

THE STATE OF RELIGION
IN NORTHAMPTONSHIRE (1793)
BY ANDREW FULLER

The letter from Andrew Fuller transcribed below is preserved in the Congregational Library, London (Box H d 9). With other documents, it appears to be part of the response to an inquiry concerning the state of religion in England and Wales which the Board of Managers of the *Evangelical Magazine* instituted when the *Magazine* was established in 1793. The "Heads of Enquiry" were approved and transcribed in their first Minute Book, which in 1974 came into the possession of the Library of the United Reformed Church History Society in London. John Eyre was given the title of "Final Editor".

I have not succeeded in identifying Fuller's correspondent, Josiah Lewis. A copy of John Gill's *The Watchman's Answer to the Question, What of the Night?* (1792) is preserved in the Congregational Library, which was given to Lewis on 16th July 1801 by Dan Taylor, so possibly Lewis was a General Baptist of the New Connexion, and a layman.

The names of the six forerunners to whose labours Fuller looks back with gratitude make an interesting list. Hervey, Doddridge, Ryland and Maurice are still remembered; Abraham Maddock was Thomas Jones' predecessor as curate-in-charge of Great Creaton; William Grant was pastor of the Independent church worshipping at West End, Wellingborough.

In square brackets I have inserted a number of Christian names, the Baptist names from the lists printed in the first two volumes of the *Baptist Annual Register*, the Independent from T. Coleman's *Memorials of the Independent Churches in Northamptonshire* (1853). What Fuller does is to provide an overview showing the combined strength of the two denominations in this strongly Dissenting county, with the names of some Evangelical clergy for good measure. Brook Bridges was brother-in-law of William Jones of Nayland.

GEOFFREY F. NUTTALL

Address:

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Kettering May 23. 93

Dear Sir

In answer to yours I transmit you the best account I am able to procure of the state of religion in Northamptonshire. This County is said to contain 136 parishes, and 13 Market Towns. Out of these there are about 6 or 7 parish Churches

where the doctrines of the Reformation, as delivered in the 39 Articles of the Church of England, are taught, and in some of them especially, with very good effect.

The number of protestant Dissenters in this County is considerable. They consist of about 40 Congregations, 21 of which are Baptists.

There is some diversity of sentiment amongst them as to doctrinal subjects, yet upon the whole they lean to what is called the orthodox system. I do not recollect above 1 or 2 Congregations at most, where the Deity, or Atonement of Christ are disowned; and even in these, I suppose there are many individuals who believe in them. The doctrines taught in some of the pedobaptist pulpits approaches near to Arminianism; but in the greater part of them it is what is usually called, Moderate Calvinism. Amongst the Baptists, there are 4 or 5 Churches who embrace what is called the High-Calvinist Scheme, disapproving of unconverted sinners being exhorted to the performance of any thing spiritually good. But the greater part of the Baptists, while they imbibe the Doctrines of grace, consider them as Calvin, and all the Reformers did, as being consistent with the obligations of men to repent from sin and believe in Christ, and therefore make no scruple of exhorting them to these duties. Of the last description there has been of late some considerable increase. Seven or Eight new Churches have been raised amongst them within the last 20 Years.

Besides the above, there are, especially of late, pretty many of the *Methodists* of Mr Wesley's connexion. There appears to be some truly religious people amongst them; but it is apprehended by thinking people that their labours have too great a tendency to mislead mankind, by encouraging them on slight and insufficient grounds to hope for eternal life.

There is a readiness discovered in many parts of the County for hearing the gospel; and the inhabitants in general behave towards a minister with decency and respect. The writer of this sketch has lived in the county for upwards of ten Years, and has preached occasionally in many villages, without ever meeting with the least interruption or uncivil treatment; and he does not much doubt but he could go through the County and meet with the like reception.

Pure Religion, it is thought by many has of late years been upon the increase. It were improper to name places, or persons, who are yet living, thus much however, I may say, The labours of *Hervey*, *Mattock*, *Doddridge*, *Ryland*, *Grant*, *Maurice*, and some others, were productive of effects which are still seen with pleasure in different parts of the County.

Episcopalians

Aldwinkle Rev Mr [Thomas] Hawes
 near Thrapstone Curate Mr [Charles]
 Chew
 Wade, near Dr [Brook] Bridges
 Thrapstone
 and Orlingbury
 Wharkton Rev Lydeat
 near Kettering
 Daventry Rev Humphreys
 Creaton Rev [Thomas] Jones
 near Northampton

There is also a Mr *Draper* not
 far from Daventry; but whether
 his Church be in Northamptonshire
 or Warwickshire I cannot tell.

Pedobaptists Dissenters

Ashley Rev [George] Bullock
 Rowell [John] Wood
 Kettering [T. N.] Toller
 Welford [John] Bicknell
 Creaton [Joseph] Whitehead
 Yelvertoft [Henry] Knight
 Kilsby -----
 Long Buckby [Richard] Denny
 Weedon & Flowre [T.] Spencer
 Daventry [T. W.] Pattison
 Pottersperry [John] Goode
 Yardly [Thomas] Raban
 Northampton [John] Horsey
 Do. [B. L.] Edwards
 Wellingborough [John] Carver
 Do. [Henry] Sommers
 Woolaston no Minister
 but a Mr [David] Hennell who
 might be applied to

Oundle [Joseph] Chadwick
 Brigstock [Maurice] Philips

Baptists

Braybrook [John] Eayre [Ayer]
 near Harborough
 Braunstone [John] Symonds
 near Daventry
 Clipstone [J. W.] Morris
 Gretton [William] Butler
 Guilsborough [John] Edmonds
 Hackleton [John] Luck
 He lives at Northampton
 Irthlingborough [William] Hall
 Kettering [Andrew] Fuller
 Do. [John] Satchell
 Long Buckby [William] Cole

Middleton Cheney [Thomas] Greene
 Moulton [Edward] Sharman
 (Lives at Cottesbrook)
 Northampton [John] Ryland
 Ringstead [Robert] Tweltree
 Road [William] Heighton
 Rushden [William] Knowles
 Thrapston [Reynold] Hogg
 Walgrave [Alexander] Payne
 Towcester [William] Amphlet
 Weston by Weedon [John] Law
 Barton near [Thomas] Shrewsbury
 Wellingborough

The Above Mr Editor is the best acct. I can obtain; You will
 make what use of it you please.

I am Yrs &c A. Fuller