

THE REVEREND EDWARD PARKER

(1) THE YORKSHIRE MINISTRY

Edward Parker, born at Thame in Oxfordshire in January 1831, as a youth had strong connections with the Anglican Church there, from whose incumbent he received his first instructions in Bible study, imbibing that strong Calvinism which so characterized his theology to the end.(1) In later years, however, Parker found little that appealed to him in the Anglican Church and was sometimes excessive in his criticism of its structure in society.

While serving as a young apprentice in business at Leighton Buzzard, Parker joined Hockliffe Street Baptist Church during the troubled pastorate of William Paine who served there from 1848-54.(2) The decision to affiliate with the Baptists stemmed from the influence of a Baptist family who guided him into an understanding of conservative views regarding baptism.(3) It was a conversion to a lifelong conviction; henceforth the centrality of baptism remained the fixed star of his theological horizon as well as the chief criterion by which he evaluated other denominational positions.

Following Parker's conversion, Hockliffe Street Church recognized in him 'a gift of usefulness' and urged him to enter the ministry. Aware of the need for training, he was in the process of applying to Stepney College when the Baptist Evangelical Society was brought to his attention.(4) Within the auspices of this Society, Parker studied for two years under Thomas Dawson in Liverpool in the old apprentice fashion. Dawson himself had been educated under William Steadman at Horton College, Bradford, and long had Yorkshire connections before crossing the Pennines. Northern tutor of the Baptist Evangelical Society, he was a leading architect in the development of several closed-communion Calvinistic enterprises in the nineteenth century, and was responsible for the education of a number of young men for the ministry, including Parker. The latter lived in his household for two years in the mid 1850s where he received 'pastoral and academic training of a most exacting nature'.(5) In what religious activity Parker may have engaged while under the tutelage of Dawson is unknown, but not many years after embarking on his own ministry he was advising ministerial candidates 'to go where they could combine practical activity with studying the word of God and preparing for greater usefulness in the church of God'.(6) Parker never forgot the contribution Dawson made to his education and on numerous occasions honoured him at significant mileposts in his career, such as at his induction into the pastorate, and his installation as president of Manchester College. A lasting legacy of his tutor's influence is seen in Parker's unyielding conservatism.

Parker was ordained on 19th August 1857 at the age of twenty-six and was inducted to the pastorate of the Baptist Church at Milnsbridge (Aeon) near Huddersfield. This was a relatively young church of the Yorkshire Association, having been formed in 1843. When Parker left, its membership numbered 82 and it had by then a thriving Sunday School. Few other details of his ministry at Milnsbridge have been

retrieved since the records for the church's first twenty years have been lost.(7) Parker's two year ministry there was distracted with overtures from other churches; in 1859 for much of the year he simultaneously pondered 'a hearty call from the church at Hebden Bridge' as well as one from Farsley. Had he opted for the former, as appears to have been his original intent, he might have drunk more deeply from the well of John Fawcett. To what degree at this point of his career Parker was familiar with the work of Fawcett is unknown, but in later life he came to admire him greatly. Reaching a decision between Hebden Bridge and Farsley proved 'painful and perplexing' to the young minister who waited long to see 'in which direction the pillar of cloud would move'.(8) When Parker settled on Farsley, he was not forgotten at Hebden Bridge. Almost two decades later, when that church celebrated its centennial, he gave an address there which was published in its centenary history.(9)

Parker had preached for the first time at the Farsley Church, then known as Rehobeth Chapel, on 12th December 1858, a few days after the pulpit was vacated on the retirement of Jonas Foster following a thirty-four year pastorate. The prospective young pastor preached again in January and church records indicate that by February 1859 there was a strong desire on the part of most of the congregation to secure him as minister, though a few wanted to seek out a more learned and gifted man. In seeking divine guidance, Farsley held a three-hour prayer meeting 'characterized by great fervour and many found the Hearer of Prayer to be present and realized a season of great enjoyment'.(10) After further detailed deliberations the congregation extended a unanimous call on 9th March 1859. The long handwritten pastoral invitation was personally delivered by two deacons the following day. Six weeks later, additional information was conveyed to Parker in response to some of his inquiries. 'What is the minimum amount of salary the church offers to its ministers?' The response: 'The pew rents and house rents will realize £100'. He was assured that the church would rent a parsonage until a new one could be erected, would contribute two guineas per year to the Aged Ministerial Fund of the Yorkshire Association, and would allow the pastor leave of four Sundays a year. In return; he was to conduct services thrice each Sunday - in the morning, afternoon and evening.(11)

Enthusiastic as Farsley was to have Parker, the church was 'obliged to submit to anxiety and suspense' for several additional months in 1859.(12) Not until the end of August did he forward an affirmative reply, one that expressed confidence of being in the will of God, hope for great success, and ended with a passionate plea for the supplication of the people. 'Bear me up in your hearts at the throne of Grace, that my earthen vessels may be filled with heavenly treasure'.(13) It was on 7th September 1859 that he and Mrs Parker arrived at the village where he commenced his ministry the following Sunday.

The village of Farsley, with a population well under 4,000, was located out on the moors in the Pudsey area to the west of Leeds. In urging its spiritual needs upon Parker, the congregation referred to it as 'this extensive locality'. Though still small, it bore increasingly the

marks of an accelerating industrial economy. The manner in which its quiet village ways were being touched by the growth of Leeds and Bradford was a story duplicated many times throughout Yorkshire during the industrial revolution. Farsley was an ancient village which, along with Calverley, constituted a manor as early as William the Conqueror's Domesday survey.(14) Baptist work began only in 1777, and initially covered Horsforth, Bramley and Pudsey as well. The new church was formed by members who had previously been under the pastoral care of William Crabtree, the first pastor of Westgate, Bradford.

Prior to Parker's arrival in Farsley, due to the recent depression resulting from the 1857 slump caused by the Crimean War and bank failures in America, many families in the church were destitute.(15) However, from 1859-77 his ministry there took place against the backdrop of an expanding northern economy recovering impressively from the slump. A spirit of optimism and progress, characteristic of so much Victorian society, marked his ministry. The church bought additional land, the cemetery was enlarged and improved at a cost of £660, and a new parsonage, built of sandstone from Horsworth, was erected on a more suitable site.(16) The parsonage cost £650, perhaps a hundred pounds more than the typical home built for Nonconformist ministers in Yorkshire in the 1860s. Though the church had incurred some indebtedness, trade had experienced brisk revival and the working classes were well employed. This, coupled with a spirit of generosity which pervaded the congregation, allowed little room for anxiety. Concerning its minister's move into the parsonage the church minutes enthusiastically recorded, 'Long may its first occupant reside in it as our pastor of the Baptist Church, Farsley'.(17)

Manifest spiritual progress marked Parker's pastorate in Farsley from the beginning. The church sent to the Yorkshire Association in 1860 its most favourable report in seventeen years, and by 1865 momentum had reached high tide. Parker had by then baptized 110 people into the church. Where the sex of the candidates was indicated, more than two thirds were women, who outnumbered male members at least two to one throughout his ministry. John Marshall, one of the deacons, and for more than half a century a bulwark of strength to the congregation, compiled some interesting data in 1865. Church membership had stood at 150 when Parker began his pastorate. Twenty-one of these had died in six years and other attritions had reduced this original band to 117. These statistics become more personal when Parker is depicted standing at the deathbed of the wife of one of his deacons tenderly assuring her that the Lord would perfect that which he had begun in her. It was her husband who had hand-delivered the pastoral invitation from the church to him. Another death in the church at about the same time was that of Parker's predecessor, Jonas Foster, with whom strong bonds had been forged during the six years Parker had been in Farsley.(18) Parker's ministry had added a sufficient number of new members so that in 1865 membership had doubled and stood at 234. Under him 124 additional sittings had been let, taxing Rehobeth Chapel to its utmost.(19) In subsequent years church membership did not show the same dramatic increase, but a decade later Farsley Nonconformity experienced a

remarkable religious upsurge stimulated by the two-year preaching tour of Moody and Sankey in Britain. In 1875, the year Moody returned to the States, Parker baptized thirty-two into his church. Attritions still ran high and in 1877 when he left Farsley membership stood at only 264. He maintained a vigorous Sunday School which at times approached 400 scholars.

As early as 1865 the church recognized that Rehobeth Chapel was no longer adequate for the enlarged membership. A few of the trustees preferred adding more seats to the old chapel, but the majority agreed on a new sanctuary at a cost with furnishings of about £4,000, though Yorkshire chapels could be erected for as little as £1,200. The new chapel was to be ninety-feet long with a forty-foot ceiling and built of the same type of stone as the parsonage. Construction was to be delayed until the church had raised half of the projected cost in cash and solid pledges, a goal achieved by April 1868 when almost two thousand people gathered near the Green for the laying of the foundation stone. It was decided to leave the old building standing and to relocate the new structure on a site much nearer the village where most of the members had their homes. Henry Dowson, who had recently left his long pastorate at Westgate, Bradford, gave the main address followed by one of those delightful Victorian social occasions when 1100 people were served tea in a warehouse because church facilities could not accommodate the crowd. (20)

A bottle containing the names of the pastor and deacons, a copy of *The Leeds Mercury*, *The Freeman*, and *The Primitive Church Magazine* was placed in the stone. The new building, including the balcony, seated about 1100, well beyond the actual membership. (21) Parker's ambitious building programme was in line with the nineteenth-century practice of erecting chapels for great throngs of worshippers who were not baptized members. Sermon-tasters were a well-accepted feature of Victorian England and Parker attracted his share of them, particularly on Sunday nights. Thus, accommodation had to be provided for them. Moreover, the large families of the day, coupled with the fact that children seldom joined the church until well into their teens, swelled congregational attendance far beyond actual membership, and there was no small pride and competition among Nonconformists in having spacious chapels. There is no question that under Parker, Farsley was acquiring a prestige hitherto denied it. By the end of his tenure it was said, 'The church at Farsley has prospered so greatly that now it is one of the largest and most influential in the district'. (22)

Records show that the largest contribution toward the new sanctuary which was opened in October 1869 was £315, the next £210, and Parker himself gave the third largest gift of £110. (23) Special events marked the opening of the chapel. Throngs gathered twice in midweek to hear two sermons from a Birmingham preacher. With much obvious *esprit de corps* the congregation raised the remaining £530 on the indebtedness to declare triumphally the chapel debt free, after which a thunderous doxology was sung. Two thousand people gathered for a Sunday night sermon by Joseph P. Chown, the eminently regarded Bradford pastor. A Monday tea was attended by hundreds. (24) A few years after the opening of the new chapel, a

splendid organ was added to the sanctuary and improvements to the interior made it one of the most beautiful chapels in the North. These later improvements were made possible by an astoundingly successful bazaar which realized more than £2,000 for the church. The building which Parker erected stood for about a century, until it was demolished in 1970 and the land sold for housing development with fourteen residences placed upon it.(25) Thus, it lasted deeper into the twentieth century than did some of the more renowned chapels which adorned Nonconformity in the last century.

By the time the new edifice had been occupied, Parker had completed a decade of successful ministry in Farsley; yet the years had put him to strong tests and at times he had walked in deep sorrow. Adhering to the tradition of conducting three services each Sunday proved so strenuous for him that in November 1863 the church agreed 'to hire' a supply preacher who was paid five shillings for the afternoon worship for about two years, until this particular service was discontinued due to dwindling interest. Parker, always passionately evangelistic, concentrated in the evening on evangelism which proved particularly fruitful among young adults. Handbills were distributed announcing the sermons with the confidence that a 'considerable number of our young friends, and others approaching thirty years of age, have been led by these special discourses to seek for mercy through Christ'.(26)

On a Sunday evening in May 1865 personal sorrow came to the pastor in the death of his thirty-year old wife, Alice Mary, who died of consumption. Church records described her as 'a beloved member' and 'excellent wife'.(27) That month Leeds reported one of the higher death rates in the United Kingdom, only slightly surpassed by Liverpool and Glasgow.(28) Coupled with the minister's personal grief, there had been some unkind attitudes from members of the church towards the building project for which the church apologized to Parker. Recognizing the strain under which he had worked, the congregation raised a purse of £26 in 1866 and asked that he take at least a month's holiday. The church lovingly wrote, 'During the last twelve months especially, one wave after another and often one wave upon another has rolled over you. You have been troubled on every side ... While we weep and sympathize with you we would recognize the hand of our heavenly Father in the troubles that have befallen you and pray that he may educe good out of seeming evil'.(29)

Less than five years after losing Alice, Parker's second wife, Joanna Hainsworth, died unexpectedly on 3rd January 1870 at the age of thirty-four after giving birth to a daughter, Elizabeth Jemima.(30) Little wonder that on the death of this 'useful, amiable, and actively benevolent' lady these lines were inscribed: 'To the church this event has caused intense grief and to the bereaved husband anguish almost insupportable'.(31)

The decade of the 1860s had been marked by ostensible growth and progress for English Baptists but also by the continuing controversy over open communion which had erupted earlier. Parker's own congregation had made the rebuilding of its sanctuary the occasion to reaffirm its statement on communion: Church records state that the

vote showed 'great unanimity' with a large majority opting for the resolution that 'none partake of the Lord's Supper or become a member of the church without having first followed Christ by being immersed in his name'.(32) Parker became well-known throughout Yorkshire as a bastion of strength for this position. He gave himself unstintedly to that wing of the denomination which clung to the old ways with regard to communion, theological conservatism, and aloofness from non-Baptists.

Breath-taking theological progress characterized the middle of the Victorian century but there was little in this which appealed to Parker. His pithy reference to that pregnant period as 'days of shifting belief and no belief at all' tersely revealed an attitude that remained unmoved to the end.(33) One of the anecdotes which Parker liked most to relate was that of an old Puritan who was cast out in the great ejection of 1662. On being told that his coat had become threadbare he remarked, 'Thank God, at least it has never been turned'.(34) In far from precise definition, Parker tended to categorize all theological innovation in terms of Rationalism, Popery, and Puseyism, terms which had for him their own code of meaning. He felt that Baptists who were of a kindred mind with him had a special responsibility to guard against the encroachment of Puseyite principles among the poor of England in an age when Anglicanism had become more awakened to the needs of the industrial masses of the North.(35)

While residing in Yorkshire, Parker was an ardent supporter of the Baptist Evangelical Society with its conservative platform. He regularly attended regional and national meetings, served as one of its secretaries, and persistently raised funds for its causes. Scores of people contributed to it each year through his instrumentality and Farsley church annually took a collection for the Society's work. In 1864 church records noted, 'Our worthy pastor is in Scotland begging for the Baptist Evangelical Society'.(36) Acknowledging that many Baptists thought education made one 'misty and proud', Parker declared that it was not education that 'leads to this result, but the amount of ignorance that remains'.(37) He urged total support for the Baptist Evangelical Society and claimed that no one else was doing more with less money.

The Primitive Church Magazine, whose motto was 'one Lord, one faith, one baptism', was the influential mouthpiece of this Society. When William Stokes of Manchester retired as editor in 1864, Parker became joint editor with John Howe. Through its columns the strict Baptist call to contend for the ordinances once delivered by Christ and the apostles echoed repeatedly. For example, in 1867 fifty-one members of the church in Rochdale moved out to form a new congregation in opposition to open communion. The paper declared, 'We cordially commend this infant cause to the earnest and prayerful sympathy of all who desire to keep the ordinances of the gospel as they have been delivered to us by Christ and his apostles'.(38) Through the pages of *The Primitive Church*, Parker came to be more widely known throughout much of the United Kingdom and to some degree in the United States. He preached in London in 1864 while attending a meeting of the Society.

In Parker's perception, 'Strict' or close communion Baptists were a despised minority who lacked that much-prized Victorian virtue, respectability. A graduate of their college in Manchester, who was living in White Plains, New York, explained to Americans that for the most part British 'Stricts' flourished in the country and in small towns and were relatively weak in wealth and influence. In consequence, they were somewhat overshadowed by larger city churches.(39) Parker and these religiously conservative people were strong adherents of Gladstone's Liberal party.

During the eighteen years Parker resided in Farsley, he was frequently astir in the work of the Yorkshire Association and its committees. One of the few times that he missed its annual meeting was in 1865, after his first wife had but recently died. Some items of the Association show that he often attended committee meetings, and performed yeoman service for this body in numerous ways.(40) He gave himself especially to the visiting of struggling churches and emerging mission stations in the growing industrial areas. The late C. B. Jewson of Norwich once wrote, 'One of the evidences of the vitality of our fathers' faith was their readiness to travel for it when travelling was much more difficult than it is today'.(41) Parker did an unrelenting amount of travel throughout Yorkshire and beyond, which of course was one of the reasons he came to be so well-known and influential. In later life he declared, 'I think I may safely affirm that during a series of years no two pastors did more Home Mission work among the Baptist churches of Yorkshire than Mr [John] Haslam and myself. And I think too, that without undue egotism and pride we may be permitted to point, he to Gildersome, and I to Farsley, as proof that our churches did not suffer for what we did'.(42) Other ministers of the Association were in accord with this assessment with regard to Parker. In a printed address they pointed out that his accomplishments were most notable at Morley, Middlesborough, Batley, Normanton, Beeston Hill, and Harrogate. He was also known to have been personally generous in financial aid to evangelists in the Association and in rendering aid to congregations at Borobridge, Bedale, Masham, and Ossett.(43)

The claims of the smaller churches of this Association upon the larger ones was always close to his heart. He prepared a circular letter which dealt with this matter and which proposed practical means by which the fifty or more smaller churches of Yorkshire might be assisted. He saw the need for assistance not exclusively in financial aid. Parker favoured the amalgamation of churches where feasible, but when this was impracticable the Association should adopt measures to make them viable. In no way should their independence be intruded upon, nor should the self respect of these churches be wounded. 'They must be relieved, but not humbled; provided for but not pauperized'.(44)

The Yorkshire Association elected Parker its president in 1876. Though widely known for his strict views on baptism and communion, he earned the good will of those who opposed him on this. He was perceived as being completely fair to those who differed from him. An observation from the ministers contemporary with him underscores this:

By conviction and long association you have been identified

with the strict communion section of our Denomination, yet, while ever faithful to your principles, you have been generous to those who have differed from you. In all denominational work your impartiality and brotherly kindness have been conspicuous, and, as a consequence, both sections have reposed in you a confidence which no one ever secured before; whilst the unity and well being of the whole body have been promoted in a remarkable degree.(45)

It was while Parker presided over the Association that the long and acrimonious division which had resulted over the application of Blenheim Church in Leeds for membership in the body was healed. Because this church, formed in 1848, accepted Paedobaptists into its membership, it had been denied membership of the Yorkshire Association on several occasions.(46) Following prolonged discussion between the Association Committee and the deacons of Blenheim Church, it was accepted for membership in 1877 with the agreement that it would enumerate only those members baptized by immersion in its report to the Association and append a footnote stating, 'This church has some unbaptized members in addition who are not included in the above statistics'.(47)

Parker's church celebrated its centennial in July 1877: As part of the function Spurgeon, who once referred to Parker as a man of 'hearty and genial spirit and sound doctrine',(48) preached twice in August to huge audiences who came through drenching rains to fill the chapel to capacity, admission being by ticket only. Farsley rewarded Spurgeon with an offering for his Stockwell Orphanages which exceeded £110. Centennial joy in Farsley was diluted by the news that Parker had been elected president of the Baptist College in Manchester. On 1st August 1877 he informed the church of his decision to accept the invitation, his resignation to be effective from 21st October. A profoundly moved congregation called upon him to reconsider, but this he would not do.(49)

Something of the tenure of Baptist ministers in Yorkshire may be noted in the fact that Parker had been at Farsley eighteen years, yet at least ten others had been with their churches longer than he. Including the brief years of his earlier pastorate at Milnsbridge, Parker had served two decades as a pastor in Yorkshire. The Manchester years which now lay before him were to extend almost precisely to the same duration. The many contacts and deep roots with the Yorkshire churches would stand him in good stead as he now turned his career in Manchester toward the training of young men for the pastoral ministry.

(2) MANCHESTER YEARS

The decision to sever ties with the church at Farsley to become president of Manchester College was not without struggle for Parker, nor without anguish for his congregation. With a strong sense of divine guidance, Parker assumed his duties as the college's second president on 21st October 1877.(50) His long association with the Baptist Evangelical Society, coupled with the high regard with which

he was held throughout the North, made him a logical choice to succeed Henry Dowson whose health and eyesight were deteriorating. Moreover, Parker had served as one of the secretaries of the college from its inception in 1866. The same year that Parker went to Manchester witnessed the forging of another bond between Farsley and the college, when John Turner Marshall, whom Parker had baptized as a young man at Farsley, joined the faculty as classical tutor at a salary of £270. Farsley maintained very strong connections with the college well into the present century, but Marshall was undoubtedly that village's most scholarly contribution to the institution, guiding his students to high accomplishments in both Greek and Hebrew.(51) He received a London M.A. External Degree and in recognition of his scholarship Manchester University conferred on him a Doctorate in Divinity. Marshall knew and understood Edward Parker as few men did. Contemporaries cited his father as one of Parker's model deacons in the church at Farsley.(52) In later years the younger Marshall, who succeeded him as president, wrote the obituary of Parker and ultimately became a major source for the reconstruction of his life and career.

The small college to which the trustees had unanimously invited Parker, at an annual salary of £300, had been founded in 1866 at Chamber Hall, Bury, to the north of Manchester. Had an earlier proprietor at Chester not withdrawn his lease upon learning that his property was to be used as a Nonconformist college, the institution would have been located there.(53) A bit of history was attached to the college's Chamber Hall premises in that it had been the ancestral home of the first Mr Robert Peel, self-made manufacturer and father of the prime minister. Here in 1787 the first Mr Peel entertained John Wesley and thirty-six of his preachers at breakfast when they were in Manchester for a Wesleyan conference.(54) In 1872, while Henry Dowson was still president, the college moved from Bury to its present site in Brighton Grove, with an address and the laying of the corner stone by Spurgeon. During Parker's presidency, the rapid expansion of Manchester began to encroach upon the quiet arcadian setting which had been a factor in attracting the college to Brighton Grove. His administration had to deal with paving and flagging of streets, sewage lines, telegraph wires, and the changing of its gates to accommodate the new flow of traffic.(55)

The clearly defined mission of Manchester College was to train ministers along the principles of the closed-communion Baptists who claimed denominational strength in Lancashire and Yorkshire. Throughout much of the North their lament echoed: 'Many of the young men went into the colleges as saints and came out as scholars. If they go into them Strict, they generally come out of them open'.(56) It was this indictment which had lured Henry Dowson from his large and successful pastorate of thirty years at Westgate, Bradford, to become the college's first president. While it is true that many in Lancashire had never entirely acquiesced in the location of Rawdon College in Leeds, the overriding concern in launching Manchester College was the growing tendency toward open communion.(57) After the *Primitive Church Magazine* ceased publication in 1869, the college in effect provided a local habitation in the North which became even more pivotal in the propagation of its pinpointed theology. The

president and faculty were required to 'hold substantially' to the doctrinal views of the London Confession of 1689, and to the institution's peculiar tenets regarding communion.(58) Parker was thoroughly versed in the London Confession as his Farsley church had adhered to it rigidly.

Closed-communion and Particular Baptists had long treasured the traditional method of placing a ministerial candidate under the supervision of 'a ministering brother' who trained him for a term of about three years.(59) Echoes of this close rapport are perhaps reflected in Parker's response to the address of welcome given him by the college in December 1877, when he expressed a firm desire to be a father, brother and minister to the students. Training them would be a congenial task for him as he anticipated no difficulty in teaching what he knew and 'was determined not to attempt to teach what he did not know'.(60) Evidence was unmistakable that over a span of two decades Parker was more than ordinarily successful in his personal relationship with the students who showed remarkable fidelity to him long after leaving college. It may be observed that the small body of students admitted to the institution each year were carefully chosen in the first place. Students were not generally admitted until they had been preaching at least one year. Each candidate had to state in writing the circumstances of his conversion, his views on baptism and communion, and to provide an explanation for his decision to enter the ministry. Once admitted, students were considered on probation for the first three months of their enrolment.(61) Manchester students regularly took their meals in Parker's home and for this the college paid him a boarding allowance.(62) Since the number of students did not exceed twenty in a given term, there was ample opportunity for them to become intimately acquainted with the president and his family.

Parker had been at Manchester only a few months when his third wife, Harriet, died suddenly and unexpectedly on 14th June 1878 at the age of forty-nine. The president's wife was expected to play a leading role in what was termed the domestic affairs of the college, and this the third Mrs Parker had begun to do.(63) Parker soon remarried but in less than five years, in January 1883, was once more faced with the death of his wife, Hannah Burgess. A widow with a young daughter, she married Parker after the death of her husband. She bore Parker his only son, Edward, who was only two or three days old when his mother died.(64) Parker's marital misfortunes make clear why so many Victorians were preoccupied with death. According to a family anecdote he, while once preaching at Wisbech, spoke of his 'poor little Edward', and every eligible lady rushed forward to offer herself as a mother to the wee babe. Parker did marry once more, Mrs Elizabeth Rachel Ridgway from Lymm in Cheshire. She was a remarkable and cultivated lady who outlived him and was an excellent stepmother to his son.(65)

Parker had no formal training as a theological professor. Apart from the apprentice training he received in early life from the Rev. Thomas Dawson, he was a self-taught theologian. He did have a keen mind and from the first years of his pastorates gave himself to serious reading. He was acquainted with many of the standard theological writings of the nineteenth century and in his classes made use of such

works from both sides of the Atlantic. Among these may be cited the commentaries of Matthew Henry, Dale's *Lectures on Preaching*, Wayland's *Moral Philosophy*, works by Lange and Alford, the classical text on homiletics by John A. Broadus of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Butler's *Analogy*, Hodge's *Systematic Theology*, Lightfoot on *Philippians*, Godet on *Romans*, and the works of Jonathan Edwards. Parker read *The Freeman*, *The Expositor*, *The Theological Quarterly*, *The Manchester Guardian*, and *The British Weekly*. The annual college reports show that he made donations of books to the library almost every year.

In the later years of life, Parker was almost always addressed as 'Dr Parker'. This stemmed from the decision of Lagrange College, a small Baptist school in Missouri, to bestow an honorary Doctorate of Divinity on him in 1883. The archives of that college have preserved no details of this recognition, but undoubtedly it signalled the popularity of this English minister among Missouri Baptists where conservatism and closed communion reigned.(66) Though this honour was conferred in absentia, it brought great joy to Parker's friends at home and may have been the seedbed for his strong interest in America.

Parker maintained close ties with his denomination, but he was now less active in associational affairs than in his Yorkshire years. He occasionally attended committee meetings and was elected moderator of Lancashire Association in 1883. Had serious illness not befallen him that year, he might have served for a time with distinction. As it was, he was little involved and was not re-elected. His work at the college left him less time for this than the pastorate had allowed. Nevertheless, he was held in the highest esteem by the pastors of the association and was constantly called upon to preach on special occasions.(67) According to John Turner Marshall, he once declined consideration for the presidency of the Baptist Union on the ground of failing health.(68) Just how serious these overtures to Parker were is not clear, though his predecessor served as the Union's president in 1881. Certainly Parker suffered from periodic ill health during his twenty years at Manchester.(69) Though Parker was known for unremitting loyalty to his basic convictions, there was a modesty about him which won the esteem even of those who disagreed with him. He warned Baptists against such dangers as the assumption of infallibility and 'parading what we believe' in an offensive manner. Adherence to the truth must not be allowed to 'magnify some portion of the truth to the disparagement of others'. He cautioned students to maintain 'a deep consciousness of our liability to err'. Consistent adherence to truth must not override modesty of spirit, courtesy, and true catholicity of heart.(70)

In no way did Parker wish to stymie the minds of his students. Indeed, the college made solid academic advancements under him. He encouraged students to avoid two extremes in dealing with the growing religious doubt of the age. One error was to lavish so much praise upon doubt that it evolved into virtue, evidencing a great mind. The other, 'visiting it with merciless condemnation, as though it were essentially sinful, and the infallible index of a treacherous heart'.(71) From time to time, Parker had to reassure his supporting constituency

in the North that in enhancing the college's curriculum it was not departing from the old cherished views of its friends. In their eyes the purpose of the institution should always be geared toward the training of evangelistically-minded pastors rather than the production of learned men in the pulpits.

As president of the college, Parker was troubled at the contrast between the growth in wealth and population of Manchester and the lack of growth among Baptists there. One college report noted the growing industrial population 'almost at our very door, and Baptists in it comparatively so few'. The college looked upon this as an open invitation to practise the great commission.(72) Parker saw to it that the students consistently preached in mission work in the rising industrial areas. For example, at Reddish they made use of a chapel formerly owned by the Primitive Methodists, and at Hollinwood a chapel once used by other Baptists was at their disposal. In addressing the Baptist Tract Society in 1881, Parker described denominational growth in the Manchester area as 'unsatisfactory' and 'not particularly bright'. He noted that within the last three years at least two Baptist places of worship had been closed in the region.(73) One factor in this was the strong transient and migratory population of the industrial masses which the students encountered in their evangelistic efforts. Student evangelism alone could not meet the spiritual needs of the industrial areas nor stem the tide of attrition which had set in before Parker's death. Attributing numerical decline to an erosion in Baptist principles and conviction, particularly with regard to baptism and communion, his public addresses, as well as those to students, were often aimed at strengthening the dikes against such erosion. For example, his first address given at the annual meeting of the college was entitled 'Steadfastness in the Faith'. He referred to the contemporary scene as 'days of shifting belief and of no belief at all'.(74)

Departure from the faith was a lifelong theme in much of Parker's preaching. Yet when the Downgrade Controversy erupted in the Baptist Union, which was at the mid-point in his tenure at the college, he seems to have taken little role in it. Parker appears to have regularly read *The Sword and Trowel* and frequently placed in the college library his personal copy of the paper. When Principal Davies of Pontypool was visiting Manchester College, he noted that in Wales Spurgeon was oftentimes considered very heterodox and the Welsh Baptists longed to see him return from his wanderings.(75) Manchester College for its part could not concur in the open communion practised by Spurgeon's church, but at Spurgeon's death the college noted that 'more than once' he had subscribed to its budget and had been its 'sympathetic friend'.(76)

Manchester students had ample opportunity to practise in ministry the precepts they learned from the tutors. Students regularly served as supply preachers throughout Yorkshire, Lancashire and Cheshire. In one 'off' year when their services were fewer than usual, Parker noted that they had conducted 1100 services in 89 places.(77) On ten different Sundays in the early months of 1890, the college had more requests for supplies than it had men. Demand for the services of Manchester students was so high that occasionally some left for the pastorate prior to completing training. More often they accepted

pastoral calls long months in advance. For example, Scape Goat Hill, near Huddersfield, called Thomas Lewis eighteen months before he finished his course and he accepted with the understanding that he would be allowed to complete his theological training.(78) Most students had considerable experience in preaching before going into pastorates. Parker required rigid training in this. His routine classroom pattern called for the students to preach in rotation frequently. All students were asked to submit sermon outlines to him on the same text which were critically studied. The president then offered his own outline from the text in question to the students for their consideration.(79)

A small number of Parker's graduates found places of service in Canada, the United States and in overseas fields of the Baptist Missionary Society in India, the Cameroons and the Congo. At least one student from South Africa studied under him. Occasionally there were a few students from other European countries such as Germany and France. As would be expected, most of the students settled into pastorates in England and Scotland. The settlement of Herbert Ellis at Farsley in 1890 must have been particularly gratifying to Parker. Ellis was an Oxford M.A. and in the examination of the *Senatus Academicus*, which was open to all Nonconformist colleges, he took first place for Manchester College.(80) With the dissenting blood which flowed in his veins, it was no mean accomplishment for Ellis to get to Oxford. He remained at Farsley as a very popular minister until Parker died and Marshall became president, at which time Ellis returned to the college as a classical tutor.(81) Thus yet another link between that Yorkshire town and Manchester college was forged.

One problem which just would not go away for Parker was that of establishing an adequate financial base for the institution. His Farsley ministry had been carried out against the backdrop of overall prosperous times, but the Manchester years fell during the Great Depression of 1873-96. Though modern research has revised the traditional interpretation of business severity in these years, the college did operate on a deficit budget of about £150 annually in the early years of Parker's administration which was attributed to 'the widespread and long continued depression in trade'.(82) Relief was delayed for several years. By 1882 the president's report stated that the institution was sinking deeper into debt but expressed optimism that 'with the revival of trade our anxiety as to the funds will be entirely removed'.(83) The long dispute in the Lancashire cotton trade, however, continued to aggravate college finances.

To meet these challenges Parker appealed more strongly to the faithful supporters of the college. The number of subscribers to the budget totalled about 1400 but varied from year to year due to deaths and other attritions. One of the strongest supporters of the college in its earliest years was William Shaw of Longwood, near Huddersfield, who died before Parker became president. Shaw, a woollen manufacturer who rose from near poverty to wealth and respectability, was known as a tenacious adherent to the old views of communion and baptism for which the college stood. His eldest son, William Dale Shaw, succeeded him in the family business and served as treasurer of the college during the Parker administration.(84) Most supporters of the college came from a much lower income constituency. The average gifts

were small and in a typical year might range from two shillings to fifty pounds. The number in the latter category could be counted on one hand. There were times when the administration had to consider reducing the number of students 'so as to equalize the expenditure and income'. In response to this possibility, however, friends in Bradford, Bacup and Huddersfield determined to raise additional money. Parker himself visited towns throughout the North 'to deepen the interests of friends in the college', (85) with the desired response; in 1888 William Dale Shaw reported that 'the income more nearly approached the expenditure than had been the case for many years'. (86)

By 1888 Parker had been introduced to William B. Hatcher of Richmond, Virginia, a highly regarded Southern Baptist pastor who was touring England and Europe. Hatcher asked Spurgeon's help in making contact with English Baptists who practised strict communion (the overwhelming custom in the southern states). Spurgeon directed him to Manchester and to Parker. After a time Hatcher said, 'Dr Parker, I want you to come over to America, to the South where the strict Baptists constitute a great multitude. Come next May to the meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention which will be held at Memphis, Tennessee, and let us show you what a welcome we can give a brother from across the sea'. (87) Parker accepted the invitation and in April 1889 he and his party sailed from Liverpool to New York for a month's visit in America. He was accompanied by his wife, step-daughter, and William Dale Shaw. Parker preached in some of the best churches in New York and was a guest of James Colgate, a Wall Street banker. (88) From New York the English party proceeded to Philadelphia, Baltimore, Richmond, Louisville, and to the convention in Memphis. Everywhere it was something of a triumphal procession and Parker overwhelmed the convention with his address. His discourse was 'marked by the most tender and grateful enthusiasm', and interrupted several times by applause, while tears flowed freely among his hearers. The editor of the North Carolina Baptist paper wrote: 'It was just impossible to capture such an address and put it on paper'. (89) As the English Baptists fraternized with the Baptists of the South, fervent handshaking took place while the congregation sang 'How Firm a Foundation', and Fawcett's 'Blest Be the Tie'. (90)

After Parker left Memphis, his party proceeded North to visit McMaster University in Toronto and Boston where he took part in the meetings of Northern Baptists before finally returning to his duties at Manchester. Perhaps the strongest impression gained from his American visit was the urgent need to endow Manchester College. Parker had visited a number of American theological colleges and observed the new trend among them to endow chairs and funds. He determined to establish an endowment of £12,000 for his college. By 1893 more than half of this had been promised, if not collected. Richard Cory of Cardiff gave £1000 and a group of Brighton Grove ladies raised £250 from the sale of their handwork. (91) Parker had returned from America optimistic that a considerable amount of money would accrue from that continent. By 1894, however, there had been only limited success in tapping that source. Nine Americans had either paid or made pledges, the largest being \$1000 (dollars) from James B. Colgate. (92) The dream of a successful endowment continued to press

heavily upon Parker's mind in the few months that he had left as president of the college.

The last years of his presidency witnessed the emergence of another idea that ultimately matured. This was the amalgamation of Manchester and Rawdon colleges which 'was freely discussed' in 1891. At that time, the communion issue, coupled with local rivalry between Lancashire and Yorkshire, was too much 'and the subject was postponed for the present to be resurrected on a future occasion should circumstances require it'.(93) Within weeks of Parker's resignation and death, the proposal was taken up anew, but once more collapsed as Manchester men felt that 'Rawdon friends did not offer to concede anything'. To them 'amalgamation seemed more like absorption'. The general opinion at Manchester was that 'Rawdon men desired an absolutely open field'.(94) Another college proposal which surfaced but did not materialise during the late Parker years was formal affiliation with the Baptist Union. Between 1894-96 this issue was given serious study, but was deferred. Parker's death was once more a catalyst, and on 29th June 1899 Manchester College adopted the resolution 'that we subscribe to the Baptist Union'.(95) Plans were now even discussed for inviting John Henry Jowett and John Clifford to preach at the college.

Parker became a sick man long before he left the presidency in a drawn out illness of about three years which appears to have been cancer.(96) By 1895 he was forced to relinquish some of his teaching responsibilities to Frederick Overend, whom he had baptized as a youth at Farsley. Though often in severe pain, the president clung to his administrative duties for two more years, but in December 1897 he formally submitted his resignation. He wrote to the college committee, 'I am not consciously worse than twelve months ago. But I may break down at any time, and at best I am only an invalid'. In responding to the resignation, William Dale Shaw and John Turner Marshall referred to Parker's 'rare administrative ability and high conscientiousness' which had made his term of office so successful.(97) Parker was consistently credited with having given the college two full decades of internal peace and harmony of purpose.

Death came to him on 21st February 1898, a few weeks after having submitted his resignation. Only hours before the end, he requested that the students be brought to his bedside where he spoke a few words to them. 'You have a good work before you. You will have many trials. Be faithful, you've a good Master'.(98) Among those who came to the college for the memorial service was Dr Alexander Maclaren. His world-renowned pulpit at Union Chapel was not far from the college geographically, but on the communion issue a considerable distance had separated Maclaren from the Manchester school. Parker's body was conveyed by train from Victoria station, Manchester, to his beloved Farsley where hundreds greeted the cortège. Some of the last words which he had spoken to his students were chiselled on his tomb as a highly appropriate epitaph. Parker, for his part, would have claimed his students as his real monument. During his tenure, about ninety had passed through the college of which eighty-four were active in the pastorate at the time of his death.(99) Mr James Charles was commissioned to do an oil portrait of the president which was unveiled

in 1899 with an address by the new president, John Turner Marshall.(100) The fading portrait still hangs in the present library as a reminder to the college of its nineteenth century roots.

NOTES

This paper was given at the Baptist Historical Society Summer School at Bradford in July 1985.

- 1 Charles Rignal, *Manchester Baptist College. 1866-1916: Jubilee Memorial Volume*, Bradford, [n.d.], p.144.
- 2 H. G. Tibbutt, *The Baptists of Leighton Buzzard*, Leighton Buzzard, 1963, p.15.
- 3 Rignal, op.cit., p.144.
- 4 *The Primitive Church Magazine*, 1st June 1862, p.141.
- 5 Ian Sellers, 'Thomas Dawson of Liverpool', *Baptist Quarterly*, XIX, 1962, p.361. It is important to realize that Parker and Dawson and those churches which later formed the North Western Association of Baptist Churches had no formal connections with Strict Baptists as such, whether of the Gadsbyite or the more liberal *Gospel Herald* variety. Throughout the existence of the North Western Association they remained in fellowship with the Baptist Union nationally. See J. H. Lea, 'The North Western Association of Baptist Churches 1860-76', *Baptist Quarterly*, XXIII, 1969, pp.77-90.
- 6 *The Primitive Church Magazine*, 1st June 1862, p.141.
- 7 Letter of Miss M. Smith (Huddersfield), 14th April 1985, to author; *Yorkshire Baptist Yearbook*, 1985, p.30.
- 8 *Farsley Baptist Church, The Centenary Volume of the Baptist Church, Farsley, Leeds, 1877*, pp.23-24.
- 9 *A Brief History of the Baptist Church Hebden Bridge With Addresses Given at the Centenary Services held November 1877, 1878*, pp.84-94. Parker's address was on 'The Future of Baptists'.
- 10 Unpublished Minutes Farsley Baptist Church, 17th February 1859. (Courtesy of the Revd Malcolm Brand who allowed the use of these valuable minutes).
- 11 *Ibid.*, 9th March, 17 May 1859.
- 12 *The Centenary Volume*, p.23.
- 13 Unpublished Minutes, FBC, 31st August 1859.
- 14 M. L. Faull and S. A. Moorhouse (eds.), *West Yorkshire: an Archaeological Survey*, 3 vols., 1981, II, 246, pp.335-36.
- 15 *A Bi-Centenary History of the Baptist Cause in Farsley, Leeds, 1977*, pp.4-5.
- 16 The parsonage stood until 1906 when it was torn down and rebuilt from the same stone at its present location on Bryan Street. Author's interview with the Revd Malcolm Brand, Farsley, 6th June 1984.
- 17 Unpublished Minutes, FBC, ? August 1860.
- 18 *The Primitive Church Magazine*, 2nd January 1865, p.10; 1st March 1865, pp.61-2.
- 19 Unpublished Minutes, FBC, 27th September 1865.
- 20 *The Primitive Church Magazine*, 1st May 1868, pp.117-8.
- 21 *Ibid.*; *The Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*, 16th April 1868, p.3.
- 22 Yorkshire Baptist Association, Minutes, Annual Meeting 1878, p.40.
- 23 Unpublished Minutes, FBC, 13th October 1869.

- 24 *The Primitive Church Magazine*, 1st December 1869, pp.280-81.
- 25 Interview with the Revd Malcolm Brand, 6th June 1984.
- 26 Unpublished Minutes, FBC, 2nd November, 30th December 1863.
- 27 *Ibid.*, 21 May 1865; *Leeds Express*, 27th May 1865, p.5.
- 28 *Ibid.*, May 1865, p.4.
- 29 Unpublished Minutes, FBC, 27th March 1866.
- 30 *The Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*, 7th January 1870, p.4.
Letter of Mrs Joan Chevalley (Parker's granddaughter),
Fontenay-Sous-Bois, France, 31st March 1985 to author.
- 31 Unpublished Minutes, FBC, 5th January 1870.
- 32 *Ibid.*, 28th April 1869.
- 33 *The Freeman*, 20th September 1878, pp.469-70.
- 34 *The Primitive Church Magazine*, 1st June 1861, p.141.
- 35 *Ibid.*, 1st June 1863, pp.138-9; 1st June 1864, p.13.
- 36 Unpublished Minutes, FBC, 14th February 1864.
- 37 *The Primitive Church Magazine*, 1st June 1862, p.141.
- 38 *Ibid.*, 1st February 1867, p.45.
- 39 *The Examiner*, New York, 3rd January 1889. The graduate of the college was J. Naylor.
- 40 The author is indebted to the Revd Keith Jones for much assistance in the use of the records of the Yorkshire Association. They are in the archives of South Parade Baptist Church, Leeds.
- 41 C. B. Jewson, 'Transport and the Church', *Baptist Quarterly*, X, 1940, pp.40-43.
- 42 *History of the Baptist Church at Gildersome in the County of York*, Leeds, 1888, p.50.
- 43 Yorkshire Baptist Association, Minutes, Annual Meeting 1878, p.40. For several years Parker and his wife paid most of the salary of an evangelist who worked at Farsley under the auspices of his church.
- 44 Edward Parker, *The Claims of the Smaller Churches Upon the Larger Churches in the Association*, 1869, published address, Angus Library, Regent's Park College, p.16.
- 45 YBA, Minutes, Annual Meeting, 1878, p.40.
- 46 A. C. Underwood, *A History of the English Baptists*, 1947, pp.209-10.
- 47 YBA, Minutes, Annual Meeting 1877, p.6. Underwood is in error in placing the reception of the church in 1887.
- 48 Quoted in Fred Barrett, *Baptist Church Farsley: Record of 150 Years*, 1928, pp.5-6.
- 49 *The Centenary Volume*, pp.54-57.
- 50 Henry Dowson was the first president of the college.
- 51 Author's interview with the Rev. K. C. Dykes (Manchester), 1st June 1984.
- 52 John Haslam in an address to the Yorkshire Association, 22nd May 1888, referred to Jonathan Marshall as 'a model deacon from the church at Farsley'.
- 53 *Primitive Church Magazine*, 1st June 1869, p.122.
- 54 *Ibid.*, 1st January 1868, pp.18-19. This meeting is confirmed in Wesley's Journal.
- 55 Unpublished Minutes of House Committee of Manchester Baptist College, 24th October 1890. (College Archives)
- 56 *Primitive Church Magazine*, 1st June 1861, p.141.
- 57 John O. Barrett, *A Short History of Rawdon College: 1804-1954*, 1954, p.27.

- 58 A. C. Underwood, *A History of the English Baptists*, 1947, p.209.
- 59 *Ibid.*, p.208.
- 60 *The Freeman*, 28th December 1877, p.648.
- 61 College officials were sensitive to prejudices against an educated ministry. They wished to clear themselves of any charges that a college could 'make' a minister. It was their desire to demonstrate that the men in their college were already ministers of God before entering school.
- 62 Unpublished Minutes of House Committee, MBC, 29th July 1898. Here it was pointed out that Parker had for two months collected on 16 students while only 15 were in the house.
- 63 *The Freeman*, 21st June 1878, p.315.
- 64 Letter of Mrs Joan Chevalley (Fontenay-Sur-Bois, France) to author, 31st March 1985. She is Parker's granddaughter.
- 65 *Ibid.*
- 66 Charles Rignal, *Manchester Baptist College: 1866-1916: Jubilee Memorial Volume*, Bradford, n.d., p.125. The Missouri college is now known as Hannibal-Lagrange.
- 67 Almost half of Parker's ministry was in college administration, but those who knew him best considered him an eloquent, evangelistic preacher who remained at heart a pastor.
- 68 See his obituary of Parker, *The Freeman*, 4th March 1898, p.104.
- 69 In 1883 Parker experienced a 'serious and painful illness' when it was said, 'the Lord saw fit to bring him very low'. *Annual Report*, MBC, 1883-84, p.8. One thing friends noted in Parker was a tenacious will to carry on even when he was ill.
- 70 *The Freeman*, 13th September 1878, p.457, 20th September, pp.469-470.
- 71 *Ibid.*, 16th July 1880, p.364.
- 72 MBC, *Annual Report*, 1877-78, p.9.
- 73 *The Freeman*, 6th May 1881, p.230.
- 74 *Ibid.*, 20th September 1878, pp.469-470.
- 75 *Ibid.*, 6th July 1888, p.454.
- 76 MBC, *Annual Report*, 1891-92, p.9.
- 77 *Ibid.*, 1893-94, p.11. 78 *Ibid.*, 1877-78, p.8.
- 79 *Ibid.*, p.10. 80 *Ibid.*, 1889-90, p.9.
- 81 Rignal, op.cit., p.146. Farsley Baptist Church, *A Bi-Centenary History of the Baptist Cause in Farsley: 1777-1977*, Leeds, 1977, p.6.
- 82 *The Freeman*, 11th July 1879, p.354.
- 83 *Ibid.*, 14th July 1882, p.443.
- 84 *Primitive Church Magazine*, 1st February 1863, p.47.
- 85 Unpublished Minutes House Committee, 15th December 1886.
- 86 *Ibid.*, 10th April 1888.
- 87 Eldridge B. Hatcher, *William E. Hatcher: A Biography*, Richmond, Va., 1915, p.287.
- 88 *The Examiner*, New York, 2nd May 1889.
- 89 *Biblical Recorder*, North Carolina, 22nd May 1889.
- 90 *Ibid.*
- 91 MBC, *Annual Report*, 1893-94, p.9.
- 92 *Ibid.*, 1894-95, p.38.
- 93 Unpublished Minutes House Committee, 6th May 1891.
- 94 *Ibid.*, 13th April 1898.
- 95 *Ibid.*, 28th June 1899.
- 96 Mrs Joan Chevalley to author, 31st March 1985.

- 97 Unpublished letters in Northern Baptist Archives. Parker's letter of resignation was dated 15th December 1897 and the response 23rd December.
- 98 *The Freeman*, 4th March 1898, pp.104-5.
- 99 Rignal, *op.cit.*, p.146.
- 100 Unpublished Minutes House Committee, 19th April, 20th June 1899. James Charles was a Yorkshire artist whose works had often hung in the Academy.

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ANDERS WIBERG

SWEDISH REVIVALIST AND BAPTIST LEADER

[This year Swedish Baptists commemorate the life of Anders Wiberg who was the undisputed leader at the beginning of this movement and who died on 5th November 1887. Celebrations will culminate with a symposium held at Betelseminariet, the Swedish Baptist Theological Seminary, in Bromma-Stockholm on 4-5th November. Leading Swedish Baptist scholars will deliver most of the addresses, but there will hopefully also be representatives from Finland, Norway and the United States. The opening lecture will be given by Professor Harry Lenhammar of Uppsala University.]

Anders Wiberg, 1816-1887, an important figure on the Swedish religious scene during the middle and second half of the nineteenth century, came from a peasant family. Trained for the ministry of the Lutheran Church of Sweden at the university of Uppsala, Wiberg made the acquaintance of several leading figures in the popular religious revival of the time. He worked with them in this and involved himself in the temperance and mission work, especially championing the cause of religious liberty. Increasingly critical of the state church, he decided to leave his pastorate, and after a short period as 'priest of the Separatists', he converted to the Baptists and became their foremost leader for more than three decades. The organizer and theologian *par excellence* of the early Swedish Baptist movement, Wiberg organized the first general assemblies of Swedish Baptists and was instrumental in the founding of many of its institutions, such as the Seminary. He worked tirelessly until his death in 1887.

The only complete biography of Wiberg, hagiographical in character, written by his son-in-law, Jonas Stadling, is largely a collection of essential sections of Wiberg's diaries, interspersed with filial commentary. Other Swedish Baptist historians have, however, given considerable attention to Wiberg in their works: he is the central figure in Nils Johan Nordstroem's two-volume work on the history of the Swedish Baptists, whilst Gunnar Westin has treated Wiberg in several works and has also published some of his correspondence.