

JOHN HOWARD HINTON, THEOLOGIAN

J. H. Hinton, first Secretary of the Baptist Union (1841-63) and assistant to his father as unpaid co-Secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society from 1815 to 1818, was a commanding figure in denominational affairs from about 1830 till his death in 1873. Rarely has such a polymath occupied high office among the Baptists, for Hinton could write with expertise on theology, economics, politics, ecclesiology, philosophy, psychology and law, and had a close, first-hand acquaintance with the affairs of northern Europe and North America.

A vigorous and voluminous controversialist, he left no opponent unscathed. Like so many early Victorians, he was assured of the rightness of his own case and the wrongness of everyone else's. More than a little arrogant, he claimed never to have changed a single opinion from youth to old age, and to be the author of a body of systematic divinity which no-one had ever previously expounded.¹ His figure was angular, his delivery nervous and staccato. Few people knew him well and most felt uneasy in his presence.² No-one, however, could dispute the thrustfulness of his intellectual penetration, even though the contradictions and inconsistencies in his thinking are never far from the surface.

A. PERPLEXITIES

The tensions within Hinton's own mind, and the tensions of the age in which he lived, are exemplified in the attitude he took to a range of problems and situations in which he was involved. First, he was an extreme individualist who found himself pioneering a movement to unite the churches of his denomination in a common endeavour. His individualism seems sometimes to run to anarchy: no church has a right to demand that a testimony be given by a candidate on the occasion of his baptism; no group of churches should ever take the initiative in planting a new cause - that might lead to spiritual bondage.³ No church has the right to 'fetter its members with laws or to make anything binding upon any of its members'. The local church should make 'general regulations', not 'binding rules'. It should rely on 'customs, not laws'.⁴ Even more surprisingly, no church *qua* church can in fact manifest a loving spirit: the whole idea of a company as distinct from individuals displaying a collective sentiment is 'absurd'.⁵

Sometimes he hints that the very idea of a union of churches is a chimera: the only bond of union is mutual love between the individual believers who compose the different congregations.⁶ Councils of churches are anathema, an expression of the 'Churchianity' which he abhorred as much as Dr Cuming who coined that particular phrase.⁷ Such a rugged individualist may have been all that the churches could tolerate as the first Secretary of their Union; perhaps the full inadequacy of his (and their) ecclesiology came out only in his sad resignation speech of 1863, when he lamented that the Union was 'a case of apparently morbid apathy', that any 'Utopian' attempts at working closer together would cause a highly combustible situation to explode, and that what he called 'the poverty-stricken resolution' of 1835 (i.e. 'the sentiments generally denominated evangelical' as the sole bond of union among the churches) was 'absolutely all that the assembled brethren would bear'.⁸

Second, there was a similar ambivalence towards the Baptist Missionary Society. The biographer of Knibb cannot make up his mind whether *à propos* the Jamaican troubles of the 1830s the London Committee or the missionaries on the spot were in the right: the missionaries were tactless in dealing with the authorities; the Committee was right in imposing a 'no politics' rule before the insurrection, but was wrong in trying to prevent the discussion of the slavery

question (surely a 'political' matter if there ever was one?); in any case in their criticising Knibb, Dyer and Hinton himself had been 'grossly misled' by the Colonial Office and by the leader writers of the colonial newspapers.⁹ These studied ambiguities of Hinton's are understandable, if unsatisfactory. They are also an insight into his deep dissatisfaction with the work of the B.M.S. and of missionary societies in general. In a sermon to the B.M.S. in 1830 Hinton actually lamented the amount of effort put into missionary work while the needs of Britain and Europe were so great.¹⁰ He was deeply saddened by the poor harvest reaped overseas contrasted with the vast resources poured into the Society: the world would never be won 'on the present system'.¹¹ A new strategy was needed. The European missionary should never aim at 'superintendence', but should pass like a 'winged messenger' as rapidly as possible to fresh fields,¹² leaving the native churches to 'stand on their own feet'.¹³ There is a refreshing radicalism here, as there is in Hinton's angry response to the *Quarterly Review's* jibe that the Baptists in India could only reach the poor and outcast, leaving the learned, mighty and noble Hindus untouched. Hinton admits the charge and asks for enlightenment as to how the higher caste is to be won, and then reflects that it is probably better if they are not - otherwise it would be Constantine and the prostitution of the Faith 'to the powers of darkness' all over again.¹⁴

Third, Hinton is unable to make up his mind about the Baptist ministry. The term ministry he disliked. It was a deplorable American practice for a Council of ministers to ordain a man who could then claim to be a minister without ever holding a pastorate. The local pastor of the local church was Hinton's ideal.¹⁵ There was danger too in over-educating the pastors - better that every theological seminary be razed to the ground than so fatally to enervate the preaching of the Gospel.¹⁶ At the same time, if ministers there had to be (and Hinton was so fond of lay agency - 'every convert a preacher' - that the former seem sometimes no more than an optional extra)¹⁷ they should be trained to be public men, to hold their own on the secular platform. This would be a major culturalising task for the colleges which should be well aware 'from what ranks of life many of your ministers are drawn'.¹⁸ Once again Hinton's ambiguities reflect the unease of the denomination as a whole at the emerging phenomenon of a separated, professional ministry.

At first sight, Hinton's doctrine of the church seems more positive and freer from reservations and qualifications. Towards religious establishments he is adamantly hostile. If Rome is the 'man of sin', then the Church of England is 'his next of kin'.¹⁹ 'There is no greater obstacle to the spread of real religion than the existence of establishments'.²⁰ The Church of England is an unmitigated evil - if no longer in its legal, then still in its social and financial privileges. The notorious £5 million of Anglican endowments is not the Church's at all, but is public property, to be disposed of by the public will, as expressed in Parliament.²¹ The establishment principle forces the Dissenter into 'social degradation. Churchmen have in every respect the best chance of getting forward in the world'.²² The Church of Scotland is no better, and Chalmers' dream of state endowment without state control is a dangerous will o' the wisp. Indeed, Presbyterianism, like Methodism, has no affinity with Dissent at all - even Congregationalists are warned about the possible consequences of allowing their Union 'higher pretensions' than the Baptists would concede.²³

The alternative to all this is, of course, 'voluntaryism, which Hinton is at pains to distinguish from Chalmers' taunting 'free trade in religion', though precisely how the two principles differ is not at all clear - perhaps not even to Hinton himself.²⁴ Of the voluntary principle he gives a spirited and wide-

ranging defence. He candidly admits that evils exist: 'oppressed flocks and lordly deacons, domineering oligarchs and turbulent democrats',²⁵ yet he is prepared to defend the gathered church principle, not only on the basis of scriptural testimony or by an appeal to the modern democratic spirit, but also on social and psychological grounds: the only true form of unity within the gathered church consists of 'the similar character, principles, pursuits and prospects of all those who belong to it'.²⁶ This would maximise consumer's choice in religious affairs, a point which Hinton underlines when he talks about the emotional bonds which hold a congregation together and for which the threat or reality of disruption and the hiving off of a new congregation are a necessary 'safety valve'.²⁷ In the last resort, indeed, the individual may find no church to his taste at all (the tragic figure of A. W. Pink in the present century at once springs to mind); even in that case Hinton offers consolation - 'believe in Jesus, repent of sin, take hold of God's promise and you are as safe out of the church - any earthly church - as in it'.²⁸

A fifth problem for Hinton, intimately concerned as he was in the affairs of both the B.U. and the B.M.S., is the rival pull of denominational loyalty and pan-denominationalism. The latter, as Professor Ward reminds us,²⁹ was much in vogue from the 1790s to the 1820s and beyond. There were rebuffs, such as in 1837 when the Committee of the Bible Society withheld grants to the B.M.S. because the Baptists' Bengali version of the New Testament had translated the Greek *baptizein* as *to immerse*, which the Union Secretary denounced in print as an 'ebullition of petty jealousy'.³⁰ Nevertheless, the pan-evangelical ideal remained a potent force throughout his life - for, once having embraced a principle, Hinton never departed from it. Towards evangelical Anglicans he was totally sympathetic, though he could not understand why they chose to work though the 'meretricious instrumentality' of the established Church.³¹ He supported keenly the Evangelical Alliance and in 1866 opposed, unsuccessfully, an attempt by Spurgeon to narrow the basis of the B.M.S. in a more denominational direction.³² Dr Bebbington in fact surmises that Hinton, Steane and Baptist Noel formed a pressure group of enthusiasts for inter-denominational endeavour which effectively curtailed the emergence of denominational agencies till the advent of Millard to the B.U. secretaryship in 1863.

A sixth dilemma for Hinton centred on the U.S.A. (with which he was closely acquainted through his brother, Isaac Taylor, a Baptist minister who had emigrated to that country) and on the type of religious revivalism with which the States were by now closely identified in the Englishman's mind. To Hinton, America was a fine example of voluntarism in action in the missionary, spiritual, charitable and educational fields alike. The so-called depravity and crass democratisation of American life had been grossly exaggerated.³³ On the other hand, Baptist church life there showed some dangerous tendencies towards State Conventions, trained choirs, pew rents, the intrusion of secular matters into church life, and violations of personal freedom such as a pastor's naming aloud a candidate whom he was about to baptise.³⁴ Likewise, Hinton was full of enthusiasm for Jonathan Edwards and the type of New Divinity revivalism which he believed Edwards had put in train. In general, American Baptists were free from hyper-calvinism's 'pernicious notions of inability',³⁵ and preached and practised Calvinism of the Fuller type, yet there were signs that 'cannot-ism', as Hinton called it,³⁶ was beginning to rear its ugly head, especially among the Presbyterians.³⁷

Finally, there was Hinton's dilemma over the problem of biblical inspiration. The literalism of orthodox Calvinists such as Haldane, Carson and d'Aubigné struck him as wooden and impossible. On the other hand, advanced

radicalism of the German type was even more dangerous and damaging. He, therefore, like John Pye Smith, took what he believed to be a mediating position, stressing that Scripture *contains* rather than *is* divine revelation. Again, he embraces what became almost a commonplace in Protestant circles a generation later. Even so, not all the content of Scripture can be said to be 'revealed': much is commonsense, factual knowledge which 'being known to the writers did not require to be revealed and was not revealed'.³⁸ As to where human knowledge ended and divine revelation began, Hinton is, perhaps wisely, silent.

B. RADICAL YOUTH

1. Rival Systems Harmonised

In his younger days Hinton bent his energies towards a resolution of the Calvinist-Arminian debate in a manner satisfactory to himself, to explicating his ideas on the conversion process and to commenting on the contemporary social and political scene. Like many of his sublimely self-confident generation, he certainly did not lack trust in his intellectual powers, nor did he refer, except very occasionally, to the authors whom he rejected or those on whom he relied. This omission is disconcerting. Nowhere, for example, does he cite Calvin. A slight acquaintance with Calvin's teaching on common grace would have saved him from a number of serious lapses. His work, as he often boasted, was all his own.

The reader is thus left to guess at the identity of those entire systems which Hinton found defective. He rejected universal restoration³⁹ and had no time for the Sandemanians and their intellectualist approach: 'what the Scripture requires under the name of faith is not our assent to the gospel as true but our consent to it as a method of mercy'.⁴⁰ Nor had he much patience with Amyraldism, which is odd, considering that it was an extreme variant of that scheme which he came eventually to adopt: the argument that Christ's death was sufficient for all but intended only for the elect is 'sophistry'.⁴¹

Rather, Hinton proclaimed proudly that he was a Calvinist of the moderate school of Edwards and Fuller. Redemption is particular: the administration of the Spirit is discriminating and sovereign... 'God sends his Spirit unsought into the breasts of particular persons whom he foreknew'.⁴² But such bold affirmations are occasional and deceptive, for Hinton repeatedly shows that he is not a Moderate Calvinist in any sense of the term that would have been understood by his two principal mentors. He boasts that he is at the same time both a Calvinist and an Arminian - and it is the latter system which has the primacy. To try to find the truth lying between the two systems is 'unquestionably right', Hinton wrote in his early essay on theology, written for the *Oxford Encyclopaedia* in 1827.⁴³

The 'truth' at which he arrived in his early years and to which he clung obstinately all his life is that 'the intention of Christ's death was universal and without discrimination', which means that the preacher can address the sinner thus: 'there is hope for you; whether you may be of the elect or not, there is equal hope for you, a real provision for your salvation and a most free welcome to your application for it'.⁴⁴ 'To every man salvation is now possible because God has done all that was needful to render it so'.⁴⁵

This outright Arminianism is Hinton's interpretation of the main thrust of God's saving work: particular redemption is 'grafted onto' the universal scheme, as a secondary system or 'supplementary interposition', as Hinton puts it in his late essay, *Moderate Calvinism Reexamined* (1860).⁴⁶ Why, if the Arminian scheme which Hinton several times defines as 'God's merciful

probation of man' is both true and primary, particular redemption is necessary at all, or why, if Christ's death confers conditional salvation or probationary hope on the majority, it should also bestow actual, absolute salvation on others, are problems never satisfactorily answered in all Hinton's voluminous writings. But people who insisted on asking him these questions certainly strained his tolerance to breaking point - 'it almost makes me want to side with the irreligious'.⁴⁷

That this system is a serious distortion of, rather than a natural progression from, the Moderate Calvinism he believed he was defending, is clear. Indeed, Hinton rather betrays the fact when he innocently cites John Cameron as the originator of the system developed by Edwards and Fuller.⁴⁸ The question remains as to why the secretary of the Baptist Union argued for his singular creed in a manner so calculated to disturb and give offence.

There are three possible explanations. The first is that, as the infant Union contained so few Particular churches and Associations, yet all the churches of the much smaller General Baptist body, which thus constituted over one third of the total membership, Hinton may have imagined that such an exercise was desirable in holding the Union together during its early testing days.⁴⁹ Second, he may well have embraced this compromise theology because of the very violence of his reaction against hyper-Calvinism which 'merely confirms and strengthens the infidel in his infidelity'.⁵⁰ Third, and most likely, Hinton, as a scholar who moved easily in academic circles, realised how strongly the tide of nineteenth-century opinion was running against religious particularism of any form, against any view of God as arbitrary and discriminating. There are certain 'give-away' lines in his writings: if he reacts vehemently against 'the direful poison of false Calvinism', he is part of a general process, for people are coming to recognise that 'the current theology is not authoritative'. Were Predestination and Election to go overboard and Arminianism to triumph, 'I confess it would not be to me the heavy calamity which some people seem to perceive in it'.⁵¹ On this matter at least, Hinton was anxious to be seen swimming with the tide, not against it.

2. The Conversion Experience

Hinton's extraordinary solution to the Great Debate between Calvinists and Arminians⁵² was whimsical rather than sinister, a private eccentricity rather than a serious challenge to Protestant orthodoxy. Isaac Watts, who had earlier arrived at a similar solution, retained the regard of the religious world despite it. Hinton's understanding of the experience of salvation is, however, much more damaging, turning the Reformed doctrine of Effectual Calling on its head. It aroused great controversy and isolated him from other evangelicals within and outside his denomination.

Hinton's scheme begins with the Adamic covenant. Mankind does not share in Adam's sin - a startling conclusion which he admits may well be at variance with the Thirty-Nine Articles, the Westminster Confession, and sundry other declarations. Once Adam had fallen, the covenant of Eden was superseded by a new dispensation when redemption, 'not part of God's original plan of administration', became man's pressing need. Only physical death may be regarded as Adam's legacy to his successors: nothing more, certainly not depravity or liability to punishment (the so-called 'penal consequences'), derives from this. What all Adam's race inherits is 'a constitution and a capacity essentially the same as they were before the Fall', though man now has a disposition or bias (Hinton is very fond of those two words) towards wrongdoing. The system of 'evangelical mercy' which supervened after the Fall now places man in a state of 'benignant probation'.⁵³

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Man is morally free and his world is 'a place of probation by experiment, an opportunity of testing human nature and of demonstrating what, left to himself, he would do with his faculties'.⁵⁴ Though Hinton professed to derive his moral philosophy from Edwards, the wholly secular influence of his Scottish university training is everywhere apparent. In this particular realm biblical testimony is totally excluded: man's moral being is a sphere from which, according to Hinton, God deliberately excludes himself. God, as it were, 'puts a fetter upon his own hand, forbids himself to enter by his power that little domain and engages to address the occupant of it only by permission'.⁵⁵ Man's government of himself may be broken down into five principles: the ability to act independently, intelligently and freely; the possession of a competency to perform the conduct required of him; the capacity to act on the sufficiency of motives and inducements which inspire him.⁵⁶

Self-sufficient man may be, but his 'bias' towards wrongdoing may eventually lead him to a state of contrition. Now he discovers that he has the means to repent (Hinton is as preoccupied with means as his American counterparts, Colton and Finney). These means are once again man's inviolable property: 'the possession of the means of repentance constitutes the power of repentance. Therefore, the sinner has power to repent without the Spirit'.⁵⁷ 'Man is able of himself to repent and turn to God'.⁵⁸ But not only is the Spirit excluded, so too is the need for prayer. The sinner should not pray - that would only confirm him in his sins. He must fight his own battles, and wrestle with his own heart.⁵⁹ He should certainly not pray for the Holy Spirit, for He will be God's gracious gift to those whose repentance is genuine and complete.⁶⁰

Paul Helm has recently reminded us that conversion should be regarded not so much as a strictly chronological process, more as a series of interwoven strands.⁶¹ Nevertheless, Hinton's, and his contemporaries', approach was consequential and, just as Fuller had accused Dan Taylor of introducing the Holy Spirit too late into his scheme of salvation in his effort to safeguard human responsibility,⁶² so Hinton, with his even more thoroughgoing concern for man's moral inviolability, introduces the Spirit even later and more hesitantly - almost reluctantly. He angrily denied that he had ever asserted that men will come of themselves to Christ,⁶³ which is correct. Nevertheless, the Spirit's work in Hinton's writings seems curiously subordinate to the efforts of men themselves. Two very curious (though revealing) analogies used by him are that a criminal (ie. natural man) could voluntarily take himself to prison, but it needs a constable (the Spirit) to conduct him there, while conversion may be compared to a man hammering a stone to split it: he could do the job himself, but the stone keeps slipping - hence some holding device (the Spirit) is necessary to position it for the effective blow to be struck.⁶⁴

In the end those critics of Hinton are exaggerating who see him as representing regeneration simply as a moral change rather than a divine act, or as seeing the Gospel as a mere instrument of moral government.⁶⁵ The uncomfortable fact remains that, despite his heated disclaimers that he had reduced the work of the Spirit to a bagatelle, he gives far too many hostages to fortune, especially when contradicting the teachings of more dogmatic theologians like the Particular Baptist, Robert Hall, or the Wesleyan, Richard Watson, or arguing fiercely against the idea of baptismal regeneration, a dogma which seems in some ways to have been the catalyst for his adoption of his trenchant, man-centred views.⁶⁶

It was his teaching on human responsibility which provoked the most widespread hostility to Hinton, was one of the factors which made Particular Baptist churches hesitate to join the Baptist Union, and helped in the formation

of rival Strict and Particular Baptist Associations in East Anglia and London.⁶⁷ Throughout his whole career this issue dogged Hinton's footsteps: from the very first time he conducted worship, when his father warned him not to preach down man's moral inability and some of his hearers feared he would renounce evangelicalism and travel into 'regions beyond',⁶⁸ on to the hostile reception given to *The Work Of The Holy Spirit In Conversion* (1829), when Ivimey warned its author, 'that book ought to be answered, sir', and alarmed correspondents to the *Baptist Magazine* did precisely that.⁶⁹ Controversy flared again in 1842 when Robert Haldane, from an orthodox Calvinist standpoint, published a pamphlet attacking the *Treatise on Man's Responsibility* and Hinton added a reply to him as an appendix to the second edition of his *Theology* (1843). It surfaced again in 1860 when *Moderate Calvinism Reexamined* was met with a barrage of criticism, not only from high calvinists but, unkindest cut of all, from evangelical Arminians, with the *General Baptist Magazine* likening Hinton's teaching on man's innate reasonableness to 'the natural ability of the tiger to be harmless'.⁷⁰

Whence, it may be asked, did Hinton derive this, his most considerable 'peculiarity', and why did he hold to it with such tenacity? Six factors may help to explain this. Hinton's biography of his father shows the son's passionate commitment to individual freedom maturing as he witnessed the Oxford minister cowering at home during the Anti-Jacobin outburst of 1792 and being vilely persecuted - nearly unto death - while engaged in 'village preaching' at Woodstock in 1794.⁷¹ These youthful experiences at the hands of the establishment or of enraged mobs were never forgiven or forgotten and helped to shape his whole subsequent attitude to the individual and his freedom.

Again Hinton, as a trained philosopher, found human dignity threatened not only by a lingering hyper-calvinism which refused to die, but also by a continuing psychological necessarianism, popularised in his own day by Henry Brougham, and re-emerging in socialist guise in the writings of Robert Owen. *Man's Responsibility* was originally written to contravert Brougham: Hinton lectured against the Owenites under the auspices of the Christian Instruction Society.

Thirdly, we may perhaps see Hinton as one of those early nineteenth-century figures like Thomas Campbell⁷² who regarded themselves as evangelicals, yet carried over from the previous century rationalist presuppositions of which they were largely unaware.

Fourthly, Hinton's preoccupation with Covenant theology and particularly his anxiety, which he shares with many of Arminius' later followers, to place man, freed from the curse of Adam's sin, in a healthier and more wholesome relationship with God, underline the fact that the whole thrust of federalism in its reaction against the unknowable, arbitrary deity of high Calvinism, was to domesticate the divine, represent him as willing to enter into reasonable, explicable and harmonious relations with his creatures, and they with him.⁷³ The God-man relationship for Hinton had to be made understandable; 'mysteries' (which he strongly differentiated from 'difficulties of explanation') he thought should be banished entirely from the Christian faith.⁷⁴

Fifthly, there is in Hinton a marked fear of possibly the greatest mystery of all - the workings of the Holy Spirit. It was not merely that he reacted with horror to the over-emphasis on the Spirit in the hyper-calvinist scheme or at Irvingite excesses. He even argued against Wardlaw that the Spirit does not testify to the external truths of Christianity which are self-authenticating: 'experimental evidence is nothing more than the impact of evangelical truth on our minds, enhancing our moral sensibilities'.⁷⁵

Finally, it must be confessed, Hinton was a child of his times, and

anxious to be seen as such. The credal inheritance of the past, even the Baptist past, is 'no longer authoritative'.⁷⁶ Both Calvinism and Arminianism 'are held at present with less rigidity or distinctness than formerly'.⁷⁷ Was Haldane entirely wrong in seeing the young Hinton 'moulding the religion of Jesus to prevailing tastes and thus getting rid of the offence of the Cross'?⁷⁸

3. A Christian Politics

A Baptist leader as theologically advanced as the young Hinton was bound to speak his mind on the wider secular issues of the day - and no less radically.

Having rejected the eighteenth-century view of a static hierarchy of social orders guaranteed by 'divine fiat' in favour of unrestricted social mobility⁷⁹ whose cause was 'God's great law of industry' and whose accomplishments were free trade and international harmony, Hinton enthuses over both the benign spectacle of a chapel-going, responsible middle class and of a christianised proletariat. The middle ranks, 'perpetually rising in importance', will affect both the higher and lower classes by precept and example: the poor, having had the gospel preached to them, will experience true cultural liberation. Hinton took great pride in Knibb's having been once a printer's apprentice and Carey a shoemaker: a sound family life is one of the happier consequences of evangelism among the poor. All attempts meanwhile to legislate for social equality or for a levelling of incomes would lead to 'wretched consequences' and ultimately to despotism.⁸⁰

Naturally, views like these impelled Hinton to take the lead in importing voluntarism into the Baptist body. Indeed, Dr Bebbington sees Hinton as the key figure in persuading the Union to espouse voluntarism in 1838.⁸¹ A little later he is to be found lecturing for the Anti-State Church Association and the Complete Suffrage Union and against the educational clauses of the 1843 Factories Bill in the treatises *A Plea for Liberty of Conscience* (1843) and *Why Not? Or Some Objections to the Factories Regulation Bill* (1843).

Yet Hinton, whose mind constantly forged ahead of his time, was soon repelled by the aggressive voluntarism of such as Edward Miall and became determined that his denomination should not be reduced to becoming a vehicle for political dissenters on the stump.⁸² Commenting sagely on Romans 13, he interprets Paul as not inculcating passivity or non-resistance but as teaching that Christian converts should not be malcontents or revolutionaries. Christianity confers no political rights; it merely demands that high moral principles should 'regulate' a man's actions in politics as in everything else.⁸³ The implied criticism of Miall is obvious, and becomes outspoken in Hinton's biography of William Knibb, where he openly rejoices that Knibb failed to introduce voluntarism into the West Indies.⁸⁴

This emphatic rejection of voluntarism in the late forties does not mean, however, that Hinton retreated into political quietism. On the contrary, his utterances became more and more socially radical. Labour, he decided, is morally entitled to a proportion of the profits of industrial enterprise 'over and above its immediate remuneration at the market price'. Vast numbers of hard-working people are compelled to spend their lives 'in a most unsatisfactory way in reference to happiness. It makes one's heart ache and brings one to say in disgust, "Wherefore hast Thou made all men in vain?"' Ultimately, when Christianity has carried all before it and wealth is seen as the product of capital and labour jointly, social legislation, now a chimera, will become a reality, and a shared Christianity will have the capacity to 'constitute all ranks into but one caste', based on 'a universality of intercourse and sympathy'. Such sentiments as these, commonplace among Baptist radicals two or three generations later, must have struck Hinton's contemporaries as prophetic, if not utopian.⁸⁵

C. THE MID YEARS: INDIVIDUALISM AND PERSONAL EVANGELISM

From about 1830 onwards, even while he was still involved in working out his controversial theological system, Hinton threw himself passionately, frenetically almost, into an advocacy of personal evangelism. This was partly to relieve his intellectual tensions, partly to underline his continuing commitment to evangelicalism, partly an older man's nostalgic harking back to his father's example in rural Oxfordshire (and to that of his pastor in his Edinburgh student days, Christopher Anderson of the Richmond Court Church, founder of the Scottish Itinerant Society) and partly a response to transatlantic influences. But of the strength and durability of this commitment there can be no question.

The clearest statement of Hinton's evangelistic principles is to be found in his pamphlet *The Active Christian* (Reading, 1832). First, the evangelist surveys his field of labour and takes account of 'the vast amount of practical heathenism around him'. He makes a direct approach to his family, his servants and employees (if any) and then turns to his next-door neighbour whose soul he should no more neglect to save than he should forbear to inform him that his house is on fire. Next, if he has come through these preliminary efforts at soul-winning, he assesses his own inner resources. All can be evangelists, especially, Hinton insists, those with meagre academic gifts whose testimony comes across as more natural and sincere.⁸⁶

He then studies his wider contacts. Evangelistic success depends on a shrewd perception of their needs, tastes, family circumstances, and social conditions, amongst other factors. Our evangelist next pledges himself to habitual, not occasional, exertion, and learns how to counter the whole gamut of responses, evasions and counter-arguments. Finally, he convicts of sin and leads to the Lord, not forgetting to examine the state of his own soul and to question the methods he has adopted if his success has been below expectation. If he has made a single convert, he will give God all the praise. His labours over, he may legitimately contemplate the immensities of his spiritual reward.⁸⁷

Elsewhere in his writings, particularly in his *Individual Effort For The Conversion Of Sinners* (Reading, 1831), Hinton deals with that favourite theme of Colton and the American revivalists, 'the means in our power'.⁸⁸ All temptations not to evangelise and obstacles in the way of evangelism are to be shunned, whether these are excessive preoccupation with foreign missions, committees and reports, a willingness to leave evangelism to the professionals (a particular hazard), or a false confidence in prayer as opposed to human exertion as the instrument of revival. Churches must cease to be inward-looking and become fortresses from which the soldiers of Christ are 'continually issuing to assail the kingdom of darkness and rescue the captives of Satan'. Every convert should be a preacher: here the West Indian Baptists have much to teach believers at home.⁸⁹

This 'individualising system', as it was called, was not to the taste of all Baptists and once again Hinton found himself criticised in the *Baptist Magazine*.⁹⁰ But gradually, 'man-centred and God-dishonouring' though it might appear to some, it quickly caught the denominational imagination. Before Hinton's powerful advocacy Baptist evangelism had been largely concentrated on the villages, as Hinton's father's labours in rural Oxfordshire testify. Now, in the period 1835 to 1845, the Baptist Home Missionary Society really came into its own as the 'American methods' were eagerly adopted by such as Pulford and Roe and revival activity spread to the towns. Nor, though the impetus was later diminished, as Hinton himself admitted,⁹¹ was it ever entirely lost: it flared up again in that remarkable outburst of activity in 1859-65 which probably benefited the Baptists more than any other body and which

Hinton lived to see and rejoice in. But by this date Congregationalism, which in the thirties through such leaders as J. A. James had shared in the Baptists' enthusiasm for revival, had advanced both in social standing and theological refinement to a point where such crudities were obnoxious to its more fastidious adherents. The two great communities of gathered churches were drifting apart, and their growing dissonance forms the background to the third and final phase of Hinton's ministerial career.⁹²

D. THE LATER YEARS: A CONSERVATIVE STANCE AND THE DRAWING AWAY FROM CONGREGATIONALISM

'He who was once rebuked by his elder brethren for innovations in doctrine is now rebuked for his vindication of orthodoxy', remarked Daniel Katterns of Hinton in 1861.⁹³ The first sign of the Baptist leader's retreat into a more conservative stance had occurred more than a dozen years earlier. He had been alarmed at the rise of conditional immortality teaching, especially in his own denomination. Remarks in John Foster's essays, H. H. Dobney's *Scripture Doctrine* (1844), some anonymous Lectures delivered in Broadmead Chapel in 1843 and Edward White's *Life of Christ* (1846) had already attracted his unfavourable notice and the long essay *Athanasia or The Natural Immortality of Man* was issued as a rejoinder to them all in 1849.

Hinton admits that in his younger days he had been drawn to conditionalist doctrine and also confesses that he can understand the moral revulsion against the idea of eternal punishment (into whose nature he will not speculate, save to say that the whole idea of hell as fire is 'fundamentally popish'). *Athanasia* is not a wholly consistent or satisfactory work. It does, however, make three well-argued points: that the idea of the existence of the wicked being terminated by their earthly demise is unsustainable from Scripture; that the extinction of the wicked by a second death following a season of punishment after their natural deaths would be a nonsense in that death would thus become a relief and could no longer be seen as a penalty; and that since conditionalism implies logically that immortality is not a gift of God to all but only to believers, a physical and not merely a spiritual change would be necessary whenever a person came to Christ.⁹⁴

In the 1850s Hinton became concerned with other signs of a 'downgrade', particularly in Congregationalism. Professor Davidson greatly disturbed him. If the Bible were produced by an 'illumination' or 'brightening up' of the faculties of the biblical writers, this would turn revelation from being a divine gift into a human, evolutionary process.⁹⁵ It was certainly with one eye on Davidson that Hinton addressed the Baptist Union Assembly at Nottingham in 1857 on the theme 'The Indispensible Importance in the Public Ministry of Evangelical Doctrine', and à propos Congregationalism in general that he now upheld the importance of the Christian evidences which once he had been inclined to underplay.⁹⁶ He now denounced the 'dialectic legerdemain' of those who found Morel and Francis Newman to their tastes, and redefined biblical revelation as progressive only in the sense that it had been a progress of manifestation.⁹⁷ God-centredness was becoming uppermost in Hinton's thought.

The decisive turning-point came in 1860. The Rev. J. H. Godwin's Congregational Lectures were followed by the publication of J. Baldwin Brown's *Divine Life in Man*. Hinton's erstwhile rationalism was now engulfed by revivalistic fervour and the impact of the Second Evangelical Awakening and unsettled by an outpouring of prophetic teachings which seemed to indicate that the end was at hand. Consequently, he was at a loss to know which aspects

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of the work of these two ministers offended him the most: the 'palpable utopianism' of their musings on the present state and future prospects of mankind; their 'cold and freezing' philosophy which 'chilled' his heart; their naïve trust in salvation by right conduct or their facile dismissal of the time-honoured doctrines of Sin, Atonement, Saving Faith and Imputed Righteousness; or their sentimental portrayal of God as loving father rather as judge and ruler. All amounted to 'the first open inroad into English evangelical nonconformist churches of a theology fatally deficient in the truth and power of the gospel'.

Hinton concludes by pledging himself determined to check the movement in its tracks - 'would that I could seal up the fountain of fatally poisoned waters'.⁹⁸ The prizing apart of the two great fellowships of independent churches, which gathered pace after Hinton's death and of which John Briggs has recently written,⁹⁹ had antedated the events of 1860. But that year marks a crisis point in Baptist-Congregational relationships, maybe a turning-point from which there could be no going back.

Two high calvinist journals, the *Gospel Herald* and the *Primitive Church Magazine*, did not agree as to whether J. H. Hinton was influential in moulding a new generation of Baptist leaders or whether his 'peculiarities' left him without any permanent influence at all.¹⁰⁰ Hinton's friend, C. M. Birrell, agreed with the former verdict: his impact was as considerable as his writings were voluminous.¹⁰¹ From the vantage point of the 1980s, Hinton's ideas appear as even more seminal in the development of Baptist thought up to the Edwardian era. Effectively he anticipates the whole range of later Baptists' responses to the life and spirit of their age. In both his unorthodoxies and his latter-day conservatism, his evangelistic enthusiasm and his advanced views of man in society, his combativeness and his crusading individualism, he is prophetic of the age of Spurgeon, of Clifford and beyond.

NOTES

1. 'Perhaps not a single idea has passed through my mind which may not have been derived from one or other of the sources I have consulted, but nowhere have I found the whole of them in connexion', J. H. Hinton, *Works*, 7 vols, 1864-7, I,9.
2. *Baptist Handbook*, 1875, p.326.
3. F. Wayland, *Principles and Practices of Baptist Churches*, ed. J. H. Hinton, 1861, xx, xxii.
4. Hinton, *Works*, VII,288.
5. *Ibid.*, V,486.
6. *Ibid.*, V,488
7. *Ibid.*, VI,310.
8. Cited in E. A. Payne, *The Baptist Union: A Short History*, 1959, p.61.
9. J. H. Hinton, *Memoir of William Knibb*, 1847, 67,70,150,265,352.
10. Hinton, *Works*, VI,18.
11. *Ibid.*, VI,83.
12. *Ibid.*, VI,313. In a BMS address of 1852 Hinton produced some alarming statistics: 100,000 pagans converted out of a target population of 8 millions and this paltry return for an expenditure of £600,000 p.a.
13. *Works*, VI,83.
14. *Ibid.*, VI,469f.
15. *Ibid.*, VI,167: 'I regard the influence of the ministerial office as one of the greatest impediments to the successful preaching of the gospel'.
16. Wayland, *op.cit.*, x. This is a complaint often heard from disgruntled church members, rarely from denominational leaders.
17. Lay agents, in comparison with whom ministers are an 'inconsiderable band', are the chief propagators of the gospel, *Works*, VII,179. See also IV, 235.
18. *Ibid.*, IV,77.
19. *Ibid.*, VI,311.

20. *Ibid.*, VII,4.
21. *Ibid.*, VII,191. Disestablishment would have the added advantage of driving many who now live in 'luxurious idleness' to 'honest industry', *Works* VII,164.
22. *Ibid.*, VII,158.
23. *Ibid.*, VI,300.
24. *Ibid.*, VII,38. But see also VII,165 where Hinton appeals against Chalmers to Adam Smith's law of supply and demand.
25. *Ibid.*, VII,251.
26. *Ibid.*, VII,233.
27. *Ibid.*, VII,263.
28. *Ibid.*, V,492. Hinton's individualism extends to the children of believers. Parents have no right to dictate their offsprings' beliefs, merely to 'put them into the best position of judging for themselves', and then, at the age of discretion, to try to persuade them to what they believe to be the truth', VII,16.
29. W. R. Ward, *Religion and Society in England, 1790-1850*, 1972, p.44f.; R. H. Martin, *Evangelicals United*, 1983, passim.
30. *Works*, VI,490.
31. *Ibid.*, VII,187.
32. BQ XXIX, 1981-2, p.324.
33. *The Test of Experience or The Voluntary Principle in the United States*, 1851, in *Works*, VII,132f. Hinton calls upon some unlikely writers in his defence of the USA, notably de Tocqueville.
34. Introduction to Wayland, op.cit., 1f.
35. R. Carwardine, *Transatlantic Revivalism*, 1978,p.63.
36. *Works*, I,459.
37. See *Man's Response to the Gospel*, (*Works*, II) a review of the Rev. J. S. Spencer's *A Pastor's Sketches*, 1855, with introduction by J. A. James. Hinton went much further than James in his revulsion against this particular American's emphasis on man's inability to repent.
38. *The Divine Inspiration of the Scriptures*, 1850 in *Works* III,369.
39. 'The reason why God does not show mercy to all is that he has in view a higher object than the well-being of mankind, namely the manifestation of his own character', *Works* II,358.
40. *Ibid.*, I,395. Quite how 'consent' and 'assent' differ is not clear. The former is, if anything, even more condescending to the Almighty than the latter.
41. *Ibid.*, I,369. In Hinton's system, as will be shown, the hypothetical universalism of Amyraut becomes a real possibility of salvation for all.
42. *Ibid.*, I,xiv; II,186,307; V,385; VI,ix,357; Wayland, op.cit., viii. It is characteristic of Hinton's man-centred view of things that he argues back from the particular work of the Spirit, which he can comprehend with his senses, to the particular work of Christ for which he has only scriptural authority.
43. *Works*, I,119.
44. *Ibid.*, I,375.
45. *Ibid.*, V,370.
46. *Ibid.*, VI,349.
47. *Ibid.*, VII,362.
48. *Ibid.*, VI,ix. To the orthodox Calvinist, Moderate Calvinism is at worst 'Calvinism in decay'(R. W. Dale) or at best 'provincial Calvinism'. Amyraldism and Hintonism are infinitely worse - see D. Maclean, *Evangelical Quarterly*, V,no.3,1933,330.
49. See J. H. Hinton, *The Aspect of the Baptist Denomination in Relation to Union*, 1863, passim.
50. *Works*, I,481.
51. *Ibid.*, I,477; IV,288.
52. A. Sell, *The Great Debate*, Worthing 1982.
53. *Works*, I,13,225; IV,15; V,332; VI,403. Hinton is at pains to stress that even theologians like Fuller, when they spoke of man's moral inability, meant no more than his 'wrong disposition'. *Works* II, 168.
54. *Ibid.*, VI,151.
55. *Ibid.*, V,182f.
56. *An Essay on Man's Moral Responsibility* (*Works*, I), a piece which originally appeared in the *Monthly Spectator*, Vol.V. Hinton subsequently identified a sixth attribute - an ade-

quate impulse or conscience. Hinton's rationalism, like his empiricism and thinly veiled utilitarianism, should probably be linked with the influence of Dugald Stewart at Edinburgh during the English Baptist's student days there. Vol.II of *The Philosophy of the Human Mind* appeared in 1814, two years before Hinton graduated M.A. I am greatly indebted to Dr David Bebbington for drawing my attention to the Scottish influences on Hinton's thought.

57. *Works*, II,59, quoted Carwardine, op.cit.,63.

58. *Works*, V,375.

59. *Ibid.*, I,59; II,504. Hinton confesses that he had *once* believed that prayer could help the awakened sinner, a singular instance of his changing his mind.

60. There is a suggestion that Hinton regarded the Holy Spirit as more markedly at work in the salvation of the elect in his dual scheme of salvation than in that of the non-elect, where He appears so belatedly: *Works*, VI,362f.

61. P. Helm, *The Beginnings*, Edinburgh 1986, 47,67,81,132.

62. A. Fuller, *Works*, 1837 edn.,II, 196f.

63. Hinton, *Works*, I,181.

64. *Ibid.*, I,384; IV,286. Calvin, 'the theologian of the Holy Spirit', would have been aghast at such imagery.

65. *Ibid.*, I,181; VI,viii.

66. *Ibid.*, III,56f,286.

67. On one occasion Hinton referred sadly to a letter from a Wiltshire deacon which read: 'I don't want to have anything to do with Mr Hinton or his Union', *Works*, VII,496.

68. *Ibid.*, VI,i.

69. *Ibid.*, VI,376; *Baptist Magazine*, 1830, 279f,318f; 1831, 3f.

70. *The Primitive Church Magazine*, January 1860; *The Gospel Herald*, March, April 1860; *The General Baptist Magazine*, February 1860.

71. J. H. Hinton, *Memoirs of John Howard Hinton*, 1835, 106, '30f,147, 253f,339f.

72. D. Thompson on Campbell in

Transactions of the United Reformed Church Historical Society, III, 1985, 225.

73. See W. A. Brown in Hastings, *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, 1908-26, IV,224: article on covenant theology.

74. *Works*, VI,51.

75. *Ibid.*, VII,405.

76. *Ibid.*, I,479.

77. *Ibid.*, VII,442.

78. *Ibid.*, I,178. For later magisterial treatments of the sinner's inability to come to Christ without the help of the Holy Spirit, see J. C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels*, 1856-73, 383-9, and A. W. Pink, *The Sovereignty of God*, 1959, 187f. For a recent exploration of this theme, see B. Nicolls, 'The Work of the Holy Spirit in Evangelism', *Evangelical Review of Theology*, Vol.9, no.4, 1985.

79. *Works*, VII, 476.

80. *Ibid.*, IV,486f; V,490; VI,76; VII,481; J. H. Hinton, *The Quarterly Review and The Dissenters*, 1824, passim.

81. BQ XXVI, 1975-6, 225.

82. E. A. Payne, *The Baptist Union*, 1959, 84.

83. *An Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans - Works*, II,402.

84. J. H. Hinton, *Memoir of William Knibb*, 1847, 473.

85. *Works*, IV,488; VI,271; VII,439, 483.

86. See also *ibid.*, IV, 237,294.

87. *Ibid.*, IV, 304. Hinton apologises if he has 'departèd from the words of soberness and truth' in describing the heavenly bliss of the successful soul-winner.

88. *ibid.*, IV, 145. See BQ XXVIII, 1979-80, 223.

89. *Ibid.*, IV, 125; VI,145.

90. *Baptist Magazine*, 1830, 318f.

91. *Works*, IV,vi and R. Carwardine, BQ XXVIII, 1979-80, 209f.

92. R. Carwardine, *Transatlantic Revivalism*, 1978, 149,150,192.

93. *Baptist Magazine*, 1861, 259.

94. *Works*, III,1f. G. Rowell, *Hell and the Victorians*, Oxford 1974, 189, is also impressed by Hinton's demons-

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tration that in the New Testament the words 'life' and 'death' are to be taken ontologically, not qualitatively.

95. *Works*, III, 386.

96. For the disappearance of the 'evidences' as an apologetic tool among Congregationalists see D. A. Johnson, *Transactions of the United Reformed*

Church Historical Society, II, 1978-82, 62f.

97. *Works*, VII, 328f.

98. *Works*, III, 410f.

99. BQ XXXI, 1985-6, 218f.

100. *Works*, VI, viii.

101. W. Cathcart, *The Baptist Encyclopaedia*, Philadelphia 1883, 528.

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J. Gwynfor Jones, *The Translation of the Scriptures into Welsh, 1588- : aims, accomplishment and achievement*. Collegiate Faculty of Theology, Cardiff. 32pp. £1.60.

G. Jones, Senior Lecturer in History at Cardiff, here discusses the significance of William Morgan's translation of the Bible into Welsh in 1588 and assesses the impact of the Welsh Bible on the life and culture of Wales from that date through to the present day.