *Morning Advertiser*, the one London newspaper to take an interest in Dissenting affairs.⁷³ John Campbell, the editor

66. *Lancashire Independent College Report for 1857*, p. 14.

67. *Nonconformist*, November 26, 1856.

68. *Manchester Examiner and Times*, March 3, 1857; *British Banner*, March 5, 1857.

69. *The Inquirer*, cited in John Waddington, *Congregational History 1850-1880*, p. 205.

70. *Record*, February 1 and 25, March 28, April 7, 14 and 28, 1856.

71. "The presence of such a teacher, for a single week, in a great Dissenting College, is a more alarming symptom than the appearance of a dozen Mr. Lynches, backed though they might be, each with his fifteen apologists". *Record*, July 30, 1856. The reference is to a letter to the *Eclectic Review* for March 1856 by fifteen well known London ministers, who said that they found in *The Rivulet* "a spring of fresh and earnest piety, and the utterance of an experience eminently Christian".

72. *Record*, November 7, 1856.

73. "Our only friend in the daily press". John Campbell, *Negative Theology: analysis of the letter of the Rev. Thomas Binney* (London: W.H. Collingridge, 1856), p. 32.

of the *British Banner*, an official publication of the Congregational Union, called for an investigation of the accusations being made against Davidson,⁷⁴ and later, as editor of his own *British Standard*, accused the College committee of “minimising the whole matter to the uttermost” and expressed dissatisfaction at their decision to keep the sub-committee’s report⁷⁵ confidential.⁷⁶ Scholarly reviews were critical.⁷⁷ Friedrich Bleek said that he gave his verdicts “in too general a way without any detailed proof”.⁷⁸ Emil Roediger of Halle criticised him for not going far enough: “He cannot quite withdraw from the results of criticism... but his scientific impulse is not sufficient, his courage for truth not strong enough, to be consistent. He knows and follows the scientific discussion pretty fully, and, from his standpoint, with all the candour and impartiality possible to him; but, instead of grounding with God-conscious sense of truth and with a clear view to the history of the Bible out of the Bible itself, he proceeds with the established ecclesiastical theory, and with a really mechanical idea of revelation. Hence there results a capitulation that lets only so much free enquiry appear as seems at any rate to agree with the theory brought forward”.⁷⁹ Two Manchester Congregational ministers gave courses of lectures on the inspiration of the Bible in their churches, indicating their disapproval of Davidson’s views,⁸⁰ and the YMCA invited Robert Candlish, from New College, Edinburgh, to come and speak in similar vein.⁸¹ After Davidson’s resignation two substantial pamphlets were published: one by John Kelly, an extended form of the address he had given at the College committee,⁸² and the other by “Two Graduates”, later

74. *British Banner*, November 11, 1856.

75. Box 29, Northern College Archives.

76. *Lancashire Independent College Book of Proceedings*, Vol. 3 (1856-63), February 16, 1857 (Box 33/5, Northern College Archives); *British Standard*, February 27 and March 27, 1857; Robert Ferguson and A. Morton Brown, *Life and Labours of John Campbell* (London: Richard Bently, 1867), p. 395. (Their account of the controversy is however inaccurate in many respects. So is that in John Waddington, *Congregational History 1850-1880* [London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1880]).

77. Cf. *British & Foreign Evangelical Review* 6 (1857), pp. 385-404; *Eclectic Review*, Sixth Series, Vol. 1 (February 1857), pp. 172-88; *Christian Observer* 57 (1857), pp. 302-320.

78. F. Bleek, *Theologische Studien und Kritiken*, 1858, p. 372; cited by Rogerson, p. 203.

79. Cited in Nicholas, *Dr. Davidson’s Removal*, pp. 123-24.

80. “I express my dissent, and express it strongly, on those points concerning the treatment of God’s word, where I think he has gone astray, and is likely to lead others wrong”. Thomson, *Three Lectures* (see n.20 above); A.E. Pearce, *Inspiration. What is it? Where is it? And how ascertained? Three Lectures* (London: Judd & Glass; Manchester: Fletcher & Tubbs, and W. Bremner, 1857).

81. “As for inspiration, I care for no admission or acknowledgement of it which does not imply infallibility”. Robert S. Candlish, *The Infallibility of Holy Scripture: A Lecture delivered at the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, on Tuesday, April 7, 1857, at the request of the Manchester YMCA*. (Manchester: William Bremner, 1857), p. 4.

82. Kelly, *Examination* (see n.7 above). This is summarised by Lea, “The Davidson Controversy”, pp. 27-29.

discovered to be Enoch Mellor and J. Guinness Rogers.⁸³ Both these were well argued on the premise that certain kinds of doubt about the Bible are ruled out *a priori*, and displayed a clarity of expression which eluded Davidson.⁸⁴ Since both came after the event they had no direct bearing on Davidson's resignation, but, in Kelly's case certainly, they indicate the arguments used in the discussions in the College committee.

It is not clear exactly what line Robert Vaughan, the Principal of the College, took in the controversy. David Everard Ford wrote to the *British Standard*: "Dr. Vaughan, our theological tutor, is not only a man who has no taste for the newest fashions from Germany, but one who earnestly contends for the faith once delivered to the saints, as anyone may see who reads the *British Quarterly Review*".⁸⁵ He and Davidson disagreed about most things.⁸⁶ In politics Vaughan took the more moderate line, Davidson the more radical. When Palmerston visited Manchester late in 1856, Vaughan sat on the platform when he spoke at the Free Trade Hall. The papers reported that Vaughan "told his lordship that his late policy had conferred unspeakable benefits on England, Christendom and humanity".⁸⁷ When it was suggested that Davidson's views about the inspiration of the Bible were no different from Vaughan's, Vaughan wrote to the press to demur.⁸⁸ Mellor and Rogers⁸⁹ drew attention to a review Vaughan wrote of W.R. Greg's *The Creed of Christendom*, in which he recognised that, although inspiration did not extend to the words of Scripture, and that discrepancies in the historical record should not lead to rejecting inspiration altogether, it was too simple to say that the Bible was always inspired when it dealt with religious or moral matters. It was the religious element in the Bible to which the opponents of inspiration took exception. The Bible was not responsible for all it

83. "Two Graduates" (see n.9 above; summarised by Lea, "The Davidson Controversy", p. 28, n.39). Rogers completed his course at the College in 1845; Mellor a year later. Alexander Gordon, in the *D.N.B.* 1901-1911, s.v. "James Guinness Rogers", said that "Nothing contributed more to the expulsion of Davidson from his chair in the Lancashire Independent College than a bitter pamphlet, *Dr. Davidson: his heresies, contradictions and plagiarisms*, by Two Graduates [namely, Mellor and Rogers] (1857)", but the preface to the pamphlet is dated October 15, 1857. Davidson had resigned on June 29.

84. They were both praised in the *British & Foreign Evangelical Review* 7 (1858), pp. 472-73. Alexander Thomson, in a letter to David Everard Ford, complained that Davidson, on the other hand, was "utterly wanting" in "the capacity of clear, definite and accurate expression" (Box 29, Northern College archives).

85. *British Standard*, April 3, 1857; reprinted in *Record*, April 4, 1857.

86. Albert Peel, "The Autobiography of David Everard Ford", *Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society* 11 (1930-32), p. 277; R. Bruce, *Lancashire Independent College, Jubilee 1893*, p. 86.

87. *Manchester Examiner and Times*, November 11, 1856.

88. *Nonconformist*, December 12, 1856.

89. "Two Graduates", pp. 40-41.

contained but only for what it approved.⁹⁰ The *British Standard* claimed that the case for Davidson's resignation was argued conclusively in the College committee by Vaughan,⁹¹ but in the light of his avowed wish to keep out of the controversy this seems unlikely. There is no trace of such an intervention in the committee's minutes. What is certain is that Vaughan himself resigned shortly after Davidson.

Perhaps the most important result of the controversy as far as Lancashire Independent College was concerned was that biblical criticism was banished from the curriculum. As Kelly had said: "We are hardly prepared for this style of teaching yet."⁹² Davidson had pioneered its introduction into British theological education, both through his college teaching and through his *Introduction to the New Testament* (1848-51).⁹³ Elsewhere study of the Bible was confined to working through texts in Hebrew and Greek and to the resolution of "difficult passages" for apologetic purposes. Teaching at the college reverted to the older ways after the departure of Davidson and Vaughan.⁹⁴ Appointments were made "in the interests of sacred conservatism."⁹⁵ Henry Rogers, who came from Spring Hill College in Birmingham to be Principal, was a devotee of the apologetic approach. He said of his book, *The Superhuman Origin of the Bible inferred from itself*: "My object is to show ... that the Bible is not such a book as man would have written if he could, or could have made if he would".⁹⁶ James Griffin wrote of him: "It is refreshing and strengthening to one's mind and heart to get away from misty Germanisms and affectations of all sorts, to the clear thinking and the strong English good sense of such a writer as Henry Rogers".⁹⁷ His colleague, Alfred Newth, was kept so busy teaching a variety of subjects that he had no time to be tempted into this dangerous field.⁹⁸ Rogers' successor, Caleb Scott, was more administrator than theologian,⁹⁹ and Newth's eventual successor, Alexander Thomson, was one of the ministers who had lectured on inspiration

90. *British Quarterly Review* 14 (1851), 178-256. Nicholas, *Dr. Davidson's Removal*, p. 86, says that Vaughan produced an "expurgated version" of this article in 1857.

91. "Dr. Vaughan at length stood forth, and delivered an address of such power and conclusiveness as went far, in the judgement of all parties, to settle the question". *British Standard*, May 12, 1857.

92. Kelly, *Examination*, p. 25.

93. S. Davidson, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (London: Samuel Bagster, 1848-51), vol. 1, preface.

94. "The college passed through the ordeal with safety, and after a season of trial, was established more firmly on the 'one foundation'." Waddington, *Congregational History 1850-1880*, p. 205.

95. Picton, "The College Crisis", p. 69.

96. Henry Rogers, *The Superhuman Origin of the Bible inferred from itself* (Congregational Lecture 1873; London: Hodder & Stoughton, Seventh edition, 1885), p. 5.

97. James Griffin, *Memories of the Past* (London: Hamilton, Adams, 1883), p. 111.

98. See the reminiscences of G.S. Barrett, *Lancashire Independent College, Jubilee 1893*, pp. 54-55.

99. J.R.M. *Centenary of the Lancashire Independent College 1816-1916* (1921), p. 18.

in 1857. Before coming to Manchester he had translated an introduction to the Pentateuch by the conservative German scholar Hävernicks,¹⁰⁰ and when Wellhausen's *Prolegomena to the History of Israel* came into the college library in the 1880s he took it out and refused to return it so that students' minds should not be poisoned.¹⁰¹ Across the Pennines Airedale College entered a more enlightened period with the appointment of Fairbairn as Principal in 1877 and that of Archibald Duff¹⁰² to teach the Old Testament in 1878, but Lancashire Independent College had to wait until 1895, when Thomson died, before they could effect the change that was clearly needed. They then appointed A.S. Peake, already tutor at the Primitive Methodist College, who immediately instituted courses on Old Testament Introduction and Old Testament Theology,¹⁰³ and thus set the pattern for biblical teaching in the college which, with appropriate updating, has been followed ever since.

In 1893 it was too late to make significant amends to Davidson himself. He was already fifty when he had to resign, and, although a substantial testimonial was raised by his friends and he does not seem to have suffered financial hardship, he did not obtain another teaching post. The University of London appointed him examiner in scripture in 1862,¹⁰⁴ and the Gladstone administration awarded him a pension in 1893,¹⁰⁵ but recognition as an authority in his own field eluded him. J. Allanson Picton claimed that "there was hardly an organ of devout learning in Great Britain, Europe, or America which did not lament and condemn the infatuated blindness of the Lancashire College Committee",¹⁰⁶ but it is doubtful whether this could be substantiated. Longmans, the publishers of Horne's *Introduction*, issued a second edition of Davidson's contribution in 1859, which differed only marginally from the first,¹⁰⁷ but in 1860 they replaced it with an entirely new volume by John Ayre. It was a revision of Horne's earlier work, and made no mention of Davidson's 1856 volume. On the question of inspiration Ayre said: "My deliberate conviction is that the sacred writers were preserved from inaccuracy even in the lower demands of history, science, etc.; since most of the apparent objections are capable of a reasonable solution; and

100. H.A. Ch. Hävernicks, *An historico-critical Introduction to the Pentateuch* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1850).

101. Leslie S. Peake, *Arthur Samuel Peake: A Memoir* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1930), p. 132.

102. See Willis B. Glover, *Evangelical Nonconformists and Higher Criticism*, pp. 58-59, 111-12.

103. Leslie S. Peake, *Arthur Samuel Peake*, p. 132; John T. Wilkinson, *Arthur Samuel Peake* (London: Epworth Press, 1971), p. 65.

104. Davidson, *Autobiography*, p. 80.

105. Davidson, *Autobiography*, pp. 314, 359; *Lancashire Independent College. Jubilee 1893*, p. 28.

106. Picton, "The College Crisis", p. 69.

107. Rogerson, *The Old Testament in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 197 n.1.

it would be rash positively to declare that the rest are inexplicable.”¹⁰⁸ Some of the “solutions” are quoted from Davidson’s earlier *Sacred Hermeneutics*. He continued to publish: the major works were an *Introduction to the Old Testament* in 1862 and an *Introduction to the Study of the New Testament* in 1868. Neither of these became the standard text books he had hoped, though R.F. Horton, who had not learnt anything about biblical criticism at Oxford in 1874-78 and who confessed to siding with Robertson Smith’s persecutors, included “Davidson’s *Introduction*” along with Wellhausen’s *Prolegomena* and Smith and Duff on the prophets as one of the books which “opened a new world” to him.¹⁰⁹ Robertson Smith, in the article “Bible” for the ninth edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* which got him into trouble in the Free Church of Scotland, lamented the lack of an adequate introduction to the Old Testament in English and referred to Davidson’s work merely as a source from which some idea of German work might be obtained.¹¹⁰ Davidson contributed to the early volumes of the *Britannica*, but his connection with the project came to an end when he found that the editor (Smith?) had rewritten his article on “Canon”.¹¹¹ He wrote reviews for the *Athenaeum*, which almost certainly included that of Smith’s *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, pointing out some of the ways in which that formidable critic still made concessions to the old apologetic approach.¹¹² This review could well have prompted Smith to omit his paragraphs on the imprecatory and messianic psalms from the second edition.¹¹³ He continued to stress the convictions he had reached in 1856, perhaps most succinctly in a book written to show the need for a revision of the Authorized Version:

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108. *An Introduction to the Criticism of the Old Testament and to Biblical Interpretation: with an analysis of the books of the Old Testament and the Apocrypha, originally written by the Rev. Thomas Hartwell Horne, now revised and edited by the Rev. John Ayre* (Longman, Green, Longman and Roberts, 1860), p. 306.
109. S. Davidson, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1862-63); idem, *Introduction to the Study of the New Testament* (London: Longmans, Green, 1868; Second edition, 1882). Cf. the unfavourable reviews of the former in the *British & Foreign Evangelical Review* 12 (1863), pp. 371-409 (by A.B. Davidson); and of the first edition of the latter in *British Quarterly Review* 49 (1869), pp. 30-61, and of the second edition in *British Quarterly Review* 75 (1882), pp. 521-26.
110. Article “Bible”, *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Ninth Edition; Edinburgh; A. & C. Black, 1875), Vol. 3, p. 648.
111. In an expanded version of the article which Davidson published separately he said: “The substance of the present work was written towards the close of the year 1875 for the new edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Having been abridged and mutilated, contrary to the author’s wishes, before its publication there, he resolved to print it entire”. *The Canon of the Bible* (London: Henry S. King, 1877; Third edition, Kegan Paul, 1880), Preface, p.v.
112. *The Athenaeum*, No. 2795, 21 May, 1881, pp. 683-84.
113. William Robertson Smith, *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church* (Edinburgh: A. & C. Black, 1881), pp. 206-207; (2nd edition, 1892), p. 224. Cf. Roger Tomes, “Samuel Davidson and William Robertson Smith: Parallel cases?” (see n.45 above).

The want of the age is not a revision of the English version, but a proper commentary on the Bible ... making it evident that the Bible is divine because it is human, and cannot be exempt from the weakness, imperfection, and inaccuracy that cleave to man in every stage of his spiritual development. Such commentary will admit diversities of gifts among the sacred writers, will affirm with Luther that one canonical book is more trustworthy than another, that an apostolical argument may be too weak to hold, and that things contrary to reason can hardly be accepted as facts, however invested with an extraordinary character. Men continue to repeat what they learnt from their fathers, ignoring settled critical results, or probably denouncing them as rationalistic. Contrary to the first principles of interpretation, they assign two senses to the words of Scripture, and justify maledictory psalms with the morality of barbarous times and men, under the plea of inspiration; as if the passionate but exclusive patriotism of a people could be converted into an immediate revelation from heaven, or different tests existed for judging virtue in Jews and heathens, Christians and theists.¹¹⁴

Davidson's significance should be neither minimised nor exaggerated. G.H. Box spoke of the "massive scale" of his biblical scholarship. He was no mere specialist in the Old Testament, but equally at home in the New Testament and the Apocrypha. He was "a thoroughly equipped Hebraist", who could "handle grammatical, textual and philological questions with a master's hand". But he was "learned rather than original".¹¹⁵ Davidson put forward no bold hypotheses in the biblical field.¹¹⁶ He could not synthesise the results of criticism and show where they should lead, like Wellhausen. He had not the gift of commending them to a popular audience, like Robertson Smith. He was only a pioneer in the sense that he realised the importance of the work that was being done in Germany at a time when other people were not ready to receive it.

He did however make a different kind of contribution to Old Testament scholarship. His estate helped to found a chair in the University of London from 1926 to 1992, and the University had the courtesy to name it after him.¹¹⁷

ROGER TOMES

114. S. Davidson, *On a Fresh Revision of the English Old Testament* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1873), pp. 149-51.

115. G.H. Box, "Samuel Davidson's work in Old Testament scholarship" (A public lecture delivered at King's College, London, 6 November, 1931, published in an unidentified journal; offprint in Dr. Williams's Library).

116. Cf. R.E. Clements, *Jacob's Ladder and Jacob's Well*, An Inaugural Lecture delivered on 18 October, 1984, p.6: "In the light of the scholarship of today ... Davidson's conclusions appear modest and even timid".

117. The holders of the chair were G.H. Box (1926-30), S.H. Hooke (1930-48), W.D. McHardy (1948-60), P.R. Ackroyd (1961-84), and R.E. Clements (1984-92).

THOMAS HARDY'S SCHOOLING; SOME CONGREGATIONAL LINKS TO HIS LIFE AND WORK

Hardy's Wessex was a "region undergoing radical and painful change". In the preface to *Far From the Madding Crowd* (first published 1874) he insisted that he was depicting "a Wessex population living under Queen Victoria; - a modern Wessex of railways, the penny-post, mowing and reaping machines, union workhouses, lucifer matches, labourers who could read and write, and National school children".¹ Yet Hardy attended a British school, financed by Congregationalists, and the background to his own life and his "modern Wessex" included chapel-going farmers who were affected, like their Anglican counterparts, by the sweeping changes which Dorset rural life was subject to in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Thomas Hardy, the Wessex novelist, was not a strong, robust child and at his birth in June 1840 had been cast aside as dead until the midwife noticed his breathing. His parents thought their sickly boy would not live but, at the age of eight, in the autumn of 1848, he was strong enough to become a pupil at the village school. Here he "worked at Walkingame's Arithmetic and at geography, in both of which he excelled, though his handwriting was indifferent". Also about this time Jemima Hardy, his redoubtable mother, gave her son Dryden's translation of Virgil's *Aeneid*, Johnson's *Rasselas*, and a translation of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's popular *Paul and Virginia*. He also read his grandfather's copy of a history in serial form of the Napoleonic wars. This school was a Church of England school, opened in 1848 with two teachers, Thomas Fuller and his wife. Hardy later described Fuller as "far above his position in education, but a drunkard".²

Managed under the auspices of the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church, this school was provided by Julia Augusta Martin, the wife of Francis Pitney Brouncker Martin who, in 1845, had bought the estate of Kingston Maurward, east of Dorchester, in Stinsford parish, in which Higher Bockhampton, where the Hardys lived, was situated. The childless Julia doted on the weak Thomas, later claiming to have "taught you yr letters". She would caress him on her lap and kiss him and a strong, mutual attachment grew up between them. When she was

1. W.J. Keith, "The Land in Victorian Literature"; G.E. Mingay (ed.), *The Victorian Countryside*, (1981), p. 145.

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2. T. Hardy, *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy*, (1984) ed. M. Millgate, p. 21; M. Millgate *Thomas Hardy: A Biography*, (1982) p. 41; R.L. Purdy *Thomas Hardy: A Bibliographical Study*, (Oxford 1968), pp. 265-7, 272-3. Francis Walkingame was the author of *The Tutor's Assistant; Being a Compendium of Arithmetic* (first published 1751, London). By 1844 it had reached its 49th edition.

young Jemima Hardy may have worked as a housemaid at Kingston Maurward (as one Dorchester resident recalled). If so, clear opportunities existed for this friendship between Mrs. Martin and Jemima's son – an intimacy Jemima grew to resent.³

In 1849 Jemima Hardy and her son, Thomas, visited Jemima's sister, Martha, and her husband, John Brereton Sharpe, who was a farm-manager on the Marquess of Salisbury's estate at Hatfield in Hertfordshire. Martha was pregnant and in need of a nurse and housekeeper and the nine-year-old boy went with his attractive mother "for protection", as she put it. While there Thomas attended the school in Fore Street, Hatfield, kept, "somewhat on the Squeers model", by a Congregational minister called Thomas Ray. There he encountered merciless bullying and minor brutality. Ray served as a pastor of the Congregational chapel at Hatfield (1846-53) before moving to Bishop's Stortford. He later was principal of College House school in Peckham, and died in 1903.⁴

Hardy's aunt's child was not born until just before Christmas and Thomas and his mother probably returned home in the new year. Jemima Hardy's sojourn in Hatfield may also have been prompted by a desire to break the attachment between her son and Mrs. Martin - "Almost that of a lover" (as he himself later described it). Hardy bore emotional scars from this severed link.⁵

On their return Mrs. Martin was offended in her turn by Jemima's choice of a school in Dorchester for Thomas, and his father lost work as a result on the Kingston Maurward estate. For Thomas did not go back to Bockhampton's National School but was sent instead in September 1850 to the school in Greyhound Lane, Dorchester, run by the rival educational organisation, the British and Foreign School Society, which was largely but not exclusively supported by Nonconformists. Thomas was now more robust and could walk to and from Dorchester, three miles each way, without strain. His removal from Mrs. Martin's school "seriously wounded" her although, Hardy later rationalised, "she must have guessed that he had only been sent there till sturdy enough to go further". That Hardy's new school was "not a Church-of-England one" was a "rock of offence to this too sensitive lady", for Dissenters in the Dorset of his youth were regarded with suspicion.⁶

This Dorchester day school had as headmaster "an exceptionally able man, and a good teacher of Latin" named Isaac Glandfield Last whose academic reputation had attracted Mrs. Hardy. Last was to be her son's teacher for seven

3. R. Gittings *Young Thomas Hardy*, (1978), pp. 28-9; M. Millgate *ibid.*, p. 46; C. Lacey, *Memories of Thomas Hardy as a Schoolboy*, (St. Peter Port, Guernsey 1968) p. 108.
4. *Congregational Year Book*, (1904) pp. 187-8.
5. Millgate *op.cit.*, p. 44.
6. T.R.M. Creighton, "Some Thoughts on Hardy and Religion", L. St. John Butler *Thomas Hardy after Fifty Years*, (1977) p. 67; T. Hardy, *op.cit.*, pp. 21-23.

years. The mature Thomas Hardy, recalling these events, attributed his mother's decision in favour of the British School solely to Last's ability "which was quite enough to lead her to waive the fact that the school was Nonconformist though she had no nonconforming tendencies whatever". This claim may have stretched the truth as Hardy, on his mother's side, had a Nonconformist ancestry. Jemima's mother's family, the Symonds from Puddletown, contained Baptists in the eighteenth century. Thomas himself was to be befriended by the "argumentative" family of Dorchester's Baptist minister, Frederic Perkins, pastor there from 1858 to 1860.⁷

On leaving school Thomas trained as an architect in Dorchester where his fellow pupil in the office, Henry Robert Bastow, was a fervent Baptist who urged Hardy to accept adult baptism. Hardy later wrote in detail of the Baptist position in *A Laodicean* and described the Perkins family as an "austere and frugal household" who "won his admiration by their thoroughness and strenuousness". "He often visited them ... It was through these Scotch people that Thomas Hardy first became impressed with the necessity for 'plain living and high thinking', which stood him in such good stead in later years. Among the portraits of actual persons in Hardy's novels, that of the Baptist minister in *A Laodicean* stands out-being a recognisable drawing of Perkins the father as he appeared to Hardy at this time, though the incidents are invented."⁸

Hardy reported of his young self in Greyhound Lane years later that "It is somewhat curious, and shows the honour with which the school was conducted, that the boy did not know till he had been there several months that it was a Nonconformist school, a large number, probably a majority, of the boys coming like himself from Church-of-England homes, having been attracted thither by the reputation of the said master; though Thomas used to wonder why the familiar but rather boring Church Catechism had vanished – or rather all of it except the Ten Commandments, in which the pupils were made proficient once a week." Thomas attended the parish church still on Sundays.⁹

The British School at Dorchester was founded in 1842 and by 1851 had 130 boys on its register and an average weekly attendance of 100. The school's committee confidently boasted in 1851 that the "considerable increase of scholars" is owing to the fact that "under their management" and "without disparaging other systems of education" their school "cannot be surpassed in cheapness, comprehensiveness, and accordance with the word of God".¹⁰ In

7. Gittings, *op.cit.*, p. 29; Millgate, *op. cit.* pp. 9, 46; E. Hardy (ed.) *Thomas Hardy's Notebooks*, (1955); D. Jackman *300 Years of Baptist Witness in Dorchester 1645-1945*, (Dorchester 1945) pp. 7, 16.
8. V. Cunningham, *Everywhere Spoken Against: Dissent in the Victorian Novel*, (Oxford 1975) pp. 110-111; T. Hardy, *A Laodicean*, (1880-81) Ch.2; T. Hardy, *op.cit.*, pp. 33-35.
9. T. Hardy, *Life and Work of TH*, *ibid.*, p. 23.
10. *Report of British and Foreign School Society*, (1851) pp. 65-66.

1853 the originators and managers of the school were described as providing “for the children of the industrial classes, at a small cost, a sound and useful course of mental training, combined with a truly unsectarian, moral, and religious education”. Last’s “able superintendence resulted in the school’s “steadily gaining favour with the people of the town and neighbourhood”. Five years earlier the number of boys on the school register was seventy, with an average weekly attendance of less than fifty. The committee felt it necessary to underline the fact that the British school was not “a Dissenters’ school: contributions for its support are solicited and obtained from all classes, it is open to the children of parents of all religious parties, no creed or catechisms are used, but the Bible is read daily, without note or comment, beyond that which is necessary to explain the meaning of words, and the enforcement of its divine lessons”. They continued that, “of the 556 children” who had been educated at the school, “the parents of 346 belonged to the Established Church, whilst those of the remaining 210 were associated with the various bodies of Dissenters.”¹¹. Thus the young Hardy’s attendance at the British School was not so unusual for a boy of his background, as he himself later stated. Jemima Hardy’s decision in favour of the British School may have been a calculated snub aimed at Julia Martin but she may also have been influenced by the “cheapness” of her choice, as well as Last’s ability.

In 1854 the school’s “prosperous condition” continued and in 1856 the report described “a gradual and steady increase in the number of boys attending the school”. By this date Last had set up his own academy for older boys. In 1858 the “useful work” and “sustained efficiency” of the British School were noted but “unavoidable circumstances” prevented the school’s removal to “more commodious premises”. In that year also the committee reported that the finances were unsatisfactory – “a debt has been allowed to accumulate from year to year”. Therefore “a vigorous effort is needed to remove this encumbrance, and an enlarged list of subscribers to prevent its recurrence in the future. In conclusion, the committee confidently asked for increased liberality to sustain an institution of such acknowledged usefulness and excellence.”¹² After this date the annual reports of the British and Foreign School Society contain no further summaries of the Dorchester school. The British School at Dorchester however had received grants from the BFSS in 1844 and 1856.¹³ In November 1867 the annual public examinations of the Dorchester British School were reported in *The Weymouth Telegram* and revealed “much pains taken and ability for education” on the part of the schoolmaster. Again in 1868 the examination achieved good results showing a “marked improvement” on previous years.¹⁴

11. *Report of BFSS*, (1853) pp. 75-76.

12. *Report of BFSS*, (1854) pp. 71-2, (1856) pp. 60-1, (1858) pp. 58-9.

13. *Report of BFSS*, (1897) “List of British Schools”, pp. 18, 19.

14. *The Weymouth Telegram* 28 Nov. 1867, *Dorset County Chronicle* 3 Dec. 1868.

One old boy of the school stated that Isaac Last was a "severe disciplinarian and would frequently chase a boy round the room lashing him with his cane until he was white in the face, the ink-pots flying in all directions as they leapt over the desks." He recalled also that Thomas Hardy was "one of the cleverest pupils" and was "always ready to help the other boys with their lessons." This did not save Hardy from the boys' pranks however. "In South Street was a little shop kept by an old woman known to us as Sally Warren. To enter the shop one descended a step. The boys sometimes threw Hardy's cap down into the shop, and when he entered to retrieve it the old woman belaboured him with a broom". Hardy and his school-fellows were amused to see the fighting cocks, kept in a Dorchester cellar near his school, "when they were let out to the street".¹⁵

Perhaps the schooling he received earlier at Isaac Last's hands also predisposed him to his openness towards his Baptist friends and their "plain living and high thinking". Isaac Glandfield Last (1814-67) had suffered from ill-health ("an affection of the chest which later compelled him to give up teaching") and this frustrated his ambition eventually forcing him to become a grocer. His son, William Isaac Last, was a civil engineer who served as director of the Science Museum at South Kensington from 1904 until his death in 1911, and his grandson, Hugh Macllwain Last (1894-1957), the Roman historian, became principal of Brasenose College, Oxford (1948-56). Hardy never discounted his debt to his early teacher; the death of W.I. Last in June 1911 prompted him to remark that the newspapers' obituary notices "gave details of a life more successful than his father's, though not of higher intellectual ability than that by which it had been Hardy's good fortune to profit".¹⁶

Hardy was older by a year or two than most of his fellow pupils at the British School although he was smaller and younger-looking. He was a studious child and at the age of twelve began to learn Latin. He was also reading some popular books of the day - a book about exploration for the source of the Nile, James Bruce's *Travels in Abyssinia*, the works of Alexandre Dumas *père* in English, Harrison Ainsworth's *Old St. Paul's*, James Grant's *The Scottish Cavalier*, G.P.R. James's historical romances, as well as Shakespeare's plays, and *The Pilgrim's Progress*, even, for Hardy, with its frightening Apollyon.¹⁷

Isaac Last had trained at the British and Foreign School Society's college in Borough Road, London, leaving there in 1847.¹⁸ Last was "admitted" to membership of Dorchester Congregational Church on 6 July, 1848 during the ministry of John Knox Stallybrass who had himself only become the minister

15. C. Lacey *op.cit.*, 101, 102.

16. Millgate *op.cit.*, p. 52; T. Hardy *op.cit.*, pp. 29, 383, 575; for H.M. Last see *DNB*.

17. R. Gittings *op.cit.*, p. 45.

18. *Borough Road Training School: Male Students 1810-1877*, (1877) p. 14. Printed lists are available in BFSS archives held at West London Institute of Higher Education, Isleworth.

there in that month. Last came to the fellowship from "the Congregational church at Banbury". In December 1848 Harriet Jane Peach was received into church membership at Dorchester by Stallybrass from the church at Beaminster in north west Dorset. Miss Peach was to become Mrs. Last and the church book records the birth and baptisms of their children, Laura Elizabeth in 1855, William Isaac, born 1857, and Leonard Henry, born 1859.¹⁹

Stallybrass had been born in 1823 in south-east Siberia where his father, Edward, was serving with the London Missionary Society. The son trained for the ministry at Coward College and remained at Dorchester until 1852 when he moved to Bridport. He died in 1879 and was described as "a man of wide culture, and vigorous intellect, and eloquent speech".²⁰

At the church meeting, held on 5 May 1857, Isaac Last was appointed a deacon and he remained in that office until his death in 1867. The minister then was Josiah Miller who served at Dorchester 1855-60.²¹ Last also attended the Sunday School teachers' meetings 1856-66. In January 1856 he offered to visit absentees, both teachers and children, and to canvass the town for children. In February 1860 a "model class" was taught by Last on a Sunday afternoon as an example to parents, teachers and church members. In 1866 Last was asked to take charge of the Sunday School's library. He also served the church by "examining and approving" the yearly accounts on several occasions until his death in 1867. His adherence to Congregationalism was by no means nominal.²² In 1884 Isaac Last's son, Leonard, resigned as secretary of the Sunday School, "having been ordered to New Zealand, for the recovery of his health".²³

Isaac Last clearly enjoyed a considerable reputation in educational matters among Dorset's Nonconformists. In May 1864 he was involved in the founding of a British school at Cerne Abbas to the north of Dorchester. By the 1860s the Congregationalists in that village had closed their day school so that only one school should remain, the National School, which the Nonconformist children would attend. However the rector of Cerne Abbas in the spring of 1864 ruled that all children attending a Nonconformist chapel on Sundays would have to pay more than those who attended the parish church. Last and others were

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19. Dorchester Congregational Church Book 1828-25, p. 26, deposited at Dorset County Records Office Dorchester.
 20. *The Story of the Congregational Church in Dorchester*, (1898) ed. W. Densham, p. 13. Edward Stallybrass and his fellow missionary, William Swan, translated the Bible into Mongolian. R. Lovett *History of the London Missionary Society 1795-1895*, (1899) II, p. 586-596.
 21. *Congregational Year Book*, (1882) p. 319, Dorchester Congregational Church Book 156 - DCRO.
 22. Dorchester Congregational Church Sunday School Records Book - DCRO, no pagination, no folio, Account Book 1786-1916, ff71, 77, 78, 79.
 23. Dorchester Cong. C - DCRO, Centenary Souvenir booklet 1813-1913.

consulted and their opinions were unanimous: a new day school, a British school, was needed there.²⁴

In 1853 Isaac Last left the British School to open his own independent, commercial "Academy for Young Gentlemen". This academy (borrowing its title from the eighteenth-century Dissenting academies and echoing with them the institutions of ancient Greece) was a private fee-paying and partly boarding school supported by the "very powerful Congregationalist colony in the Dorchester area". These Congregationalists lived mostly to the east of Dorchester and one family, the Woods, bought Athelhampton Hall, near Puddletown, founding there a British School also and thus rivalling the local Anglican squire, John Brymer. In addition an annual gathering was held at the Hall for the British and Foreign Bible Society which was always well attended. These Congregational farmers, Woods, Samsons, and Homers, related by marriage to each other, "provided a body of backing for Last's further plans".²⁵

George Wood senior left a substantial sum to the Dorchester Congregationalists. This bequest, received in 1848, was used in 1878, with other donations, to buy a manse.²⁶ Earlier (about 1807 or 1808) Wood had fitted up a room in one of his cottages at Upwey, south of Dorchester, for worship to be held there. The Congregational ministers of Weymouth conducted services on Thursday evenings at Upwey. With an increased attendance Wood then erected "on his own land, and at his sole expense", a chapel which was opened in 1810. Services were now held on Sunday evenings and, if no preacher could attend, Wood read a sermon to the congregation. He swore the oaths, about religious worship and assemblies, required of Nonconformists, before a local justice of the peace and made the declaration enabling him to preach and teach.²⁷ Mrs. Wood with some assistants began a Sunday School to meet the local need as few village children could read. "Held in high esteem by all who knew him", Wood died in 1826 aged eighty.

George had paid all the expenses at Upwey and his son, George James continued to do so until 1832. The Wood family came from Owermoigne, moving to Upwey where the children of George and his wife Dorothy were born.²⁸ Then, following his father's example, George James Wood made his declaration in 1834 to the agents of the Bishop of Bristol that "a certain building belonging to me called Upwey Chapel near my house is used for a meeting house for dissenters, and religious worship is held there according to the

24. A manuscript record of incidents affecting Schools at Cerne Abbas Independent Chapel, pp. 4, 5 - DCRO.

25. R. Gittings, *op.cit.*, p. 46. Gittings also lists William Manfield, a solicitor and landowner, as a member of this group - *ibid.* p. 45.

26. W.Densham and J. Ogle, *The Story of the Congregational Churches of Dorset*, Bournemouth 1899, p. 126.

27. DCRO - Wood's oath and declaration.

28. Notes on the Wood family - DCRO.

Independent denomination". Dorothy Wood was one of the first ten members of the church formally constituted at Upwey in 1838. Her daughter, Hannah James Wood, eldest sister to George James, married Thomas Samson in 1825 and was "a friend everyway to the cause", giving freely to the cost of the "beautiful and spacious" new church, built in 1880. Mrs. Samson paid for a stained glass window to be installed there to her parents' memory. Also supporting the Congregational church at Upwey were Mr. and Mrs. Homer of Martinstown who became members in 1867 and Henry William Hawkins who married Elizabeth Homer, George James Wood's niece, in 1860. George Wood's daughter, born at Upwey in 1810, had married John Green Homer in 1835. They lived at Winterborne St. Martin, also in Dorset, and had four children, three boys and a girl. However Elizabeth at the early age of 34 years, died in November 1844 in an accidental fall from her carriage.²⁹

At Puddletown, north-east of Dorchester, a local draper and grocer, John Styles Goddard, began to worship in a converted malt-house set aside for evangelical preaching about 1834. In 1902 Thomas Hardy's cousin, Nathaniel Sparks, a maker and repairer of violins in Bristol, learned from his two sons who had recently visited Hardy, that Thomas was hoping to buy a 'cello. Nathaniel supplied his needs and Thomas sent a letter of thanks in these terms:

No doubt the old viol has many a score time accompanied such tunes as 'Lydia' or 'Eaton'. The latter was the tune with which they used nearly to lift off the roof of Goddard's chapel of a Sunday evening.

Thus Hardy referred to the Puddletown chapel of the 1850s, suggesting that he may even have played his violin there on occasions. Certainly in the hymns of Isaac Watts he "heard the metrical forms which he was later to use in many of his own verses".³⁰

Some of Goddard's hearers in time became dissatisfied with his teaching. They consulted George James Wood of Athelhampton Hall about the need for a Congregational church and in 1862 services were started in a cottage and a church was gathered. The need for a chapel could not be met in the village so in 1865 Wood gave freehold a piece of land near his house and on this a place of worship was erected. This building was opened formally in March 1866.

George James Wood was a generous supporter of "Bere Regis, Upwey and Puddletown Congregational churches especially, as well as others in Dorset".

29. *Ibid*; Densham and Ogle *op.cit.*, pp. 322, 323, 324, 325. G.J. Wood's death in 1867 occasioned the establishment of a charitable trust for Upwey Chapel in the following year. Among the trustees were John Green Homer, Hannah James Samson, John Thomas Homer, George Wood Homer, Henry William Hawkins and Thomas Samson. See title deed, Upwey Chapel, held by United Reformed Church (Wessex) Trust Ltd., Chandler's Ford, Hants.

30. M. Millgate *op.cit.*, p. 415; and C. Walbank, *Thomas Hardy*, (1979) p. 4.

For many years Wood contributed forty pounds per annum to the minister's stipend at Upwey. After his death his relatives continued this giving although not so generously. He was "a kind, Christian gentleman, with large means and a large heart, steadfast in his principles, and a tower of strength to his denomination".³¹ His widow, with Thomas Alner Homer and Mrs. Homer, transferred their church membership from Bere Regis Congregational church to Puddletown in 1877. She died in March 1880 – "an irreparable loss to the little cause she watched over and aided in every way". She was buried near her husband in Owermoigne churchyard where his relatives, the James family (ancestors of John Angell James, 1785-1859, of Birmingham), were buried. T.A. Homer and his wife lived at Spetisbury between 1844 and 1848, attending Bere Regis chapel where he was a deacon. He died in 1895 and was "a fine specimen of the Dorset yeoman". His son, Ernest, was both deacon and treasurer of the Congregational church at Puddletown in the 1890s.³²

The Homers had attended the Congregational church at Bere Regis from at least the early years of the nineteenth century. In 1866 George Wood Homer and a Mr. Wood (probably George James Wood – Homer's uncle) gave equal contributions, with two other donors, towards the cost of a harmonium for the chapel. Later when a new chapel building was needed and no site could be found at an affordable price, Wood gave instructions to "acquire at any cost, and at his sole expense, the one bit of freehold in the place, on which a Chapel and Manse could be erected". This was done and the buildings were subsequently opened free of debt. Thomas Alner Homer of Tolpuddle became a deacon at Bere Regis in 1868.³³

George James Wood bought Athelhampton Hall, near Puddletown (sometimes called Admiston Hall), in 1848 from the family of the Earl of Mornington, nephew of the Duke of Wellington. Wood repaired the hall roof and Thomas Hardy senior, the novelist's father, and others in the Hardy family worked on the repairs at Athelhampton. Thomas junior painted a watercolour of the hall in August 1859 when he was nineteen years old, wrote two poems concerned with it, and a strange short story, *The Waiting Supper*, is set partly at Athelhampton Hall, its gardens and by the river there. His poem, *The Dame of Athelhall*, is a "presentment of Athelhampton, a magnificent example of Tudor building with some evidences of earlier work", and another poem, *The Children and Sir Nameless*, refers to the knight as being "once of Athelhall". In 1891 the Wood family sold the hall to Alfred Cart de Lafontaine who complained to visitors

31. Densham and Ogle, *op.cit.*, pp. 221-223, 324.

32. *Ibid.*, pp. 223-4. For John Angell James, who was born at Blandford Forum, see *DNB* and *Life and Letters of John Angell James*, (1861) ed. R.W. Dale. The recurrence of the name James in George James Wood and his sister Hannah James Wood reflects the family link.

33. Densham and Ogle, *op.cit.*, 22, 24, 25.

from the Dorset Natural History and Antiquarian Field Club later in the 1890s, that the hall had been neglected and needed much restoration.³⁴

The Woods, Homers and Samsons were well-established farming families. In 1839 George James Wood occupied 563 acres of mostly arable land (including some pastures and meadows) which belonged to William Wellesley Esq., and in 1842 he was also farming 112 acres of Wellesley's land (most of the Admiston Hall estate) in neighbouring Athelhampton. Wood clearly had extensive farming interests because in the 1860s he was described as a landowner in Upwey, leasing some 370 acres to three different farmers and 360 acres to one other while he was also described as the "owner" and "occupier" of the Independent chapel there. Wood's widowed sister, Hannah James Samson, and the spinster Elizabeth Alice Samson were then living in Upwey also. The census recorded G.J. Wood as a "farmer" in 1841 and 1861 but in 1851 he was "a landowner and farmer" of 700 acres, employing fifty labourers. At his death he left effects valued at under £7,000 as well as his Athelhampton estate, the ownership of which carried with it the rights of patronage to the rectories of Burleston and Athelhampton.

By 1871 Mary Wood, his widow, was head of the family at Athelhampton Hall and was described as "a Yeoman's widow" whereas George Wood Homer, her twenty-one-year-old nephew, also resident at the hall, was noted as a "farmer of 950 acres, employing 23 men, 11 boys and 4 yeomen". In the 1870s, 1,000 acres was the size often used to distinguish gentry estates from those owned by men of lower status so the Woods of Athelhampton had acquired wealth and property but were not gentry. Even Ernest Homer's 1150 acre farm at Puddletown, where he employed thirty labourers and seven boys in 1881, only accorded him the rank of farmer. In Dorset estates of over 3,000 acres covered more than half the county. When Ernest Homer died in 1928 he left £19,521.³⁵

George Homer was a tenant farmer in Bere Regis in 1842 and 1857 Thomas Homer was a "landowner" there. In the 1840s Thomas and John Homer were tenants at Winterborne St. Martin farming 413 and 610 acres respectively. In 1867 Thomas Samson, George James Wood's nephew, of Kingston Russell, west of Dorchester, owned and farmed 311 acres, bought by his grandfather from the Earl of Pembroke.³⁶

George Wood Homer, in later life a friend of Thomas Hardy, became a leading figure in the county. The popular writer, Sir Henry Rider Haggard,

34. Brochure on *Athelhampton*, available at hall; M. Millgate *op.cit.*, p. 66; Notes on Wood Family at DCRO; H. Lea, *Thomas Hardy's Wessex*, (1913) p. 271; manuscript at DCRO - particulars of Athelhampton Hall as sent by estate agents in 1916 to George Wood Homer stating the hall was in a "wretched" condition when bought by de Lafontaine.

35. D.C. Moore "The Gentry", G.E. Mingay (ed.), *The Victorian Countryside*, (1981) pp. 389-90; census returns; G.J. Wood's will and Ernest Homer's will - held at Dorset County Records Office.

36. Census returns.

embarked on a tour of England at the beginning of the twentieth century to see how the agricultural depression had affected farming in the regions and in Dorset learned that “the gentleman farmers had disappeared, having gone under one by one”. In such conditions, Homer survived well and became the moving spirit behind the Dorset County Ratepayers’ Association, urging the removal of taxes on land. On his estate at Burleston, record-making trout were caught. In the 1890s Homer was noted also as a successful landowner, lecturing other farmers on how to cope during the depression and he provided “much valuable help” to the royal commission on agriculture.³⁷

In 1854 G.J. Wood corresponded with Henry Dunn, the secretary of the British and Foreign School Society, about establishing a British School at Athelhampton and this school began in 1855. In 1858 Wood reported that any deficiency in income received by the school was made up “by the managers” although the BFSS made grants to the school at Athelhampton in 1854 and 1860. In the school accounts (included in Wood’s own ledger) Thomas Homer, Mrs. Samson, and Mrs. Wood among others are noted as contributing to the school’s funds. Wood’s ledger also reveals subscriptions to chapel repairs, donations to the British school at Coryates, south-west of Dorchester, and regular payments to the work at Upwey Chapel.³⁸ The inspection of Athelhampton’s British School in April 1869 yielded a favourable report. “The school has passed a very creditable examination, and the discipline also is decidedly good”. The school-teacher, John Holmes, had been there for fourteen years in 1869.³⁹

George James Wood’s mother, Dorothy, died in 1855 and was buried in the church yard at Owermoigne. In 1867 Wood himself died of a heart ailment at Athelhampton. He was the president of the Dorchester Farmers Club and was noted for his philanthropy – “the extent of his open-hearted and benevolent charities was greater than many” of his neighbours were aware of. A local denominational newspaper, *The Dorset Congregational Penny Magazine*, was keen to claim Wood as its own. His obituary stressed the loss to Dorset Congregationalism and Bere Regis in particular. “He was a true Nonconformist, and though he was of a liberal spirit, yet his best friends will at once decline the ambiguous praise offered to his memory in the local press, where he is credited with the indiscriminate endowment of both Churches and Chapels, of both National and British Schools”. Wood had “a wide circle of Christian friends”

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37. *Victoria County History of Dorset*, (1908) II, pp. 258, 321; *Royal Commission on Agriculture: England*, (1895) report by R.H. Rew on Dorset, pp. 9, 10, 11, 20, 34, 35; G.E. Mingay, *Rural Life in Victorian England*, (Stroud, 1990) p. 65.
38. BFSS ms – Dunn correspondence; 1858 Returns from British Schools to the Newcastle Commission Reports – BFSS archives; *Report of BFSS*, (1897) “List of British Schools”, pp. 18, 19; Athelhampton School accounts – DCRO, pp. 23, 26, 37, 80, 89, 97.
39. *Dorset County Chronicle* – 8 April 1869. Holmes was originally from Berkshire and may have been the model used by Hardy for the schoolteacher Richard Phillotson in *Jude the Obscure*. R. Gittings, *op.cit.*, p. 307.

often to be found at his home. For seventeen years Wood was “the lay secretary of the Dorset auxiliary of the Bible society” and he was always the valued friend and counsellor of the Dorset county union of Congregational churches. “But now Athelhampton ... mourns for its dead: its Sunday evening service is suspended. The church at Upwey has lost its best earthly friend. The Congregational community at Puddletown, discovering all his love for it, will gratefully cherish his memory. And his fellow worshippers at Bere Regis, whom he long served as deacon with so much courtesy and love, and over whom he generously cast his shield in their hour of peril twelve months ago, will mourn him for many days.” G.J. Wood was also a contributor to the funds of the British and Foreign School Society.⁴⁰

George James Wood's great-niece, Eleanor Christine Wood Homer (1883-1975), was the only daughter of George Wood Homer of Athelhampton Hall and later of Bardolf Manor, also near Puddletown, where he farmed his own lands. Thomas Hardy was a frequent visitor to Bardolf Manor and in the 1890s would often go on cycling trips with Christine's mother, Eliza Wood Homer, as her daughter recalled in her old age.⁴¹ In his correspondence Hardy wrote of having tea with the Homers of Bardolf Manor in 1900 and wrote to his cycling companion, Eliza, in 1904, thanking her for her expressions of sympathy at the recent death of his mother, Jemima. He stated that Jemima had approved the Homers' “fixing your residence on such a healthy spot, and she spoke to me more than once of her admiration for Mr. Homer's practical energy and capacity”.

As a young man Hardy had “an exceptionally slight figure and school-boy face” and he provided a great contrast with the “typical Dorset man, broad-shouldered and barrel-chested”. Robert Gittings has observed, “among these people in Dorchester, Puddletown or in his own parish, young Hardy must have appeared like some changeling, an innocent in a rough, practical world”. Hardy, sickly as a child and later a timid, day-dreaming adult, whose father was a self-employed mason, may have betrayed himself in thus quoting his mother's verdict on George Wood Homer. One is left to conclude that Jemima may have been contrasting unfavourably her own literary but impractical son with his friend and more down-to-earth neighbour. Christine continued an occasional

40. Notes on Wood family at DCRO. The obituary quoted above may refer to a tribute to Wood in *The Weymouth Telegram* of 21 March 1867 where he was described as being “in his philanthropy... no sectarian but assisted liberally in the building and endowment of both churches and chapels, in the maintenance of religious services whether episcopal or nonconformist, and in the spread of education through the instrumentality both of National and British schools”. *Report of BFSS*, (1848) p. 159. G.J. Wood's ledger, held at DCRO, reveals regular payments to BFSS.
41. C. Wood Homer, *Thomas Hardy and his Two Wives*, (Beaminster, Dorset, 1964) p. 6. George Wood Homer was the son of John Green Homer and Elizabeth Wood of Winterbourne St. Martin. G.W. Homer lived at Athelhampton after his uncle's death.

correspondence with Hardy.⁴² Whereas in early life Hardy had enjoyed strong links with Isaac Last, in later life he was friendly with the descendents of Last's financial backers.

In the hamlet of Coryates a building owned by Thomas Samson was set aside for public worship. This "out station" was linked to nearby Upwey Congregational church and lay preachers conducted the weekly services, with the Upwey minister presiding at the quarterly communion.⁴³ Thomas Hardy's cousin, Tryphena Sparks, was probably an assistant at the little British school at Coryates. This school had also been founded by Thomas Samson, the friend and brother-in-law of George James Wood. After Samson's death his elder unmarried daughter, Elizabeth Samson of Upwey, continued to run the school. Coryates' little school is not included in the BFSS's list of British schools in Dorset in the early 1860s. However the BFSS had given Coryates a grant in 1857 and gave again in 1867.⁴⁴

Tryphena Sparks, when eleven years old, had become a monitor in the small British School at Athelhampton in 1862. She was to become a pupil teacher in 1866 at Squire Brymer's National School in Puddletown despite her British School education. After encountering problems in 1868 at this school, she may have moved to the British School at Coryates where her good record at Athelhampton commended her to Miss Samson. Their friendship grew and Elizabeth Samson visited Tryphena when she had passed through the BFSS college at Stockwell in south London and secured a full teaching post. Also Tryphena was to stay with Elizabeth Samson at Upwey during a later school holiday – an unusual crossing of contemporary social barriers.⁴⁵ The same Dorset Congregationalists who were prominent supporters of Isaac Last's academy and the British School at Dorchester supported the schools at Athelhampton and Coryates. Thomas Hardy was very attracted to his young cousin, Tryphena (eleven years his junior), and may have wished to marry her, probably in 1869.⁴⁶

Hardy went with Last to be a pupil at his new academy in 1853 and thus his schooldays were prolonged. His education at an ordinary British School would have finished at the age of twelve or thirteen unless he undertook teacher training and stayed another five years. In the academy Hardy was able to continue the study of Latin under the same teacher. His copy of *An Introduction to the Latin Tongue*, bought in 1852, was in regular use from September 1853. In 1854 Hardy bought the *Breviarum Historiae Romanae* of Eutropius, and about the same time he devised a scheme for memorising genders in his *King Edward VIth*

42. R. Gittings, *op.cit.*, p. 30, 72; *Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy*, ed. R.L. Purdy and M. Millgate II, (1980) pp. 270-1, III, (1982) p. 122, V, 1985, p. 1.

43. Densham and Ogle, *op.cit.*, p. 326.

44. *Report of BFSS*, (1897) "List of British Schools", pp. 18, 19.

45. R. Gittings, *op.cit.*, pp. 157-9.

46. Hardy's relationship with Tryphena Sparks is explored in L. Deacon and T. Coleman, *Providence and Mr. Hardy*, (1966). See also R. Gittings, *ibid.*, pp. 313-323.

Latin Grammar by using colours. In 1854 Hardy also acquired Cassell's *Manual of the French Language* for the lessons he took from a teacher at the Dorchester Ladies' School where his sister, Mary, was a pupil.

At Last's academy the young Hardy made notes in a book entitled "Miscellaneous Questions" in which were set out mathematical questions related to carpentry, plumbing, bricklaying and other aspects of the building trade. He also had a notebook headed "Conic Sections and their Solids" which delved into more theoretical problems but these were still expressed in mundane terms, familiar to Dorchester folk, such as the sharing of a pot of beer into unequal draughts.⁴⁷

Isaac Last's evident competence in academic and technical subjects may have swayed Jemima Hardy in choosing to send her son to his school rather than to either of the clear alternatives. The first of these was founded by his namesake Thomas Hardy of Melcombe Regis, who died in 1599 having endowed a grammar school in Dorchester which from 1909 to 1925 the novelist was to serve as a governor. The literary Thomas was a descendant of this more prosperous, Elizabethan Hardy. In addition to the school, conducted since 1837 by the philologist and dialect poet, the Anglican Revd. William Barnes (1801-1886) in South Street, Dorchester, was passed over by Jemima. Barnes was a scholar with the widest interests, in Persian, Welsh, Anglo-Saxon archaeology, French and Italian literature, wood-engraving, and other subjects. He was both "homely and unconventional" and provides too "a most interesting link between present and past forms of rural life". Barnes's Dorset characters are, however, untroubled by "ambition, pride, despair, defiance, and the grand passions". Thus his writing resembles that of Thomas Hardy in its subject-matter but not in the emotional depths which it plumbs. In April 1861 Barnes was granted at Lord Palmerston's initiative an unsolicited pension of £70 from the civil list. Jemima Hardy's confidence in Isaac Last is therefore all the more marked in the light of his rival's talents and achievements.⁴⁸

About 1856, when he was sixteen years old and studying architecture, Hardy became acquainted with Barnes whose school was next door to the architect's office. Hardy often consulted Barnes about the precise meanings of points of grammar when disputing these with his fellow apprentice, Bastow, whose knowledge of the classics was initially superior to Hardy's. Hardy was encouraged to deepen his studies by Barnes. In 1908 Hardy was to edit a selection of Barnes's Dorset poems.⁴⁹

47. M. Millgate, *op.cit.*, p. 52.

48. T. Hardy, *Life and Work of TH*, *op.cit.*, pp. 9-10, 367, 370. For Barnes see *DNB*. Barnes's pupils were clearly well taught as the success of T.W. Hooper Tolbort, a friend of Hardy and a pupil of Barnes, in the Indian Civil Service examination showed. Tolbort came first nationally and was a long way ahead of the second. T. Hardy *ibid.*, pp. 37, 168.

49. R. Gittings *op.cit.*, p. 69.

Hardy's progress at school was rewarded by Last's giving him at Christmas 1854 *Scenes and Adventures at Home and Abroad* as a prize for his good conduct and diligence. In 1855 Hardy continued his studies of mathematics, French and Latin and for good work in this last subject he was presented with Theodore Beza's *Novum Testamentum* in a pocket edition. Isaac Last continued to teach Hardy in 1855 and a surviving exercise book contains model examples of commercial letters and receipts, all in the pupil's copperplate handwriting from this period. Last tutored Hardy also in "elementary drawing, advanced arithmetic, geometry, and algebra, in which he was fairly good". At Christmas 1855 Hardy was given two volumes of John Cassell's *The Popular Educator* (an early encyclopedia), receiving a third at Whitsun 1856. However in the summer of 1856 Hardy's formal education at school ended.

Undoubtedly Last provided Hardy with a good education for a boy of "his time, place and class" but his imperfect mastery of the classics would not permit him to pursue his ambition at university. Hardy "never quite lost the sense of inferiority and resentment stemming from the incompleteness of his schooling" in this respect.⁵⁰

Last's influence was vital but Jemima's was naturally more telling. Hardy submitted to the *Dorset County Chronicle* an unsigned tribute to his mother in 1904 - "a woman of strong character and marked originality, with the keenest love for literature; and much of her son's work in prose and verse was based upon her memories and opinions".⁵¹ Yet education proved a two-edged sword for Hardy. In his writing it is a means of betterment which also sets apart its recipient from his surroundings, rendering him both discontented and bewildered. In his first novel, *The Poor Man and The Lady*, his hero, "the son of peasants", aspires to win the squire's daughter because his intelligence has been nurtured by his schooling. In *Far From the Madding Crowd* Bathsheba Everdene rejects Gabriel Oak's early advances by stating, "I am better educated than you". Jude Fawley in *Jude the Obscure* is the only Hardy character whose childhood and adolescence are described yet, although the reader learns of Jude's "strenuous private reading", neither he nor any other Hardy character is portrayed at school.

In the opening chapter of *Jude the Obscure* the schoolteacher, Richard Phillotson, admits his academic and clerical ambitions. "My scheme, or dream, is to be a university graduate, and then to be ordained." However Hardy shows from the outset that Jude has over-estimated Phillotson's ability and by the next chapter the schoolteacher is a disappointed man. Clearly Phillotson was not modelled on Hardy's own teacher, Isaac Last, of whom he always retained a high opinion - "his accomplished schoolmaster".⁵²

50. M. Millgate *op.cit.*, pp. 53, 55, T. Hardy *op.cit.*, p. 38.

51. *Dorset County Chronicle*, 7 April 1904.

52. P. Collins "Hardy and Education", N. Page (ed.) *Thomas Hardy: The Writer and His Background*, (1980), p. 66; T. Hardy *op.cit.*, p. 29.

Thomas Hardy, as his life and writings reveal, gave great thought to the religion of his day. As a young man he had ambitions to be ordained in the Church of England. In *Far From the Madding Crowd* Jan Coggan, in speaking to his drinking companions, states that

there's this to be said for the Church, a man can belong to the Church and bide in his cheerful old inn, and never trouble or worry his mind about doctrines at all. But to be a meetinger, you must go to chapel in all winds and weathers, and make yerself as frantic as a skit. Not but that chapel-members be clever chaps enough in their way. They can lift up beautiful prayers out of their own heads, all about their families and ship wracks in the newspaper.

His friend, Joseph Poorgrass, responds, "Chapel-folk be more hand-in-glove with them above than we". From his own experience of Dorset Christianity, perhaps especially of Last, the Woods, Homers, Samsons, as well as the Baptist Perkins family, Hardy suggested this difference between church and chapel: "There are two sorts of church people - those who go and those who don't go: there is only one sort of chapel people; those who go."⁵³

The Woods, Homers and Samsons for several generations provided a closely intertwined network of support for the Congregational churches around Dorchester and also for the British schools. Their families, mostly successful tenant farmers rising into the landowning classes, formed a broad body of rural allegiance to Congregationalism which contrasts with the accepted picture of Wessex Anglicanism in Hardy's day. Thomas Hardy himself was well aware of these Nonconformist neighbours who may not have intruded noticeably into his novels but contributed much to Wessex and, more directly, to him.

ALAN A. ARGENT

53. R. Gittings *op.cit.*, p. 73; T. Hardy *ibid.*, p. 31.

AN OBITUARY FOOTNOTE: SIR EDGAR WILLIAMS CB, CBE, DSO (1912-95) AND THE REVD. J. EDGAR WILLIAMS (1877-1938)

If the obituary is an art form then Nigel Hamilton's recent tribute to the late Sir Edgar Williams is one of its masterpieces.¹ Here is celebrated a pillar of the intellectual establishment: Scholar, then Research Fellow, of Merton; Fellow of Balliol; Warden of Rhodes House ("Oxford's umbilical cord with the English-speaking world", where and under whom the future President Clinton made his retrospective mark) and recipient of ten honorary degrees; Pro-Vice Chancellor, and Editor of the *Dictionary of National Biography*; Athenaeum, Saville and MCC; his first wife the daughter of a chemistry professor from New Zealand. Here is also celebrated a hero of military Intelligence, who was a Brigadier by the time he was thirty-three, thrice mentioned in despatches; an indispensable member of Montgomery's North African staff, described as the "best intelligence officer on any side"; his second wife a major general's daughter from Burke's *Landed Gentry*.² And here too is celebrated a bafflingly complex personality, this "quintessential Oxford don: sharp-tongued, intellectually vain – and all too careful not to present himself as a target for malevolent critics, incapable of leaving his Alma Mater, yet unwilling to meet the historical challenge of his formidable mind [who, in] almost 50 years as a don at the university ... published only two essays and three entries for the *Dictionary of National Biography*". He was so disliked by some colleagues that they spoonerized him into "the Rodent of Ward's House", for, though he "conquered an over-familiarity with the bottle, there remained a sort of sublimated anger that could manifest itself in testiness and even malice towards those who crossed him." Does the clue lie somewhere there, and also in his formation as the "son of a Nonconformist minister, which led to a lifetime's religious discomfort"?

That last, carefully barbed anonymity is what might alert readers of this *Journal*. Perhaps "son of a Nonconformist minister" reflects Williams's own editorial practice, since at the *DNB* "he eschewed inclusion of private or personal details."³ More likely it reflects the general ignorance of contemporary society. Protestant Nonconformity now seems as unreasonable to secular contemporaries as it once was for most Anglicans. Nonconformity of any sort bruises the establishment mind unless tamed into political correctness.

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1. N. Hamilton, "Sir Edgar Williams", *The Independent*, 7 July 1995, p. 18, see also *Who's Who*, 1993.
 2. Gambier-Parry of Highnam Court, Glos. She was a great-niece of Sir Hubert Parry, the composer; an uncle, Brigadier Richard Gambier-Parry, appears in *Who's Who*, (1948) tersely as "attached to a Department of the Foreign Office": more Intelligence?
 3. "He read widely and knew good contributors, but contributed little himself, and edited still less". *The Independent*, *op.cit.*

Yet Williams's Nonconformist background merits consideration; there was nothing obscure or surprising about it. He was born 20 November 1912 the son of Joseph Edgar Williams and Annie Ethel Evans. He had a brother, who also went to Oxford and a sister. His father was a Congregational minister, from an upwardly mobile family, three years into the second of five pastorates.⁴ On the face of it J. Edgar Williams was the model of a modern Congregational minister: born Chester; trained Hackney; ministered Pontypridd (1905-9), Ebenezer Chatham (1909-17), Grange Sunderland (1917-22), Queen Street Wolverhampton (1922-28) and Zion Attercliffe, in Sheffield (1928-38). Each of those churches was large. One of them was nationally known. Two survive. At Pontypridd there was a membership of 382 with a Sunday School of 411 (and a further 297 in a branch school) staffed by twenty teachers; a co-pastor had arrived in 1906 and there was an alderman for church secretary.⁵ So it was in each subsequent pastorate. The Chatham Church had 400 members in 1912, with a further eighty-two in four of its five branch churches; there were 775 children in the main Sunday school and 703 in the five branch schools, as well as 119 teachers and twenty-five lay preachers.⁶ At Sunderland ten years later there were 501 members in the main church, with 246 scholars, twenty-five teachers and four lay preachers, while the two branch churches had 344 scholars, thirty-six teachers and three lay preachers.⁷ Such churches were commonwealths. Queen Street, Wolverhampton, for example, had 567 members, 266 scholars, fifty-five teachers and twenty-three lay preachers; its eight branches produced a further 522 members, 1085 scholars and 124 teachers.⁸ Even Zion Attercliffe, Williams's last and smallest church, had 267 members, 209 children and thirty teachers.⁹ In 1938 it was still Sheffield's third largest Congregational church; its secretary, Harold Turner, was a silver refiner whose family firm had close links with the Sheffield Smelting Company, then into its fifth generation of Congregational ownership. Indeed, Cecil Wilson, pacifist and Labour M.P. for Attercliffe, and a member of that fifth generation, was still an Honorary Deacon at Zion, although he had by then effectively left Congregationalism for Quakerism.¹⁰

These were weighty churches. In his thirty-three years of pastoral ministry J. Edgar Williams had the direct spiritual charge of several thousand people. They were also demanding churches. Each was politically, indeed socially, influential. None was socially impregnable. None offered a pedestal. Each demanded a call.

4. *Who's Who in Congregationalism*, c.1933, p. 94.
5. *Congregational Year Book*, 1909, p. 388.
6. *CYB*, 1913, p. 254.
7. *CYB*, 1922, p. 143.
8. *CYB*, 1927, p. 276.
9. *CYB*, 1939, p. 482.
10. *Sheffield Congregational Year Book*, 1939, p. 56; see also R.E. Wilson. *Two Hundred Precious Metal Years: A History of the Sheffield Smelting Company Limited*, 1960; for Cecil Henry Wilson (1862-1945), Liberal, then Labour city councillor 1903-24, Labour MP Attercliffe 1922-31, 1931-44, see R.E. Wilson, *op.cit.*, esp. pp. 169-216.

So much can be deduced from *Year Books*. Something more can be gleaned from two obituaries clearly drawn from the funeral address given in Sheffield by an old college friend, David Ffrench. Thus, Hackney College meant “the influence of Principal Dr. Forsyth, who taught him to make redeeming love the theme of his preaching and his life” and assured the College preaching class that in Williams they had a born preacher; and some thirty years later at Zion, “his longest pastorate and one of his happiest”, his duties as pastor, his weekly Bible School, “above all the preaching of the Gospel, these were the commanding things to him”. There were three variations on that theme. The first was evangelistic. At Pontypridd there was “a useful ministry, especially among the many young men”; and in Attercliffe there was cooperation with the vicar and fellow Free Church ministers: “he and they held united open-air services in the church, the Wesleyan Hall and chapels ... a united witness to the Master they all served”.¹¹

The second variation was denominational. Williams was one of Congregationalism’s locally representative ministers: Chairman successively of the Northumberland and Durham and Staffordshire Congregational Unions, of the Yorkshire Congregational Union’s Sheffield, Rotherham and Doncaster District and of the Sheffield Congregational Association: President of the North-East Federation of Free Churches and of the Sheffield Free Church Council; a good committee man in Bible Society, Sunday School Union and temperance work (the last of which brought him into frequent contact with Sheffield’s first Bishop); a Director of the London Missionary Society and Chairman of its Sheffield auxiliary; and Secretary of the Sheffield Ministers’ Fraternal. “As to his Secretarial and Presidential activities... and as to committees he has been on for the spiritual and social welfare of others – there is no counting them. He seems to have been incapable of saying ‘No’”. Indeed his fatal attack of pneumonia followed a double dose of meetings – first the Fraternal and then a committee preparing for the 1939 L.M.S. “Swanwick”, which he “left early”.¹²

The third variation was the impact of war. At Chatham Williams held “in addition... a naval chaplaincy for the first three years of the war. The Jubilee Hall of his church was crowded every night with sailors and soldiers and his special services for the men both in the church and in the barracks evoked the best from him.” And at Sunderland his church “released him for service at the Front” where, as a YMCA worker, he held “crowded services and meetings for the soldiers. His Bible Class was always well attended and many are the letters he received afterwards from young men he influenced while out there.”¹³

Thus the national *Congregational Year Book*. The *Sheffield Congregational Year Book* had more to say:

11. *CYB*, 1939, pp. 716-7.

12. *Who's Who in Congregationalism*, p. 94; *CYB*, 1939, p. 717; *SCYB*, 1939, p. 28.

13. *CYB*, 1939, pp. 716-7.

For four months, up to the Armistice, he was stationed just behind Vimy Ridge and was frequently under devastating fire. He had not been physically trained for such experiences and was by nature highly strung. When he returned he seemed to be at first little the worse physically for what he had seen and suffered there. But a few weeks later, his nervous system collapsed. He rallied... It was not many months before he was back again at work; but on the battlefield, in brotherly service, he lost finally some of his physical vigour.¹⁴

David Ffrench knew what he was talking about, for during his own recent ministry in Leeds, at Newton Park, Gordon Stowell, his predecessor's son, had published a well-regarded novel which had graphically described how Newton Park had been knocked sideways by the war. Nor had it regained its balance, for the social composition of what had been a quietly desirable suburb was rapidly changing in the face of Jewish immigrants and municipal housing schemes.¹⁵ Although Attercliffe had not been quietly desirable in living memory, it too was on the verge of transformation. In the 1930s it was a densely populated, working-class district cheek by jowl with Sheffield's heavy industry. Zion was remarkable in sustaining in its gauntly powerful building a strong and socially mixed congregation; but the writing was on the wall. Williams arrived two years after Sheffield had become what it has since remained, a Labour-controlled city. Its traditional Liberalism had collapsed. Consequently, if ministry in Attercliffe were still for the civic-minded, it was not for the squeamish. Already large suburban council estates were preparing the way for what the Second World War would complete, the collapse of a significant community. Williams, with his successful career in five strong churches, had first-hand experience of two of the most disintegrative influences on the ministry for which he had been trained:

no one of us can affirm that the Church of to-day is hopeful and joyous. We are burdened and careworn, prone to think our task is too great for us.

Ours *is* a great task. Ours it is to establish the Kingdom of God in the world. And our task is the greater because we have not only to overcome the indifference of others, but our own apathy.

We have to meet not active and positive hostility, but the more subtle enemy of a vast unbelief that makes men utterly indifferent

14. *SCYB*, 1939, p. 28.

15. G. Stowell, *The History of Button Hill*, (Gollancz, 1929). This is explored in C. Binfield, "The Story of Button Hill: an Essay in Leeds Nonconformity", in A. Mason ed. *Religion in Leeds*. Stroud 1994, pp. 79-107.

to our message. With the great majority of our fellows God simply doesn't count.¹⁶

Williams certainly counted with his friends. David Ffrench, whose own five churches had been smaller but not less eligible than Williams's and who had overlapped with him in Sunderland, retired to Sheffield "for the sake of being in the same city as Mr. Williams, and a member of his Church."¹⁷ And the *Year Book* obituary contains a rare editorial intrusion: "I loved him too and greatly mourn his loss - Ed."¹⁸ "Ed." was J.B. Gotts, a civil servant whose wife had been President of the Chatham and Gillingham Women's Liberal Association from 1908 to 1913.¹⁹ That link with J. Edgar Williams's second pastorate and progressive Nonconformity's Edwardian high noon brings us back to Sir Edgar Williams.

He was not quite twenty-six, newly married and back in Oxford after a spell at Liverpool University, when his father died. His youth had been passed in the incessantly busy manses of three large, demanding and changing industrial towns, varied by Tettenhall College (it was hard for a Queen Street minister's son not to go to Tettenhall) where he experienced three headmasters,²⁰ and King Edward VII School, Sheffield, a very different place, which had been transformed from the proprietary Wesley College (it was, architecturally, a scaled down version of Wentworth Woodhouse and a scaled up version of a mahogany age Methodist chapel) into one of the North's great grammar schools: ample scope there for a "lifetime's religious discomfort". The rest is conjecture and therefore unsatisfactory. Nonetheless it makes credible the son's independence of mind, his incisiveness, even "his remarkable ability both to summarise essentials and place those essentials within a quasi-historical context."²¹ His expository gift was clearly inherited, his service on useful

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16. "The Chairman's Message", SCYB, 1938, p. 15.
 17. For William David Ffrench (1880-1961), Radnor Park Folkestone 1905-8, Lightcliffe near Halifax 1908-15, Union Sunderland 1915-21, St. George's West Hartlepool 1921-26 and Newton Park Leeds 1926-37 see *CYB* 1962, p. 458. Williams's first manse in Sheffield was in Chippingham Street, in the heart of Attercliffe near Zion (Cecil Wilson had settled in the same street in a similar demonstration of solidarity with the community), but by 1934 he had completed the first of three northward moves uphill to Firth Park; the Ffrenchs settled in the same district.
 18. *CYB*, 1939, p. 717.
 19. John Benjamin Gotts MBE, OBE, b.1876, of Sidcup, was Chairman of the Civil Service Education Council and editor of the *British Imperial Calendar* and *Civil Service List*. He was also Deputy Chairman of the Independent Press and had been Chairman of the London Congregational Union. His Quaker-educated wife (Gertrude Bertha Gower) listed her recreations as "Social work, journalism", *Who's Who in Congregationalism*, c.1933, p. 138.
 20. A.H. Angus, Percy Day and (more notably) Horace Pearson, see G.V. Hancock, *History of Tettenhall College*, Wolverhampton 1963, esp. pp. 118 *et seq.* In 1927 there were 81 pupils.
 21. *Independent*, 7 July 1995. Subsequent quotations are taken from this.

committees and for efficient causes becomes predictable and one can understand why here might be a man who “did not dissimulate or drive” but who “revelled in bus travel”. Though he was Trevor in Zion but Bill in Oxford, he did not deny his roots: in *Who's Who* he is listed as a Freeman of Chester, his father's city, he contributed a notably sensitive foreword to the published version of David Ffrench's memorial address, he maintained some at least of his Sheffield friendships and in 1981 he accepted an honorary degree from the University of Sheffield. It was noted that he was the sole honorary graduand to wear morning dress.²² And so to Oxford, his fatal success.

Educated sons of the manse of Williams's generation were properly ambitious not for business or industry but for public service or politics (though the Liberal politics which Williams championed in school debates was no longer a sensible option and Tory politics was perhaps still too close to betrayal for conscientious Congregationalists) or the professions. And of the professions the academic was surely the most satisfying. Again, eighteenth-century cabinet government as contexted by the Polish Lewis Namier and developed by the Methodist Herbert Butterfield, outsiders both but the latter at least a proof that outsiders could be assimilated with integrity, was at the cutting edge of the new History. Then came the Second World War. This man, the second generation to experience military service from a class for which such service had been inconceivable, whose childhood had been shadowed by the implications of one war and who found his abilities liberated in a second, was, it seems, defeated by Oxford. “It was tough... to slip back into the role of a college fellow at Balliol after having second-guessed the greatest German commanders” and it proved impossible to write about a war of which he knew too many secrets when he was “too honest” to write as if they did not exist. “In a different university, perhaps, or in a different profession he might have turned his dazzling mind to greater advantage.” Can there be any greater discomfort than conscience at odds with indolence in Oxford?

CLYDE BINFIELD

22. And his brother-in-law, Brian Bennett, was treasurer of Sheffield's Broompark Congregational Church into the late 1960s. I am indebted to Mrs. M. Andrews, Mr P. Bentley, Lord Dainton, Ms. S. Fetto, Mrs. J. Hamilton, Ms. J. Lauriston, Mrs. A. Priestley and Professor E. Wilkes for further information.