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**EDITORIAL**

Professor Sell would be the first to accept that in touching upon eighteenth-century English Presbyterianism he has stepped into a minefield. Moreover, although his method is historical his purpose is confessional. Many readers will welcome his paper, some will question it, all will be provoked by it. It follows admirably upon his "Confessing the Faith in English Congregationalism" (*J.U.R.C.H.S.*, Vol. 4, No. 3, October 1988) and it is of the same order of importance.

Of our other contributors, Rosemary Seton is librarian at the School of Oriental and African Studies; Alan Cass was librarian at the University of Sheffield; Alison Gill moves in October to a post at the University of East Anglia; John Brencher is a Baptist minister.

**NOTES**

**Note I: RELIGIOUS ARCHIVES CONFERENCE**

Thursday, October 12th 1989 may well prove to be a significant date in the annals of religious archivology. About fifty archivists, librarians, administrators plus a sprinkling of academics gathered together in the Lecture Theatre of London University's School of Oriental and African Studies.

There were present representatives of the Catholic Archives Society, the British Council of Churches, Selly Oak Library, the Methodist Church, Leicestershire Record Office, the Orthodox Church of the British Isles, the Church Missionary Society, the Borthwick Institute of Historical Research, to name but a few. It had long been felt that the archivists of churches and religious societies and organisations worked in some isolation and did not, in general, feel themselves to be well informed of each other's activities. Then, too, religious archives in the British Isles were very scattered, some remaining with their creating bodies while others had been deposited in local record offices or institutional libraries and repositories. Here, the staff who administered them often acquired a subject specialism and, so to speak, became "religious archivists". Both custodians and users found that information about the whereabouts of religious archives was sparse and elusive. The business of the day was to discuss these and other matters of common interest and to exchange news and information.

Father A.P. Dolan, Chairman of the Catholic Archives Society, was the first speaker. His paper concerned the development and growth of the Society since its formation in 1979. The next two speakers were academics who provided a user's view of religious archives. Professor Richard Gray of the School of Oriental and African studies outlined the specific and wider importance of religious archives for research. Dr. Clyde Binfield of the University of Sheffield drew on personal experience in stressing the importance of ease of access, the provision of basic facilities, improved guides and increased cross-referencing with material in other repositories. The emphasis of the afternoon papers was practical and to some extent technical. Rosemary Keen of the Church Missionary Society spoke about the problems of the divided archive based on her work with the Church Missionary Society. Malcolm Thomas of the Society of Friends introduced the topic of thesaurus construction in religious archives. Christopher Kitching of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts spoke of the advisory and information services available from the Commission and particularly how these could help participants.

The papers generated lively discussion which greatly benefited from the variety and range of organisations represented. Points raised indicated a wealth of topics which could be dealt with in depth at future conferences. These included closure dates and confidentiality; the difficulties of access to ecclesiastical records; the temporary loan of records; weeding; the significance of religious ephemera and the need for a directory of religious archives. One non-participant wrote in urging the pressing need of an archive of contemporary church magazines.

All in all it was felt that the day had been a great success and was worth repeating in another year's time. Not least had participants benefited from the opportunity to chat amongst themselves in the intervals of the formal sessions. The proceedings would be put together and published by the Society

of Archivists Specialist Repositories Group. A steering group was set up and a register of interested persons and organisations would be maintained.

ROSEMARY SETON

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## Note II: MAUDE ROYDEN AND THE GUILDHOUSE

What are we to make of Maude Royden? Elaine Kaye reviews Sheila Fletcher's biography of that remarkable woman in this issue. For she was remarkable. Sheila Fletcher distils enough of the Royden quality of mind and argument to make it clear that she ranks with Josephine Butler among great Anglican women. Her quality too bursts through the constraints of words and class and time. But what are readers of this journal to make of Maude Royden's Guildhouse? It was a classic London preaching box, built off Eccleston Square by Seth Smith, the Congregational builder and developer, with Caleb Morris as the first great draw. This was in 1848. Forty years on and four ministers later, the church ran to a Sunday School, a Young Men's Society, Band of Hope, Cricket Club, Swimming Club, Football Club, Gymnasium, Dorcas Society and Soup Kitchen. It employed a missionary. Hiles Hitchens, the minister, was well into his third pastorate. The titles of his books – *Ritualism*, *The Jesuits*, *Christadelphianism*, *Papal Supremacy*, *The Priest in Absolution*, *Bible First* – suggest the tenor of his ministry. Another forty years and Maude Royden, author of *Sex and Common Sense*, held the pulpit. She was as much a draw as Caleb Morris had been and under her what was now called The Guildhouse was as full of activity as Eccleston Chapel had been in Hiles Hitchens's day. But there was a significant discontinuity. The Congregational cause had dwindled and closed (though in 1920 it still had 105 members) and the lease had been taken up by a Fellowship which, though it included many Congregationalists, was no more a church than it could have been for the many Anglicans who also joined it.

Did this matter? Maude Royden was too good an Anglican ever to be a Congregational minister and she seems to have found or learned little Congregational *churchmanship* in her brief time as assistant at the City Temple. She could not, therefore, be minister of Word and Sacrament. Anglican Catholic and Free Church Catholic readers must feel sharply the sacramental absence at the Guildhouse. Free Church readers should also feel sharply the inadequacy of a *fellowship* or a *guild* as opposed to a *church*. All readers will feel sharply the denial of a vocation to one who so clearly had it.

It may be that this released Maude Royden for her true diocese which was world-wide. This one woman reminder that what is irregular need not be invalid was not to be imprisoned by church order. As it was, the Guildhouse held her for just over fifteen years and then, shortly afterwards, the lease fell in and that was almost that, though the Fellowship Guild survived in other quarters for a further twenty years, which is about par for the course for a city cause.

One thing is certain. When English episcopalian women are ordained to the priesthood and reach the bench of bishops, and if stained glass windows should then return to fashion, Maude Royden will figure glowingly in them and only the ignorant will wonder why.

J.C.G.B.

### Note III: PAST MEMBERS

The membership of our society and its two predecessors has been – doubtless still is – distinguished. Mrs. John Rylands of Manchester (1843-1908) was a member of the Congregational Historical Society from 1902. She was one of five women out of a membership of 163, of whom 68 were ministers and two were theological colleges. She was also one of twenty-four honorary members, which meant that she subscribed at least a guinea a year (which is close to £50 in current values). Dr. John Brown of Bedford (1830-1922) was a founder member, a contributor to the second issue, and president from 1903 when he succeeded Dr. (later Sir John) McClure of Mill Hill School. As an ordinary member, Brown's annual subscription was five shillings (25p, which is close to £10 in current values). Two recent publications place these accessibly in context.

Enriqueta Augustina Rylands, most intelligent and sympathetic of women and most retiring of benefactresses, was not born into Congregationalism. Her family derived from Leeds, Liverpool, Scotland, Cuba and Florida: hence her siblings' names – José Esteban, Leocardia, Florentia, Bianca Carolina. She was educated in New York and Paris as well as London. Her religious formation was Roman Catholic, though an uncle had ministered at the English Church in Florence. Somehow this got her to Manchester where in the 1860s she sat in Cavendish Chapel under Joseph Parker and next to John Rylands whose third wife she became. The rest is history. Thanks to her we have (or had) the Rylands Library, the Rylands Chairs of Comparative Religion and Biblical Criticism and Exegesis, and a headquarters for Lancashire Congregationalism, all in Manchester. But for an understanding of how that history came about the definitive source must now be D.A. Farnie, "Enriqueta Augustina Rylands (1843-1908), Founder of the John Rylands Library", *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, Vol. 71, No. 2, Summer 1989, pp. 1-38.

Not all our questions about this elusive woman are answered, but Douglas Farnie answers what can be answered. He sets her in the context of her family, her husband and her library. He provides an invaluable chronology of her life as well as an economic historian's understanding of what made such Dissenting largesse possible. He brings her to life in her own right.

John Brown was Bolton-born but Ayrshire-descended. Consequently his family liked to contemplate a connexion with Burns. His wife's connexions were southern, south-eastern and south-western, but they met when he was the Minister at Park Chapel, Cheetham Hill, and she was a Minister's daughter at Richmond Chapel, Salford. Together they moved to Bedford, she to run a good school in their large manse, he to fill out a grand pastorate at Bunyan Meeting and an internationally Protestant reputation as the prime authority on John Bunyan (tiresomely hailed by comparatively-minded Victorians as the Burns of England) and as a prime authority on Puritanism. Scholar, preacher and pastor, in any order, he was quite simply a true bishop. He is set in context by his grandson, Neville Brown, in *Dissenting Forbears: The Maternal Ancestors of J.M. Keynes*, Phillimore, Chichester, 1988, pp. xvii, 205.

Neville Brown lacks the Cambridge-dry elegance of his aunt, Florence Ada Keynes, whose *Gathering Up the Threads* (Cambridge, 1950) he expands and updates. He lacks too the stylish economy of his cousin Geoffrey Keynes's *The Gates of Memory* (Oxford 1981), but his collective biography of Everards, Haydons, Langdons, Downs, Fords, Browns, Keyneses, Lloyds and Dimsdales is a mine of intelligently opinionated information pulling together the threads of ministry, medicine, academe, the law, commerce, trade, Liberalism, Calvinism, agnosticism and women's rights, and dotting the i's with a good index, an invaluable appendix on "Relative Costs of Living" and a sensible foreword by the Cambridge economist, Sir Austin Robinson, who knew the Cambridge Keyneses.

Here is character formed in chapel: White's Row, Long Melford, Lymington, Richmond and Park, Bunyan Meeting and Lyndhurst Road, Emmanuel, Blandford, Brown Street and Endless Street. Here is more of that Manchester culture promoted by John Rylands and commemorated by his widow (Neville Brown's father and his great-uncle, Gerard Ford, were Trustees of the Rylands Library), as well as that Cambridge culture which would have shrivelled without the intellectual and economic backing of Manchester's manses and warehouses. Neville Brown is frank about his family's foibles, fair about their qualities, evasive about their backsliding – that point at which chapel ceased to attract them, even for funerals, and they joined Bernard Manning's glittering netherworld of Lapsed Dissenters.

For this reader the most interesting section is that which describes how the deacons of Richmond Chapel, fashionable Salford's carriageway to heaven, got rid of their incorrigibly vigorous minister, David Everard Ford (1797-1875). Ford was Neville Brown's great-grandfather. His manuscript autobiography attracted the attention of Albert Peel who wrote about it in

*Congregational Quarterly* (Vol. X, April 1932, pp. 226-232) and who printed extracts of it in *T.C.H.S.* (Vol. XI, pp. 237-255, 265-279). The Richmond Chapel business was not among them.

It is not a nice story. Neville Brown attributes the reasons for the coup (for such it was) to jealousies among the Chapel ladies which flared when John Brown, Manchester's most eligible ministerial bachelor, chose Ada Ford to be his wife. Personality certainly came into it. So did generation: Richmond's deacons pleaded their minister's inability to draw the young or the working classes. But there is one dog which fails to bark in Neville Brown's account: doctrine.

David Everard Ford was emphatically old school. In 1856-7 he played an active role in the ousting of Samuel Davidson ("generally thought a competent man, although of a very crotchety turn of mind") from Lancashire Independent College. That was shortly before his own ousting from Richmond. Was there a connexion? The Davidson controversy was Manchester's version of London's *Rivulet* controversy. Ford was Manchester's John Campbell. Ford's day, like Campbell's, was passing and his deacons were right to feel that he should go. This is surmise. Neville Brown does not pick it up, perhaps because Ford's wife deleted difficult passages from his diaries, perhaps because there was indeed no direct connexion. Certainly Ford's autobiography covered the Davidson affair and he reflected:

The Lancashire Independent College was saved; but some of the men who rescued it from destruction had a very heavy penalty to pay. At least I had.

The occasion cost me more than any crisis I had previously known; but never have I, for one moment, regretted it.

Is that a clue? The future lay neither with Ford nor with silly Samuel Davidson, but it did lie in that crucial Congregational relationship between pulpit and pew. Ford's deacons were hard tacticians but they were also intelligent men, for all their counting-house ethics.

J.C.G.B.

## PRESBYTERIANISM IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLAND: THE DOCTRINAL DIMENSION

Beware! The territory we are about to enter is notorious for its pitfalls, and is pervaded by myths. There are three requirements of any who would explore it. The first is a firm grasp of an elementary philosophical distinction: to say that B is in temporal succession to A is not necessarily to say that A caused B. Thus, despite what has been said about the "Socinian blight" and the "unitarian drift," we should not rashly conclude that the possession of heterodox opinions necessarily leads to the numerical decline, and even the extinction, of the church in which they are propounded. Some heterodox churches did not decline or become extinct; some declined for demographic

and other reasons; and some churches in which the doctrine preached was deemed to be orthodox also declined – again, not always because of the theological views on offer.

The second requirement is sensitivity to the denotation of terms. Thus, “Arian” in the eighteenth century is not altogether the Arianism of Arius himself (and modern scholarship has shown that *his* Arianism was more diverse than has sometimes been thought – but we cannot pursue this point here); rather, it denotes a generally subordinationist position *vis à vis* the Son’s relation to the Father. Similarly, the “Arminianism” of the eighteenth century is not on all fours with that of Arminius himself, and it displays internal variety. As processed *via* the Dutch Remonstrants (in which connection Locke’s association with Limborch should not be forgotten, for Locke’s works were studied in the more “progressive” dissenting academies) “Arminianism” came to signify the application of unfettered reason to Scripture regarded as supreme (especially over creeds and confessional statements). Along this line many were confirmed in their version of Arianism, and/or in their denial of Calvinistic views of original sin, election and predestination, and the eternity of punishment. Under its evangelical aspect, “Arminianism” came to denote a warmly missionary stance which freely offered the gospel to all, and in some cases expected the final salvation of all, and which was viewed askance by rationalistic Arminians (and also by many orthodox Dissenters) both because of its theology and, even more perhaps, because of its “enthusiasm.” As we shall see, and blurred edges and overlaps notwithstanding, it is broadly true to say that whereas the Arians and rationalistic Arminians of the first three-quarters of the century asserted the supernatural, Priestley and his Socinian/unitarian followers in keeping with their aggressive materialism, found it unreasonable to maintain this position and, not surprisingly, ended with the Jesus who is the first among equal *men*.<sup>1</sup>

The third requirement of would-be explorers is alertness to the eighteenth-century propensity for nick-naming. “Arian” no less than “methodist” was used pejoratively, and in such a way as to encompass a wide range of views. This is one of the ways in which myths are born, and myths have been perpetuated by many who might have been expected to know better. Thus, for example, as compared with the Church of England, which had conferred “great benefits” upon him, John Henry Newman surmised that “had I been born an English Presbyterian, perhaps I should never have known our Lord’s

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1. For rationalistic Arminianism see A.P.F. Sell, “Arminians, deists and reason,” *Faith and Freedom* XXIII, 1979, pp. 19-31; for evangelical Arminianism *vis à vis* the varieties of Calvinism see *id.*, *The Great Debate. Calvinism, Arminianism and Salvation*, Worthing: H.E. Walter 1982, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House 1983. For the general doctrinal background see E.M. Wilbur, *A History of Unitarianism*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., II 1952, chs. XIV-XVI.
  2. J.H. Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, ed. Martin J. Staglic, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1967, p. 420.

divinity.<sup>12</sup> Perhaps; but the implication is that English Presbyterians universally denied the divinity of Christ, and that such denial was the defining characteristic of them. To imply this is to go too far, as we shall see. We must be alert for innocent exaggeration and for the partisan spirit.<sup>3</sup>

Enough has been said to caution us that we must pick our way with care, attending to one question at a time: Were those of whom we speak really Presbyterians? What kind of people were they? What were their theologico-doctrinal concerns? How far did Presbyterian congregations undergo doctrinal change? How is any numerical decline to be accounted for? This last question will be considered in relation to the significantly different experience of the eighteenth-century Independents. Finally, in an epilogue we shall briefly apply hindsight to some post-eighteenth-century verdicts upon our theme.

## I

Were those of whom we speak really Presbyterians? If by "Presbyterian" is meant one who is committed to that ecclesiastical polity which maintains an hierarchical structure of church courts proceeding from the local church, through presbytery and synod to a general assembly, then the answer *in relation to our title* is that some "Presbyterians" in eighteenth-century England really were Presbyterian, but the majority were not. We are here concerned with Presbyterianism in eighteenth-century England, not only with the English Presbyterianism of that century. Thus, we must not overlook exiled Scots, who had first organised themselves in Founder's Hall, London, in 1672. A number of the ministers of the Scottish congregations in England were on good terms with their English Presbyterian and Independent neighbours, but *most* of them (the qualification is necessary because some English ministers served Scots churches) were committed to the Scottish polity. They organised a presbytery which, in its Minutes of 5 August 1772, declared that "The Scots' Presbytery in London, since their first formation as an ecclesiastical body, have conformed strictly to the worship and government; inviolably maintained the faith and spirit; and legally exercised the powers, of the parent Church in the land where Providence hath cast their lot."<sup>4</sup>

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3. Thus, for example, on 21 June 1734 Philip Doddridge wrote to his wife Mercy, "I had several orthodox spies to hear me this afternoon, and they observed, with great amazement, that I urged my hearers to endeavour to get an interest in Christ. This, it seems, is Arminianism." See Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *Calendar of the Correspondence of Philip Doddridge D.D. (1702-1751)*, London: HMSO 1979, no. 416. For Doddridge see DNB; A. Gordon, *Freedom After Ejection*, Manchester: Manchester University Press 1917 (hereinafter FAE).
  4. Quoted by A.H. Drysdale, *History of the Presbyterians in England*, 1889, p. 557.

The Scots nevertheless recognised that legal establishment would for ever be denied them in England. For all that, their ministers were trained in Scotland for the most part, and licensed by the presbyteries of the Scottish Church. But however much they may have desired it, they had ruefully to admit that "We are not, and perhaps cannot be, an integral part of the Church of Scotland." Their presbytery was voluntary, and had no status within the Scottish structure. Moreover, on occasion, as in February 1783, it experienced logistical problems: "The Presbytery met at London Wall, according to appointment, and *as no congregation appeared*, they went to Prayer, and delayed the Sermon to be preached and other Exercises until the next ordinary meeting."<sup>5</sup>

Of the English Presbyterians we may say that by 1700, even if there were any who still favoured the establishment of an hierarchical system of authoritative church courts,<sup>6</sup> they could hardly realistically have hoped for it. Indeed, we have discovered no eighteenth-century written lamentations concerning the absence of such a structure. Even during the short-lived Presbyterian Establishment from 1646, twelve presbyteries and the synods of London and Lancashire only were formed, while the polity was actively resisted elsewhere. Certainly, after the Restoration of 1660, the possibility of a full-blooded, parochial presbyterianism, illegally existing alongside the parishes of the Church of England, was inconceivable. For this reason it is sometimes said that by the end of the seventeenth century the Presbyterians had become virtually Independent. No doubt they were independent of presbyterian hierarchical structures. Such associations as existed were composed of ministers only (with which circumstance normative Presbyterian

5. Quoted by K.M. Black, *The Scots Churches in England*, 1906, pp. 180, 182.

6. Alexander Gordon ("English Presbyterianism", *Christian Life*, 15 December 1888, p. 597) argued that in contrast with Scottish Presbyterianism, the English variety from Cartwright via *The Book of Discipline* (1586) = *A Directory of Church-Government* (1644) held that "presbytery" denoted the governing body of a particular church, and that synods were advisory only. He has been followed by Gordon Bolam, "The Ejection of 1662 and its consequences for the Presbyterians in England," in *1662-1962, The Ejection and Its Consequences*, reprinted from *The Hibbert Journal*, 1962, p. 5; and by Jeremy Goring in G. Bolam *et al.*, *The English Presbyterians*, London: Allen & Unwin 1968, pp. 28 and (with Bolam) 43. Gordon has been countered, in our view correctly, by Michael R. Watts, *The Dissenters from the Reformation to the French Revolution*, London: OUP 1978, pp. 90-1. Watts quotes the clear statement of *The Book of Discipline* to the effect that particular churches "ought to obey the opinion of more churches with whom they communicate," and suggests the reason for Gordon's uncharacteristic slip, namely, his failure to realise that when his authority, John Bastwick, distinguished between "Presbyterian government dependent" and "Presbyterian government independent" he signified Independence by the latter term, and thought it no Presbyterianism at all. For Bastwick (1592-1654) see DNB, FAE.

polity may be contrasted). Moreover, their role was advisory only,<sup>7</sup> except that some approved candidates for ordination and ordained them.<sup>8</sup> But – and the great significance of this for doctrinal change will become clear as we proceed – their *ecclesiology* was decidedly not that of the Independents. We should, however, note that there was a degree of fluidity, both as to the denominational label of some ministers, and as to that of the local churches, some of which included both Independents and Presbyterians.<sup>9</sup>

Why did the English Presbyterians retain their label? A number of reasons may be suggested in addition to inertia, which can overtake Christians of all hues. First, among some older Presbyterian ministers at the turn of the seventeenth century there lingered the hope that in the wake of the Toleration Act of 1689 comprehension might still be possible. They stood in the line of Baxter, who detested the name “Presbyterian,” and, with respect to ministers, wrote, “He was called a Presbyterian that was for Episcopacy and Liturgy, if he conformed not so far as to subscribe or swear to the English diocesan frame and all their impositions.”<sup>10</sup> To Presbyterians of this kind their designation signified the parity of ministers albeit on “Christ’s Terms of Communion,” as over against the Anglican view, and ordered worship as over against the sectaries. Again, despite the failure in 1689 of the proposed Comprehension Bill, some Presbyterians still desired to be parish ministers,

7. Richard Baxter’s Worcestershire Association of 1653 was the pioneer. Among others were the Warrington and Cheshire Classis, promoted by Philip and Matthew Henry, and the Exeter Assembly, whose first moderator was John Flavel. In the far north-west Richard Gilpin led the Cumberland and Westmorland Association. See further, A. Gordon, *Cheshire Classis Minutes, 1691-1745*, 1919; T.S. James, *Presbyterian Chapels and Charities*, 1867, pp. 19-21; A.P.F. Sell, *Church Planting. A Study of Westmorland Nonconformity*, Worthing: H.E. Walter 1986, pp. 4, 14, 21. For Richard Baxter (1615-91), Philip (1631-96) and Matthew (1662-1714) Henry, John Flavel (1630?-91) and Richard Gilpin (1625-1700) see DNB, FAE.
8. The Worcestershire Association, for example, did not ordain. For views on ordination see *Presbyterian Ordination Vindicated*, 1660. For a full account of an ordination service at Nottingham on 6 and 7 April 1703 see Benjamin Carpenter *Presbyterianism in Nottingham and the Neighbourhood* [1862], pp. 122-4. In his *Charge to Job Orton at Shrewsbury on 18 September 1745*, Samuel Bourn the Elder makes “presbytery” synonymous with “senior pastors”, “Your *Investiture* into this sacred Office has been performed (as far as Men can do it) by the laying on of Hands of the Presbytery, or Senior Pastors (signifying their Approbation and Consent) and by the Prayers of the Assembly to the God of the Spirits of all Flesh, for a Blessing in your future Labours,” 1745, p. 29. For Orton (1717-83) and Bourn (1689-1754) see DNB. For the latter see also A.P.F. Sell, “A little friendly light. The candour of Bourn, Taylor and Towgood,” forthcoming. The orthodox presbytery of Newcastle was revived in the mid-eighteenth century, its extant minutes dating from 7 August 1751. Elders attended from 1783. Elders attended the presbyteries of London (from 1787), North-west Northumberland (from 1818) and Northumberland (from 1820). See W. Thorp, *Brief Sketch of the Rise of Northumberland Presbytery*, [1925], pp. 16-17.
9. As, for example, at Castle Hill, Northampton, Elder Yard, Chesterfield, Barton Street, Gloucester and Marshfield Old Meeting.
10. R. Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, ed. M. Sylvester, 1696, II, p. 278.

and they wrote (unsigned) *A letter from some aged nonconforming ministers to their Christian friends touching the reasons of their practice* (1702).

Against Calamy's rejoinders to Bishop Hoadly's *The Reasonableness of Conformity*, some of the older Presbyterian ministers protested that Calamy had gone too far in the Independent direction. On the other hand, T.S. James suggested that the Presbyterians would hardly have gone headlong into chapel-building if they really hoped for comprehension within the Established Church.<sup>11</sup> But had comprehension come, their chapels could readily have been incorporated into a new structure – especially given the inordinate size of Anglican parishes and the paucity of Anglican buildings in some parts of the country.<sup>12</sup> It was left to Macaulay to point out that in view of his comfortable situation, "One of the great Presbyterian Rabbies . . . might well doubt whether, in a worldly view, he should be a gainer by a comprehension."<sup>13</sup>

That many of the younger generation of Presbyterian ministers and students did not hope for comprehension, or would not wait for it, is clear from the fact that many of them conformed to the Church of England during the first three decades of the eighteenth century. The conformists included Joseph Butler and the future Archbishop, Thomas Secker, both of whom had been educated under Samuel Jones at the dissenting academy at Tewkesbury. It seemed "reasonable" to join the latitudinarian Church of Hoadly, and to leave what some regarded as the constricting atmosphere of Dissent.<sup>14</sup> They could justify their confidence by pointing out that eighteenth-century Anglican, Presbyterian, and other Arians and Arminians who, under the Toleration Act, were supposed to hold the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England did not have the Act invoked against them.

The Presbyterians themselves became increasingly open to heterodox opinions, so that by 1732 it could be reported that they "admit all sorts of persons that will but say they are Christians into their communion, be they Arminians, Calvinists, Free Thinkers, Arians or Socinians; it is all one to them."<sup>15</sup> With the further movement of thought in a unitarian direction some Presbyterians began to feel increasingly uneasy about their name. Until 1813 they could not legally call themselves Unitarians, but as early as 1772 the erstwhile Calvinist Andrew Kippis admitted that

The English Presbyterians of this age have discarded all ideas of parochial sessions, classes, provincial synods, and general assemblies.

11. T.S. James, *op. cit.*, p. 15. For Edmund Calamy (1671-1732) see DNB, FAE; for Benjamin Hoadly (1676-1761) see DNB.
12. See M.R. Watts, *op. cit.*, pp. 277-80.
13. T.B. Macaulay, *History of England*, 1858, III p. 98.
14. See E. Calamy, *Historical Account of my own Life*, 2nd edn. 1830, II, pp. 504 ff. For Butler (1692-1752) and Secker (1693-1768) see DNB. For Jones (1680?-1719) see DNB.
15. MS Report, "A View of the Dissenting Interest in London," 1732 (DWL MS 38.18), p. 87.

They disclaim all coercive jurisdiction in spiritual concerns; and believe, that every distinct and separate congregation ought to be the sole director of its religious affairs, without being controllable by, or accountable to any other earthly authority. In short, . . . they retain little of Presbyterianism, properly so called, but the name.<sup>16</sup>

That Kippis was somewhat too sweeping – even respecting the *English* Presbyterians – will become clear when we examine the fate of the churches.

## II

What kind of people were the Presbyterians of the eighteenth century? For many parts of the country hard socio-economic evidence is difficult to find, and where records are more plentiful, interpretation remains hazardous. It does appear, however, that in the first half of the eighteenth century the Presbyterians were the most substantial body of English Dissenters, both in terms of the size of their community, and of their social position.

Thus, something in the order of one thousand dissenting meeting-houses were built during the twenty years following the Toleration Act, and of these more than six hundred were Presbyterian. The Presbyterians' relative numerical strength was reflected in the fact that at the meetings of the Deputies of the Three Denominations there were always two Presbyterians for every Baptist and Independent.

As to their socio-economic position, Michael R. Watts has deftly reviewed the available evidence,<sup>17</sup> from which we draw the following points which are relevant to our study:

1. Dissent appealed chiefly to the economically independent.
2. Such persons were to be found in rural areas – for example, in the Fens – but they were more characteristically town and city dwellers.
3. In towns such as Norwich and Coventry, where Dissent flourished, its supporters were socially akin to their non-dissenting neighbours.
4. Nevertheless, Dissent was not socially homogeneous, the Presbyterians being the most prosperous, the Quakers and Baptists the least prosperous, with the Independents in between.
5. There were variations within denominations. Thus, Evans's List of 1718/29 shows that whereas the Whitehaven Presbyterians included one merchant worth more than £20,000, and four worth more than £4,000

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16. A. Kippis, *A Vindication of the Protestant Dissenting Ministers*, 1772, p. 38. For Kippis (1725-95) see DNB.

17. See M.R. Watts, *op. cit.*, pp. 346-66.

each, those at Salkeld included but one gentleman together with "the meaner sort of yeomen and poor farmers."<sup>18</sup>

6. By the beginning of the eighteenth century most aristocrats who had favoured Dissent had died – Lord Wharton and Lady Hewley among them – and by the middle of the century Lord Willoughby of Parham was the sole surviving Dissenting peer.

We may thus far surmise that the Presbyterians included a number who were not averse to "getting on," and while it by no means necessarily follows that those who are adventurous in business are adventurous in thought, *sometimes* they are; and there have ever been those who have felt that their social aspirations could best be fulfilled by their belonging to an intellectual *avant garde*. Moreover, "upwardly mobile" Presbyterians were the stuff of which trustees are made – and thereby hangs a tale, as we shall see.

For the period from 1770 the researches of John Seed are of great assistance.<sup>19</sup> He finds, for example, that at Cross Street, Manchester, the trustees included "a substantial group" of textile merchants, a banker, a doctor, a solicitor and two landed gentlemen. Among the members at Bowl Alley Lane, Hull, were merchants, ship owners, three doctors, a solicitor and the Pearse family. With one exception, the merchants who established the first bank at Newcastle-upon-Tyne in the 1750s belonged to Hanover Square Chapel. Similar circumstances prevailed in Leeds, Liverpool, Bristol, Birmingham and Nottingham; and at Bridgwater in 1788 a special pew was built for the town's Corporation, all of whose members belonged to the Presbyterian congregation. Dr. Seed points out that while the churches of the commercial centres evinced such opulence, Presbyterianism had vanished, or was vanishing, from "wide tracts of rural England."

### III

What were the theologico-doctrinal concerns of the Presbyterians of eighteenth-century England? A forthcoming issue will contain a full account of the thought of Samuel Bourn the Elder, John Taylor of Norwich, and Micajah Towgood of Exeter,<sup>20</sup> who between them adequately represent the

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18. Evans's *List*, p. 19. DWL MS. 38.4.

19. See John Seed, *The role of Unitarianism in the formation of liberal culture, 1775-1851: A social history*, unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Hull, 1981; *id.*, "Gentlemen Dissenters: The social and political meanings of rational Dissent in the 1770s and 1780s," *The Historical Journal* XXVIII no. 2, 1985, pp. 299-325.

20. See n. 8 above. For aspects of the broader intellectual ferment see e.g. J. Hay Colligan, *The Arian Movement in England*, 1913; Olive M. Griffiths, *Religion and Learning*, 1935; R.L. Colie, *Light and Enlightenment, A Study of the Cambridge Platonists and the Dutch* 20. *Arminians*, 1957; A.P.F. Sell, *The Great Debate*, 1982/3.

concerns of most Presbyterian ministers of the first three quarters of the century (though Towgood lived until 1792). What follows here is a general survey, to herald that study.

If we were required to nominate one book which, more than any other, served as a catalyst of the thought of eighteenth-century *English* Presbyterian ministers, it would be Locke's *The reasonableness of Christianity as delivered in the Scriptures* (1695). The book did not, of course, come as a bolt from the blue. Richard Baxter, whose candour permitted him to confess that his certainty differed as the evidences differed, and whose moderate position between high Calvinists and Arminians won him enemies from both sides, was in many respects a harbinger of Locke.<sup>21</sup> The accelerating pace of scientific enquiry, epitomised by the re-formed and re-named Royal Society (1660; incorporated 1662), was a further stimulus to adventurous thought. Again, one of the effects of the Toleration Act (despite its limitations) was to engender the feeling that as far as religious enquiry was concerned "the brakes were off." Thus John Taylor could remind his readers in 1745 that it was but a few years ago that "LIBERTY at the *Revolution*, O bright, auspicious Day! reared up her heavenly Form, and smiled upon our happy Land. Delivered from the fears of Tyranny and Persecution, Men began freely to use their Understandings; the Scriptures were examined with more Attention and Care, and their *true* Sense, setting aside human Comments, and especially the Jargon and Sophistry of School-Divinity, was sought after."<sup>22</sup>

This method of approaching the Bible was precisely what had been advocated by Locke, and the lesson had both positive and negative aspects. Positively, as George Benson put it, "by our reason we are to make trial of what is offered to us as a revelation from God. Otherwise how could we distinguish between the Koran of Mahomet and the Bible?"<sup>23</sup> Negatively, the implication of the last phrase of Locke's title was that we are *not* to be beholden to creeds and confessions if, after calm and rational investigation, these should seem to go contrary to Scripture.<sup>24</sup> Coupled with the method was a strong sense of moral obligation to follow the light received. Here was the

21. See A.P.F. Sell, "Arminians, deists and reason," n. 1 above.

22. John Taylor, *A Narrative of Mr. Joseph Rawson's Case*, 2nd edn. 1742, p. 9. As already noted, thought could roam as freely as it did only because the letter of the law requiring assent to the Anglican Articles was not enforced. Any enforcement would, of course, not only have curbed the Dissenters, but it would have turned the spotlight upon those Anglican incumbents who were (according to one's view) more adventurous or more wayward *vis à vis* the Articles.

23. George Benson, *The Reasonableness of the Christian Religion*, I and II 1759, p. 158. For Benson (1699-1762) see DNB.

24. For Locke's approach to the Bible see A.P.F. Sell, "John Locke's Highland critic," *Records of the Scottish Church History Society* XXIII pt. I, 1987, pp. 65-76.

Arminian armoury against dogma, whether Roman or Calvinist, which seemed to violate – notably by addition – the principle of the sufficiency of Scripture; here was the basis of the Dissenting stand against subscription to “man-made” formulae of all kinds.

Nothing within Dissent did more to foster the new intellectual spirit than the dissenting academies.

The Arian John Moore the younger was tutor at Bridgwater in succession to his father (d. 1717), and he remained in office until 1747. The liberal Joseph Hallett Jr. was at the Exeter academy from its foundation – possibly in 1790; the open-minded Henry Grove was in charge at Taunton from 1706; from 1720 Ebenezer Latham was principal at Findern; and in 1733 Caleb Rotheram established his academy at Kendal.<sup>25</sup> In the curriculum of all of these academies, Locke was a staple ingredient.<sup>26</sup>

We must not, however, suppose that English Presbyterians alone among Dissenters tolerated the newer thought. If the King's Head Society was founded by Independents in 1730 with a view to countering Arianism, the Arminian Independent John Eames was successively the classical and then the theological tutor at the Congregational Fund's London academy. At this stage the student bodies were fluid: Henry Grove, for example, sent Thomas Amory from Taunton to complete his education under Eames. At Northampton, Philip Doddridge was supremely competent in steering a balanced course and acquiring a mixed student body who could be sure of hearing all sides of any question; while at Daventry the students (who included Priestley) heard orthodoxy from the principal, Caleb Ashworth, and heterodoxy from his assistant, Samuel Clark, and were challenged to make up their own minds.<sup>27</sup>

That not all were happy with this state of affairs is clear from a letter of John Barker, a Manager of the Presbyterian Fund, to Doddridge, dated 5 June

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25. For Moore (1642?-1717) and Hallett (1656-1722) see DNB and FAE; for Grove (1683/4-1738) see DNB and A.P.F. Sell, "Henry Grove: A Dissenter at the parting of the ways," *Enlightenment and Dissent* IV, 1985, pp. 53-63; for Latham (1688-1754) see H. McLachlan, *Essays and Addresses*, Manchester: Manchester University Press 1950, ch. ix; for Rotheram (1694-1752) see DNB and A.P.F. Sell, *Church Planting*, pp. 39-41, 45, 48, 132.

26. See further H. John McLachlan, *English Education under the Test Acts*, Manchester: Manchester University Press 1931.

27. For Eames (d. 1744), Amory (1700/1-1774), Priestley (1733-1804) and Ashworth (1722-1775) see DNB. Samuel Clark (1727-69) was trained at Doddridge's Northampton academy, and served as assistant tutor there. He was at Daventry (1752-6), and at the Old Meeting, Birmingham and Oldbury from 1756 until his death. See G.E. Evans, *Midland Churches*, Dudley 1899, but beware of confused dates.

1750. He found Rotheram "no proper Tutor," and Latham an incompetent one: "the pupils from both these persons do no honour to us, nor are any of them near us [i.e. in Calvinist doctrine], nor have we comfort or credit from them." Barker is much happier with Doddridge's academy, and with that of David Jennings at Hoxton. Indeed, "Had you not supplyd our Presbyterian Churches for Many years past what would have become of Us – nay – It is certain that what is calld the Presbyterian Interest in England has been supported by Independent Tutors."'<sup>28</sup>

The parting of the educational ways was at hand. Doddridge died in 1751, Rotheram in 1752 and Ashworth in 1754, and with them went their moderate academies. Among the signs that dissenting educational institutions were becoming more partisan was the resignation in 1789 of Thomas Belsham from the post of principal of the Independent academy at Daventry, which he had held since 1781. This was a result of his conversion to unitarianism. Another was the establishment of Warrington academy under John Taylor in 1759. Among those who taught there was Joseph Priestley; and when we recall his Independent origins, and place his name alongside those of the Arian Nathaniel Lardner, the upholder of the simple humanity of Christ, and Caleb Fleming, we can see that although (for reasons we shall adduce later) surviving Independent *churches* for the most part remained orthodox during the eighteenth century, the outstanding heterodox *individuals* had Independent roots. Indeed, with reference to Lancashire Robert Halley declared that "On comparison of the Lancashire ministers belonging to the middle of the century, those educated in the Independent academy of Northampton and Daventry, under Doddridge and Ashworth (the academy of Priestley and Belsham), were more decided and active in promoting the new theology than those who had been educated in the presbyterian academy under Dr. Rotheram at Kendal."'<sup>29</sup>

Returning now to the early years of the century, we find a significant application of Lockean principles to a doctrinal question, namely, that of the relation of the Son to the Father. Within the general Arminian climate of thought eighteenth-century Arianism has the status of an important sub-plot. It was, indeed, the trigger of an intense, more wide-ranging theological debate. The Arian conclusion was held to be a deliverance of reason derived from the diligent study of Scripture; and to subscribe to doctrinal statements which denied such deliverances, or unwarrantably added to them, was to

28. Extracts from the letter are given by Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *Calendar*, no. 1619.

29. Robert Halley, *Lancashire, Its Puritanism and Nonconformity*, 1869, II, p. 381. For Lardner (1684-1768), Fleming (1698-1779) and Belsham (1750-1829) see DNB.

dishonour God and violate conscience conceived as the mind judging what is right.<sup>30</sup>

But those who claim freedom of enquiry for themselves cannot consistently deny it to others: hence the pleas for the toleration of many views within the household of faith (though not of Roman views – their methodology was wrong, and their additions to scriptural teaching unacceptable);<sup>31</sup> hence also the conscientious resistance to a State Church which both required subscription of all, and at the same time turned a blind eye to those of its clergy who denied what some of the Articles taught.

It is indicative of the continuing influence of Calvinism at the beginning of the eighteenth century that when, in 1705, the English Presbyterian Thomas Emlyn came from Dublin to London after being imprisoned for preaching Arianism, he found no like-minded Presbyterian colleagues, and a good deal of opposition. Converted to Arianism by William Sherlock's defence of orthodoxy in 1690, he was on good terms with the Anglicans Clark and Whiston who, presumably, appreciated the predicament he outlined thus: "I long tried what I could do with some Sabellian turns, making out a Trinity of somewhat in one single mind. I found that by the Fatherhood scheme of Dr. Sherlock and Mr. Howe, I best preserved a Trinity, but I lost the Unity; by the Sabellian scheme of modes, subsistence, and properties, I best kept up the Divine Unity, but then I had lost a Trinity, such as the Scripture discovers, so that I could never keep both in view at once."<sup>32</sup>

30. Some writers play down the importance of Arianism by setting it over against Arminianism. Thus, for example, Roger Thomas (in Bolam *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 172) writes that among Presbyterians at the time of Salters' Hall, "the trend amongst them was not so much towards Arianism as towards Arminianism." Again, Jeremy Goring has declared that after 1730, "where there was heterodoxy in the pulpit it is almost certain that the form it took was not Arianism." See his "Calvinism in decline," in *1662-1962, The Ejection and its consequences*, p. 24. Now, there may not have been much Arianism in the pulpit for, as we shall see, a concern for "practical" preaching coupled with a certain amount of diplomacy kept it at bay; but that there were Arians in the pulpit at least until Micaiah Towgood died in 1792 is clear from the careers of a number of Presbyterian ministers, for whom their Arianism was a function of their Arminianism. It was Arianism's continuance and inherent instability that finally drove Priestley to be done with it, an added consideration being his changing ideas concerning what it was reasonable to believe *vis à vis* materialism. We should also note that as late as 1753, under the influence of Micaiah Towgood, the Exeter Assembly determined that ministerial candidates might proceed to ordination without subscribing to the Trinity. None of which is to deny that the issue at Salters' Hall was subscription rather than the Trinity.
31. When reflecting upon Presbyterians and toleration, we should not forget that at the Westminster Assembly neither they nor the Independents (at first) demonstrated that their natural inclinations were in that direction. See Robert S. Paul, *The Assembly of the Lord*, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark 1985, *passim*.
32. T. Emlyn, *A True Narrative of the Proceedings of the Dissenting Ministers of Dublin against Mr. Thomas Emlyn*, quoted by A. H. Drysdale, *op. cit.*, p. 499 n. After a meeting with Emlyn on 1 September 1705, Matthew Henry expostulated in his Diary, "The Lord keep me in the way of truth." See J. B. Williams, *Memoirs of M. Henry* (1828), reprinted

Martin Tomkins, minister of Stoke Newington Presbyterian church, also met with hostility. In a sermon preached on 13 July 1713 he admitted that "There are some who cannot approve of, or subscribe to, what is generally received as the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity – in plain words, that the Son and the Holy Ghost are the same substance, the same individual Being with the Father; or in all respects equal to the Father." He proceeded to adduce six reasons for denying that "the doctrine of the Trinity, or of the Deity of Christ – according to what is generally reckoned to be the orthodox notion – is a Fundamental Doctrine of Christianity."<sup>33</sup> For this he was dismissed from his charge, and twenty years on was still lamenting that no Presbyterian church had addressed a call to him.

The Scottish Presbyterian minister in London, Robert Fleming, published three volumes on Christology between 1705 and 1708, and while he was orthodox *vis à vis* the person of Christ, his stand against subscription was a further straw in the wind.<sup>34</sup> But few put the Arminian case for the sufficiency of Scripture, and against subscription to the "traditions of men" as succinctly as Joseph Hallett Jr. of Exeter:

If we are impartial and diligent in our studying the Scriptures, and in our enquiry after truth, and conscientiously practise what we find to be our duty, He will guide us by His Spirit, into the belief of all those doctrines which are necessary to salvation. This is our unspeakable comfort, while thoughtless and angry zealots presume to condemn us for not attending to them, who teach for doctrine the commandments and traditions of men.<sup>35</sup>

In view of the importance of the Netherlands in the story of rationalistic Arminianism, it is worthy of note that of those just mentioned, Fleming had been pastor of the English church in Leiden and the Scots church in Rotterdam, and Tomkins went with Lardner to study at Utrecht. While Amsterdam, rather than Leiden and Utrecht, was the academic centre of Arminianism, they could hardly have failed to notice the current flowing in that direction. The friendship between Locke and Limborch is a further factor in the situation.<sup>36</sup>

Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust 1974, p. 180. For Emlyn (1663-1741), Sherlock (1641-1707), Clarke (1675-1729) and William Whiston (1687-1752) see DNB.

33. Quoted by F.W. Powicke, "An apology for the Nonconformist Arians of the eighteenth century," *Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society* I, no. 2, 1918, p. 114. For Tomkins (d. 1755?) see DNB. In 1732 he published a work on the atonement, *Jesus Christ, the Mediator between God and Man* which was praised by Doddridge.
34. For Fleming (1660-1716) see DNB, FAE.
35. Joseph Hallett, *The Christian Creed . . . as profess'd by those who are called Arians*, pp. 1, 2.
36. For the Dutch connection see J. van den Berg and Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *Philip Doddridge (1702-1751) and the Netherlands*, Leiden: Brill 1987; and the latter's "Why did the English Presbyterians become Unitarian?" in *Miscellanea Anglo-Belgica*, Leiden: Sir Thomas Browne Institute 1987, pp. 7-17. The fact that Dr. Nuttall and I were researching

In 1711 some neighbouring ministers boycotted the ordination of Samuel Bourn the Elder at Crook, near Kendal, because he refused to subscribe to the Westminster Shorter Catechism (indeed, he was later to publish his own modifications of it);<sup>37</sup> but this was a local squall. The storm broke in 1719 about the head of James Peirce, who had studied in Utrecht (though he returned thence a convinced Calvinist, and as late as 1708 was found deploring his friend Whiston's heterodoxy). Peirce was now Hallett's colleague in Exeter. As Locke's *Reasonableness* was the catalyst of the broader rationalistic Arminianism, so Samuel Clarke's *The Scripture-Doctrine of the Trinity* (1712) was a catalyst of Anglican and other Arianism. Clarke held that while there were three divine persons, the Father alone enjoyed independent self-existence, and was undivided.<sup>38</sup> In this he was in due course followed by a number of Presbyterian ministers, as well as by relatively few Independents and a greater number of General Baptists.

For all that, the fact is that, as Edmund Calamy said, at the Salters' Hall conference of 1719 the Trinity was "not the point in question."<sup>39</sup> True, Peirce's position was by no means Athanasian: "We are sure," he wrote, "that there is but one God the Father, because the Scriptures are express in saying so, but we cannot be so certain that the Father, Son and Holy Ghost are one God, because the Scripture never so much as once says so."<sup>40</sup> Despite this, Peirce denied that he was an Arian: "Why should we I pray, be denominated from Arius? Did we ever propose any particular veneration for him? Do we pretend, nay, do we not most positively deny, that we have received our opinions from him?"<sup>41</sup> Peirce did not positively contend for the subordination of the Son to the Father; rather, he was determined to maintain that the God and Father of Jesus Christ is the one God, and to oppose the view that Father, Son and Spirit together constitute the one God.<sup>42</sup>

Was Christ "one God with the Father" or not? This was the *question* at Salters' Hall; but that the *issue* was subscription is clear from the fact that when the vote was taken, the non-subscribers *affirmed* their belief in the Trinity: what concerned them was that by seeking such a vote the principle of the sole sufficiency of Scripture had been compromised. In their own words: we utterly disown the *Arian* Doctrine, and sincerely believe the Doctrine of the Blessed Trinity, and the proper Divinity of our Lord

this topic concurrently but independently will make a comparison of our findings the more interesting.

37. See A.P.F. Sell, "A little friendly light: The candour of Bourn, Taylor and Towgood."
38. S. Clarke, *The Scripture-Doctrine of the Trinity*, 3rd edn. 1732, pp. 234-5. For Peirce (1674?-1726) see DNB.
39. E. Calamy, *Historical Account of my own Life*, II, p. 414.
40. J. Peirce, *Plain Christianity Defended*, I, 1719, p. 29.
41. *Id.*, in a sermon preached at Exeter on 18 March 1719, the Sunday following his ejection, on *The Evil and Cure of Divisions*, 1719.
42. See his *Letter to a Dissenter in Exeter*, 1719, pp. 10, 11.

Jesus Christ, which we apprehend to be clearly revealed in the Holy Scriptures; But we are far from condemning any who appear to be with us in the Main, tho' they should chuse not to declare themselves in other than Scripture-Terms, or not in Ours . . .

We saw no Reason to think, that a *Declaration* in *other Words* than those of *Scripture*, would serve the Cause of *Peace* and *Truth*; but rather be the Occasion of *greater Confusions* and *Disorders* . . .

We did not see fit, to pay such an new and unwarrantable Regard to the *Catechism of the Assembly of Divines* . . .

We take it to be an inverting the Great Rule of *deciding controversies among Protestants*; Making the Explications and Words of *Men* determine the Sense of *Scripture* . . .

We foresaw the Subscription insisted on would occasion *Reflections*, and become a *Mark of Distinction* set on those who should not subscribe: And we knew that several, who had the *same* Faith and Opinions concerning the TRINITY, with *ourselves* and our Brethren, yet could not be satisfy'd to come into any Humane Explications . . .

To add but one Thing more, We did not think it proper to subscribe, because if this Humour was *once* complied with, we could not tell *where it would stop*.<sup>43</sup>

An analysis of the Salters' Hall vote reveals that 29 Presbyterians and 28 Independents subscribed; and that 47 Presbyterians were among the 73 non-subscribers, of whom only Benjamin Avery and Lardner were decided Arians. It has been pointed out by a number of scholars that a more significant division was as to age, the preponderance of subscribers being over 40, of non-subscribers, under 40.

The application of Arminian hermeneutics gradually entailed the modification (high Calvinists said the abandonment) of other doctrines. Election and predestination, eternal punishment – these and other doctrines were subjected to close scrutiny. James Strong of Ilminster published a revised version of the Westminster Shorter Catechism in 1735, and where he led Samuel Bourn the Elder and others followed.<sup>44</sup> By 1752, when James Daye delivered Caleb Rotheram's funeral oration, he could redefine "Protestant Dissenter" thus: "As a *protestant dissenter* he was a credit to his *profession*."

43. *An Authentick Account of Several Things Done and agreed upon by the Dissenting Ministers Lately assembled at Salters-Hall, 1719*, pp. 15-16, 25-9. For the Salters' Hall controversy see A. Gordon, *Addresses Biographical and Historical*, 1922, ch. V; F.J. Powicke, "The Salters' Hall controversy," *Congregational Historical Society Transactions* VII, no. 2, 1916, pp. 110-124. R. Thomas in C.G. Bolam *et al.*, *The English Presbyterians*, pp. 151-174; *id.*, "The Non-Subscription controversy amongst Dissenters in 1719: The Salters' Hall debate," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* IV, 1953, pp. 162-186.

44. For Avery (d. 1764) see DNB. for Strong (d. 1738) see J. Murch, *A History of the Presbyterian and General Baptist Churches in the West of England*, 1835, pp. 231, 234-5.

For he was a *friend*, a *faithful friend to liberty*, the *distinguishing principle of that profession*."<sup>45</sup> By now Dissent was becoming increasingly self-conscious over against the pretensions of the Established Church, and in Micaiah Towgood it found an enthusiastic apologist.<sup>46</sup>

Arianism, as an aspect of a broader Arminian world view, survived throughout the eighteenth century. Such distinguished ministers as Abraham Rees and Andrew Kippis did not waver; neither did Richard Price, whose Arianism so distressed his Calvinistic uncle Samuel, Watts's colleague at St. Mary Axe, Bury Street. When Samuel asked Richard "whether he believed in the *proper divinity* of Jesus Christ, he very ingenuously answered in the negative, if by *proper divinity* was meant the equality of Jesus Christ with God. On which his uncle with some vehemence exclaimed 'that he had rather see him transformed into a pig, than that he should have been brought up to be a dissenting minister without believing in the Trinity.'"<sup>47</sup> Indeed, Arianism was among the matters on which Price differed from his friend Priestley – as Priestley acknowledged in his funeral oration for Price: "Though, among other things, he differed from me with respect to *the person of Christ*, no man laid more stress than he did on his being a *creature* of God, equally with ourselves, and no more an *object of worship* than any other creature whatever."<sup>48</sup>

The tide was, however, with Priestley who, although he went "to Daventry [academy, 1751] as an Arminian and a believer in free will; [and] came out of it an Arian in theology, and in philosophy a determinist,"<sup>49</sup> he could not rest in the Arian position. Impressed on the one hand by Newtonian physics, which seemed to require but one ultimate cause, and on the other hand, by such biblical texts as that recording Peter's preaching of "Jesus of Nazareth, a *man* approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs," he embraced a Socinian position and, to the dismay of some older Presbyterian ministers, began to advocate an aggressive brand of humanitarian Christianity to be distinguished by the name Unitarian.

45. J. Daye, *The Christian's Service, completed with Honour. A Sermon Occasioned by the Death of the Reverend Caleb Rotheram, D.D. Who died June 8. 1752. Aetat. 59. Preached at Kendal, June 14. 1752, [1752]*, p. 20. For Daye see R. Halley, *Lancashire*, II, pp. 293-4; G.E. Evans, *Vestiges of Protestant Dissent*, 1897, p. 126; B. Nightingale, *Lancashire Nonconformity I* 1890, pp. 216-18; A.P.F. Sell, *Church Planting*, p. 40. Daye was born in 1700, educated under Caleb Rotheram at Kendal, and ministered at Lancaster from 1736 until his death in 1770.
46. See A.P.F. Sell, "A little friendly light;" *id.*, "Dubious Establishment? A neglected ecclesiological testimony," *Mid-Stream* XXIV, 1985, pp. 1-28.
47. W. Morgan, *Memoirs of the Life of the Rev. Richard Price D.D., F.R.S.*, 1815, pp. 13-14. For Rees (1743-1825) and Price (1723-1791) see DNB.
48. J. Priestley, *A Discourse on the occasion of the Death of Dr. Price; Delivered at Hackney, on Sunday, May 1, 1791*, 1791, p. 25.
49. A. Gordon, *Heads of English Unitarian History*, 1895, p. 106.

Something of the temperamental differences within the new unitarianism emerges in the account of the life of Michael Maurice. His father was orthodox, but Michael left Hoxton academy a convinced unitarian. However, "the whole tone of his mind in relation to religious questions was that of the old Salters' Hall Presbyterians of 1719, and not that of the later Unitarian dogmatists."<sup>50</sup> The account includes this illuminating comparison: "The spirit of Presbyterianism had been that of tolerance carried to its utmost limit; the new apostles who joined it from without, and of whom two notably, Priestley and Belsham, formed and all but formulated for it a creed, were men of vehement assertion and scarcely disguised contemptuous aggression against all who differed from a pure Unitarianism." We are here at the point at which extremes of "right" and "left" meet: in censorship (actual or desired) of those who do not share their position. It would not be difficult to cite a number of illustrations of this phenomenon from the theology of our own time. Drysdale (admittedly a hostile witness), goes so far as to call Priestley's Socinianism a "*militant and fighting creed*."<sup>51</sup> Certainly in welcoming Joshua Toulmin's proposal to write a life of Socinus, Priestley urged that the result should be "calculated to give a favourable idea of his principles, and to inspire the lukewarm freethinkers among us with a greater zeal for truth, and more serious endeavours to promote it."<sup>52</sup> His widely-circulated tract of 1770, *Appeal to the Serious and Candid Professors of Christianity*, was a determined attempt to stem the advance of methodist "enthusiasm," and his more scholarly *History of the Corruptions of Christianity* (1782) showed him on the side of pure religion and undefiled. In 1786 there followed the *History of Opinions Concerning the Person of Christ*, many of which did not appeal to the author.

H.L. Short provided a concise and accurate statement of Priestley's Unitarianism, and we quote it in full:

It meant an emphatic rationalism, completely Newtonian, determinist and materialist. It was individualist; following Hoadly, Priestley believed that Christ's authority was not in a church but in the individual reason and conscience. The story of Christianity, both as institution and as theology, was one of progressive corruption of the original impulse; and the time had come for rational recovery. Christ was not the second Person of the Trinity, nor (as the Arians taught) the pre-existent Word, but a man, commissioned by God to proclaim those sacred truths of creation and conduct which the unaided human reason might guess at, but could never know with certainty without divine revelation. Christianity was the one true religion; the other religions of the world

50. *Life of F.D. Maurice by his Son*, 1884, I, p. 7.

51. A.H. Drysdale, *op.cit.*, p. 534.

52. Quoted by A. Gordon, *Heads*, p. 109. Toulmin (1740-1815), for whom see DNB, published his *Memoirs of the Life, Character and Writings of Socinus* in 1777.

were superstitious and vicious. This unique authority of the Christian revelation was guaranteed by Christ's miracles and resurrection; his death at the hands of a reactionary priesthood was not an atoning sacrifice for sin, as the evangelicals claimed, but a grim example of the fate of all prophets and reformers.<sup>53</sup>

Prominent among those who threw their lot in with the new movement was Theophilus Lindsey, who concluded to the simple humanity of Christ without pausing at the Arian half-way house, resigned his Anglican living in 1773, and founded Essex Street Chapel, London, in 1778. He brought with him liturgical habits and a predilection for set prayers which John Taylor and most of the older Presbyterians would have abominated.<sup>54</sup>

Any attempt to quantify the number of ministers whose doctrinal position changed, or who began as heterodox, is fraught with difficulty. We shall, however, venture a few fairly firm general remarks. Our point of departure may be a letter which Isaac Watts wrote in the very early years of the eighteenth century. Of the Presbyterians he said that "Their doctrine is generally Calvinistical, but many of those who are called Presbyterians have of late years inclined more to Mr. Baxter." As for the Independents, "They generally hold more to the doctrine of Calvin than Presbyterians do."<sup>55</sup> The MS report, "A view of the Dissenting interest in London"<sup>56</sup> records 19 Presbyterian ministers as Calvinist, 25 as Arminian, and 12 as of the middle way – Baxterians. (By comparison, and with the exception of Jeremiah Hunt – "It is difficult to say what he is" – the 30 Independents were Calvinists.) Among the Presbyterian Calvinists are Zephaniah Marryatt, who became an Independent after succeeding Abraham Taylor at the King's Head academy; John Barker who, in 1742 was found complaining to Doddridge about the departure of dissenting ministers from Reformation doctrines,<sup>57</sup> and who by 1750 was one of the very few remaining active ministerial Calvinists in London; and Daniel Wilcox who, against the advice of the London ministers, dismissed his Arminian assistant Henry Read in 1716. Later that year Read was ordained at a service in which Calamy participated. He appears among those of the middle way in the 1732 list, as does Nathaniel Lardner. George Benson and Samuel Chandler joined Read among the Arminians.<sup>58</sup>

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53. H.L. Short, "Presbyterians under a new name," in C.G. Bolam *et al.*, *op.cit.*, pp. 229-30.

54. For Lindsey (1723-1808) see DNB.

55. I. Watts, *The posthumous Works*, 1779, II, pp. 159, 161. For Watts (1674-1748) see DNB, FAE.

56. DWL MS. 38.18, pp. 88-92.

57. See his letter of 4 February 174[1]/2, in Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *Calendar*, no. 724.

58. For Hunt (1678-1744), Marryatt (c. 1684-1754), Taylor (fl. 1727-40), Barker (1682-1762) and Chandler (1693-1776) see DNB.

As for other parts of the country, the orthodox Scot John Cumming of Cambridge published *The general corruptions and defection of the present time, as to matters of religion* in 1714, warning that "Socinianism and Arminianism threaten to lay the axe at the root of Christianity;" John Ball of Honiton, who was perturbed by Henry Grove's open-minded pedagogy at Taunton, went to his grave fearful of what would become of gospel truth; John Walrond and John Lavington upheld Calvinism at Bow Meeting, Exeter, as did another Exeter minister, John Enty – a determined opponent of James Peirce at Salters' Hall. Similar service was performed by Doddridge's pupil Risdon Darracott of Wellington, Somerset, by Jacob Chapman, who ministered at Staplehurst from 1740 to 1745, and by Aaron Pitts of Topsham.<sup>59</sup>

But the tide was turning against the Calvinists – Samuel Bourn the Elder, James Peirce, John Taylor of Norwich and many others leaving the orthodoxy in which they had been bred for Arianism within the Arminian framework. Of like mind was William Blake of Crewkerne, one of Doddridge's last pupils.<sup>60</sup> Indeed, the mention of Doddridge's name recalls an illuminating statement by Jeremy Goring: "of the fifty-nine former pupils of Doddridge known to be in the Dissenting ministry in 1772 no fewer than fifty-three are found among those liberal-minded men who in that year signed the petition for a relaxation of subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles: of the remaining six, four did not sign because they were Unitarians of the Priestleyan school who wanted a much more radical reform, while only two remained to champion the cause of Calvinistic and Athanasian orthodoxy."<sup>61</sup>

There was much adverse criticism of the heterodox turn of events from without – the Baptist John Gill was vocal in this matter, for example. And within the Presbyterian fold some attempts were made to stem the tide. A favourite method was to appeal to Scotland. The most northerly counties benefited most from the labours of Scots ministers, and from the outposts of the various Scottish Presbyterian denominations, as we shall see. But London, too, felt the Scottish influence. For all the ambiguity of its relationship to the Church of Scotland, the London Scots Presbytery, half of whose congregations were of English origin, affirmed its allegiance to the Westminster Assembly's doctrine and discipline and, for its pains, was reproved in 1772 by the heterodox English Presbyterians meeting at Dr. Williams's Library for being "not Dissenters upon principles of liberty." In

59. For Ball (1655?-1745), Lavington (1690?-1759), Enty (1675?-1743) and Darracott (1717-59) see DNB.

60. For Blake (1730-99) see DNB under his son of the same name (1773-1821).

61. In C.G. Bolam *et al.*, *op.cit.*, p. 195.

some cases an English minister was called to a Scots church; more frequently, Scots were called to English pastorates, William Smith of Silver Street, London, being a prominent example.<sup>62</sup>

In 1763 thirty-one orthodox church members at Kendal seceded in face of heterodoxy, and petitioned the General Associate Presbytery for preachers: hence the cause which built its chapel on Beast Banks. Its first minister, James McQuhae turned Independent, and the result was the formation of Lowther Street Independent meeting.<sup>63</sup>

Of a number of itinerant Scots, James Scott was among the more notable. He served Presbyterian and Independent pastorates and, in 1756, became the first principal of Heckmondwike academy, which had been established by London Independents to counter "the cloud of Socinian darkness."<sup>64</sup>

Lest it be thought that the feeling towards Scottish ministers and assistance was all of one kind, we should note the feeling of some that the decline of English Dissent was not unconnected with the encouragement shewn to strolling Scotch Ministers. This was possibly a reference to the liberal reputation which Glasgow had acquired from its Professor of Divinity, John Simson (1712-29)<sup>65</sup> and its Professor of Moral Philosophy, Francis Hutcheson (1729-46).<sup>66</sup> Again, in 1737, the orthodox Presbyterian minister in Darlington, William Wood, found himself on the same side as Thompson, the Arian minister of Stockton, in objecting to the encroachment of Scottish ministers on the ground that the latter were committed to non-biblical Establishment principles.<sup>67</sup>

In this section we have attempted to show how what Bogue and Bennett called a "blight" and what Drysdale called a "fungus" affected *English* Presbyterian doctrine in the eighteenth century. We prefer, less emotively, to speak of doctrinal change. This there undoubtedly was – all temporal overlaps, caveats, and attempts at resistance notwithstanding. What we have now neutrally to illustrate, *without making an immediate connection with the doctrinal change*, is what happened to the Presbyterian congregations. Only then shall we be in a position to ask to what extent the Presbyterian numerical decline (which we shall demonstrate) was caused by heterodox teaching.

62. So K.M. Black, *The Scots Churches*, p. 18. For John Gill (1697-1771) see DNB.

63. See A.P.F. Sell, *Church Planting*, p. 42.

64. For Scott (1733-1814) see DNB; K.W. Wadsworth, *Yorkshire United Independent College*, London: Independent Press 1954, pp. 11, 18, 40-55.

65. For Simson see DNB.

66. For Hutcheson see DNB.

67. See A.H. Drysdale, *op. cit.*, p. 551 n. For theological traffic in the opposite direction see R.S. Robson, "England's contribution to the 'Secession' and the 'Relief'," *Presbyterian Historical Society Journal* V, no. 3, 1934, pp. 132-7.

## IV

How far did English Presbyterian congregations undergo doctrinal change and numerical decline in eighteenth-century England?<sup>68</sup> Let us first examine those counties in which, according to Evans's *List* Presbyterians were strongest in the first three decades of the eighteenth century. In Lancashire, where Presbyterians comprised 8% of the population, 22 Presbyterian causes became heterodox, and 6 Independent. (Risley became Unitarian, but was returned to the Presbyterians by Chancery decree in 1836. Tunley, or Mossy Lea, became Independent, possibly Unitarian during William Gaskell's brief ministry from 1776 to 1777, and, under Robert Dinwiddie, who served from 1797 to 1835, it was linked to Scottish Presbyterianism.) Presbyterians exceeded 7% of the populations of Cheshire, Devonshire and the city of Bristol. In Cheshire, 12 of their congregations became heterodox, 6 remained orthodox. Among the heterodox congregations was that at Dukinfield, to which William Buckley came as pastor (*via* Ashworth's Daventry academy and Atherstone) in 1762. According to his biographer, quoted by Nightingale, he was "not only an Arian, but a clerical dandy" who prompted a secession which led to the formation of the Independent churches at Dukinfield and Ashton-under-Lyne. His successor, David Davies from Carmarthen academy, ministered at Dukinfield from 1791 to 1794, and was known as the first Unitarian minister of the congregation. In Devonshire 11 or 12 Presbyterian congregations became heterodox, and that from which Micajah Towgood retired in 1782 was the strongest nonconformist cause in the city of Exeter. In Somerset 8 Presbyterian congregations became heterodox, while that at Milborne Port became Independent. In Dorset, where more than 5% of the population were Presbyterians, 4 Presbyterian congregations, together with the Independent cause at Bridport, became heterodox, while that at Wareham went from Presbyterian to Unitarian and back, under the influence of a dissembling Calvinist who secured election to the board of trustees in 1818, thereby prompting a secession of *Unitarians*. When John Reed Harris settled at Lyme Regis in 1775, his Arianism came upon the people as "a bolt from the blue;" they followed him nonetheless.

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68. In attempting as accurate a statement of the matter as possible we have drawn upon M. R. Watts's analysis of Evans's *List* in *The Dissenters*, pp. 270-1, 281; the completed volumes of the *Victorian History of the Counties of England*; C.F. Stell, *Nonconformist Chapels and Meeting-Houses in Central England*, London: HMSO 1986; and the following area denominational histories: Bell, Newcastle; Black, Scots Churches in England; Browne, Norfolk and Suffolk; Carpenter, Nottingham; Coleman, Northamptonshire; Densham and Ogle, Dorset; Elliot, Skinner, Shropshire; Halley, Nightingale, Lancashire; Matthews, Staffordshire; Miall, Yorkshire; Murch, West of England; Powicke, Cheshire; Sell, Westmorland; Thorp, Northumberland. Urwick, Hertfordshire.

Northumberland, where 5% of the population was Presbyterian, is a special case. It is sometimes alleged that orthodox Presbyterianism held on here because of Scottish influence. However, the background of Puritanism in the county and the legacy of its many ejected ministers should not be overlooked. It appears that 4 Presbyterian congregations only became heterodox, of which 3 were English and 1 was connected with the Church of Scotland. Some 23 of those with Scottish connections remained orthodox (12 Church of Scotland; 3 English; 3 Burgher; 1 Antiburgher; 1 Relief and 3 Secession), as did the remainder of the English foundations in the county.<sup>69</sup>

Presbyterians accounted for more than 4% of the populations of Berkshire, Derbyshire, Essex, Nottinghamshire and Staffordshire. In Berkshire Dissent as a whole declined from 27 causes in 1715 to 9 in 1772. Heterodoxy overtook 7 Derbyshire congregations, one of which, Loscoe, became Baptist, while those at Charlesworth and Chinley became Independent. The High Pavement chapel in Nottingham was an important accession to Unitarianism, while in Staffordshire, where the congregations at Walsall, Coseley, Oldbury, Cradley and elsewhere became Unitarian and that at Longdon Green became Independent, the Stafford cause, after teetering on the brink, was saved for Presbyterian orthodoxy partly by Scottish ministers and partly by temporary Wesleyan support.<sup>70</sup>

As for the rest of the country, we may note that in London the orthodox remnant of Swallow Street Presbyterian church, Piccadilly, seceded to their Scots neighbour; that at different times during the century 13 churches had Scottish links, of which 3 were English, 2 Burgher, 1 Antiburgher and the remainder Church of Scotland; that King's Weigh House became Independent possibly in 1784, while the Independent church at Walthamstow became Unitarian. Other Independent churches did likewise at Leeds, Great Yarmouth, Framlingham, Gloucester and, as we have seen, at Bridport. (We note, but do not here exemplify the fact that many General Baptist churches also became heterodox.)

In Wiltshire, where 3 Presbyterian congregations (and Birdbush for a time) became Unitarian, 2 became Baptist, 7 Independent, while Silver Street,

69. Some writers suggest that the geographical isolation of many Northumberland churches, which made presbyterial life difficult to organise, left them in conservative orthodoxy. Others say that it was precisely the lack of presbyterial organisation and hence of discipline, which fostered heterodoxy. But a full parochial, Established structure complete with bishops did not prevent many Anglican incumbents from entertaining Arianism. Isolated or not, regionally organised or not, church members will tend to follow – for good or ill – a minister whom they love and respect. It ill behoves ministers to presume upon this trust.
70. See A.H. Drysdale, *op.cit.*, pp. 561-66. Drysdale declares that when, c. 1811, the Wesleyans left to build their own chapel, the Presbyterian meeting, though at its lowest ebb ever, was "never 'shut up' as was once alleged." A.G. Matthews (following T.S. James, *op.cit.*, p. 499) disagrees. See his *The Congregational Churches of Staffordshire*, [1924], p. 112.

Trowbridge, by the skin of its teeth, remained orthodox. In Shropshire heterodoxy overtook the Presbyterian causes at Shrewsbury, Wem and Whitchurch. Farther north, as we saw, when the old English Presbyterian congregation in Kendal became heterodox under the Rotherams, the Scottish Antiburghers were appealed to by the orthodox members, and they formed their congregation in 1763. In Cumberland the Presbyterian congregations at Bewcastle and Maryport (Church of Scotland), and Whitehaven and Workington (Antiburgher), together with the English causes at Great Salkeld, Plumpton and Fisher Street, Carlisle, remained orthodox, as did the 5 Scottish-connected congregations in County Durham. Bethany, Sunderland was unusual in making the journey from the Church of Scotland to Unitarianism, while the congregation at Stockton had a particularly interesting pedigree:

a Presbyterian meeting was licensed in 1672, and a place of worship built and a minister ordained, 1689. After two long pastorates of forty-one, and of twenty-four years respectively, of the Thompsons, father and son (the latter of whom was heterodox), the third ministry, for thirty-one years, was that of a Scotchman, in 1753, Rev. Andrew Blackie (previously of Branton, near Alnwick), whose successor in 1785 was distinctly a Unitarian. A struggle ensued, resulting in a Scottish Presbyterian minister obtaining possession, during whose pastorate and his successors it was known as the Scotch Presbyterian Church . . . and then it relapsed. It is the common parent of the three bodies of Unitarians, Congregationalists, and Presbyterians.<sup>71</sup>

Yorkshire saw 20 Presbyterian congregations pass to Independency (and, unusually, 3 to the Church of England), and other places where the same thing happened include Ravenstonedale, Kidderminster, Bicester, Witney, Bridgnorth, Oswestry, Bromyard, Beaconsfield, Buckingham, Creaton, Daventry and Northampton.

Our attempt at an overall statistical summary leads us to the following conclusion: in 1718 there were some 637 English Presbyterian congregations, and some 203 Independent churches. By 1772 there were 302 English Presbyterian causes and 400 Independent churches. By 1800 the English Presbyterians were down to 200,<sup>72</sup> the Independents up to 900 (as a result of secessions from English Presbyterianism, and of openness to the Revival). On the other hand, of the 19 Unitarian churches in Yorkshire in 1808 no fewer than 12 were new foundations, and there were new foundations elsewhere also. Nevertheless, by 1825 there were but 220 Unitarian chapels in England, and of their general situation Isaac Taylor wrote in 1830:

71. *Ib.*, p. 551 n.

72. Though, according to our evidence, John Seed goes too far in describing the remaining Presbyterian congregations as being "all more or less unitarian in character." *Art. cit.*, p. 302.

It is a remarkable fact that the system of doctrine of which we are speaking seems not to be susceptible of any middle state of prosperity. Unitarian chapels are either the three or four, or possibly the five, well-filled chapels in London, Birmingham, Liverpool; or they are the three or four hundred [an exaggeration this] dungeons of desolation which are found elsewhere. By their own statements, ninety-eight unitarian chapels in every hundred are desolate.<sup>73</sup>

We have now demonstrated that there was significant doctrinal change among eighteenth-century English Presbyterian congregations, and that there was a serious decline in the number of those congregations. (At this point we continue to refrain from attributing the decline to the doctrinal change.) There were numerous secessions from English Presbyterianism on (or, in some cases, ostensibly on) doctrinal grounds, and of these the Independents were the principal beneficiaries. Such churches are too numerous to list here, but in addition to those which we have already noted, those at Bridge Street, Walsall and New Road, Bury, Lancashire, are among their number. We have seen that, rarely, Presbyterian congregations became Baptist and Anglican, but that six Independent churches only became Unitarian, and this despite the prominence of Unitarians with Independent roots. We should also observe that on occasion – as at Castle Hill, Northampton and Dagnal Street, St. Albans, there were Unitarian secessions from Independent churches.

It is not unreasonable to suppose that in all such changes the ministers played an important role. If their doctrine changed from orthodox to heterodox the people had three choices: assuming that they were alive to the change – and some ministers were remarkably discreet, as we shall see – they could welcome, tolerate, or protest against the change; and in the last case they could remain in discomfort, or secede.

## V

We come now to the most difficult, and the most important, question of all: How is the English Presbyterian decline to be explained? More particularly, did the doctrinal change *cause* the numerical decline? Let us address the latter question first.

It is more than likely that in most cases, when a secession from an heterodox Presbyterian congregation took place, that congregation did not make good its numerical loss. Again, it cannot be denied that the majority of secessions were said to be on doctrinal grounds (though we cannot overlook the mixed motives of the human condition). But when congregations became

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73. I. Taylor, *Logic in Theology, and other Essays*, 1859, pp. 96-106. For Taylor (1787-1865) see DNB.

extinct, as many did, it would be rash to conclude that doctrine was the sole, or even in all cases the primary cause. In cautioning us against positing that sort of cause-effect relationship too readily, F.J. Powicke, with reference to the fate of the London churches, asked, "if a subtle Arian blight killed the *thirteen non-subscribing* churches what killed the *sixteen subscribing* churches? The answer is that all the churches – orthodox and unorthodox alike – succumbed for reasons largely irrespective of doctrine, as they still do."<sup>74</sup> We take the main point, though we think that Powicke overplays his hand, for in the eighteenth century it *mattered* to many what they believed, and what their ministers believed, and this to a degree almost unimaginable to some in the genial, fashionably liberal Congregational circles in which Powicke moved. What we may say is that doctrine is not a necessary cause of decline, though it may be a sufficient cause. But this will then apply to all doctrine indiscriminately. That is, a church may expire under suffocating Calvinistic scholasticism as inexorably as under moralistic Arminian preaching.

This reference to Arminian preaching prompts the observation that for the most part heterodox preachers did not adopt a gladiatorial stance in the pulpit. They were, in any case, temperamentally disinclined towards "enthusiasm," and in favour of calm reason and tolerance. What William Jay wrote of the Presbyterian minister of his youth might have been written of many: "He was a Clarkeian Arian (but he never dealt much in doctrine), a very dry and dull preacher, but a lovely character, and exceedingly tender-hearted, kind and generous."<sup>75</sup> The sermons of such men were generally what they would have called "practical," and what we might describe as "moralistic." (Not indeed that the "godly walk" did not need all possible encouragement in their age). They did not set out to disturb their flocks with controversy, however controversial they might be in their pamphlets. Nor need this fact necessarily be cynically construed as a product of the desire to maintain numbers, hence contributions, hence stipend. James Manning held up the non-pugilistic Micaiah Towgood as an example to all: "Would to God, that all the ministers of religion, like this amiable preacher, could be induced to drop their disputes at the shrine of piety, and to sacrifice their talents, their love of popularity and profit, on the altar of public utility!"<sup>76</sup> What Drysdale wrote of Samuel Chandler could have been written of many: "The lack of the distinctive features of the Gospel, rather than any antagonism to Gospel doctrine, is the characteristic of [his] position."<sup>77</sup>

74. F.J. Powicke, "An apology for the Nonconformist Arians," p. 107.

75. *The Autobiography of William Jay*, ed. George Redford and John Angell James (1854), Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust 1974, p. 18. For Jay (1769-1863) see DNB.

76. James Manning, "A Sketch of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Micaiah Towgood," *The Protestant Dissenter's Magazine*, November 1794, p. 426. For Manning (1781-1856) see J. Murch, *op. cit.*, pp. 413, 448-52.

77. A.H. Drysdale, *op. cit.*, p. 530 n.

We cannot altogether suppress the feeling, however, that with some, good eighteenth-century prudence so prevailed as to make the line between diplomacy and deception very thin indeed. Thus, of Doddridge's pupil, the Arian/Arminian Benjamin Fawcett, who served Kidderminster's mixed congregation of Calvinists, Arians and Arminians, it was said that "he managed so far to conceal his opinions as to be very popular with his hearers, and these were very numerous."<sup>78</sup> We may sum the matter up by noting that one of the most frequently-used adjectives to describe eighteenth-century English Presbyterian ministers is "quiet." One of them, the Unitarian David Evans of Devonport, lamented that his pulpit ministrations had not been more doctrinal after the Unitarian fashion of emphasising "the unity and benevolence of God, the proper humanity of Jesus Christ, and other leading doctrines of Unitarianism."<sup>79</sup> This, he felt, might have halted the decline of the churches.

If most English Presbyterian ministers were "quiet," were they also "dry" and "cold" as has so often been alleged? If Job Orton is to be believed, sometimes they were. Of Paul Cardale of Evesham he declared that he "ruined a fine congregation by his very learned, dry and critical discourses, an extreme heaviness in the pulpit, and an almost total neglect of pastoral visits and private inspection."<sup>80</sup> And when Richard Price wrote to Benjamin Franklin on 30 September 1772 he referred to Kippis and other "preachers of Christianity on the rational plan," ruefully adding that "the congregations of many of them are very thin, partly perhaps for this very reason."<sup>81</sup> To William Jay we owe the following account of the views of the Unitarian physician of Bath, Thomas Cogan, concerning Unitarian preachers: "He wished they would give up reading their discourses, as less exciting and impressive. . . He complained of their disuse of the awful terms of Scripture, such as *fury*, *vengeance*, *the lake of fire and brimstone*, observing they were words employed by the only wise God himself, and were adapted to strike the careless and arrest the thoughtless. . . He also acknowledged that they never seemed to ascribe importance enough to the mediatorial work of the Messiah."<sup>82</sup> On the other hand, on the death of their pastor Caleb Rotheram Snr., James Daye could remind the Kendal congregation that "you have been accustomed to hear themes of *joy*; and, that a *melancholy gloom*, the *disgrace* of religion, was never admitted to disturb the *pleasures*, provided for you in

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78. G. Hunsworth, *Memorials of the Old Meeting House, Kidderminster*, 1874, p. 41. For Fawcett (1715-80) see DNB.

79. See J. Murch, *op. cit.*, p. 528.

80. Job Orton, *Letters to Dissenting Ministers*, ed. S. Palmer, 1806, I, p. 154. For Cardale (1705-1775) see DNB.

81. *The Correspondence of Richard Price, 1: July 1748-March 1778*, ed. D.O. Thomas and W. Bernard Peach, Durham N.C.: Duke University Press and Cardiff: University of Wales Press 1983, p. 142.

82. William Jay, *op. cit.*, p. 466.

the best *entertainments* of the rational mind." He hoped that "your sorrow, if it cannot intirely give place to joy; may, at least, have joy mingled with it."<sup>83</sup>

Sometimes, no doubt, Presbyterian and other congregations became extinct for demographic reasons. Village causes could be left high and dry as people moved to the towns; and where extinction was avoided, notably in the towns, the incursion of ambitious men from Scotland, Wales and Ireland, whose indebtedness to the Puritan tradition was at best slight, and who sought fashionable (but not Anglican or Wesleyan Tory) bases, and married into the older families, altered the complexion of many Presbyterian congregations.<sup>84</sup> Again, some Presbyterian ministers increasingly gave themselves to politics – George Walker of Nottingham, for example, combining such activity with his pastorate at High Pavement. But such ardour was dimmed, and Presbyterian/Unitarian causes suffered when the burning of meeting-houses by conservative mobs took place in the 1790s, and when there seemed no way of squaring the older Presbyterian way of conscientious free thought with the totalitarian demands of revolution.<sup>85</sup> More domestic factors, such as the dissolution of the academy at Warrington in 1786, and the scandals, indiscipline, and paucity of ordinands in relation to the total number of students experienced by the new academies founded at Hackney and Manchester in the same year, further weakened the denomination.

The causes of English Presbyterian decline were multifarious; doctrine was an important factor, but there were others. But at least we may venture the judgment that doctrine and the general rationalistic Arminian mindset contributed to the general unrevivability of English Presbyterianism during the Evangelical Revival. Many Presbyterian ministers (not unaware of seventeenth-century sectarian fanaticism, which they did not wish to see repeated in their own time) were hostile to revivalistic "enthusiasm," and to the preaching of laypeople. But the Independents, despite their extinct causes, and despite the fact that neither they nor the Particular Baptists produced an eighteenth-century Athanasius, nevertheless more than quadrupled the number of their churches between 1718 and 1800, as we saw.

But why the dramatic difference as between the Independents and the English Presbyterians? The answer lies in ecclesiology, and a consideration of this factor will lead us to point a moral of the utmost importance for churches in the last years of the twentieth century.

Although, as we have seen, a number of prominent Independent *individuals* became heterodox, about six of their churches only did so, whereas the majority of English Presbyterian congregations became heterodox. Why

83. J. Daye, *The Christian's Service, completed with Honour . . .*, [1752], pp. 102.

84. See H.L. Short in C.G. Bolam *et al.*, *The English Presbyterians*, p. 223.

85. See Mark Philp, "Rational religion and political radicalism in the 1790s," *Enlightenment and Dissent* IV, 1985, pp. 35-46; F.K. Donnelly, "Joseph Towers and the collapse of rational Dissent," *ib.*, VI, 1987, pp. 31-9.

should this have been? Our suggestion is that within the Independent polity there were checks and balances and, above all, the involvement of the saints in the local church's profession of the faith, to a degree which was not possible in English Presbyterianism. Hence our earlier remark that whereas by the end of the seventeenth century many Presbyterian congregations had become Independent (in that they lacked presbyterial polity), they had not become Independent (in the sense of espousing the ecclesiology of the gathered church).

We have elsewhere shown<sup>86</sup> that Independent church members were regularly involved in the profession of the orthodox faith. They made their personal profession (in terms deemed acceptable – a basic *conserve-atism* here) before the Church Meeting; they signed the local covenant; they called the minister having collectively assured themselves of his soundness; they heard the faith rehearsed, sometimes at considerable length, at ordination and induction services; and they regularly sang the orthodox faith – supremely in the hymns of Watts and Doddridge. They may even, on occasion, have recalled, or been reminded of, their Savoy Declaration of Faith and Order (1658). As Bernard Lord Manning wrote, such fellowship cannot “guarantee fervent faith or purity of doctrine; but a society which requires such personal profession is not very likely to fall into the hands of those who are strangers to its evangelical experience. And of catholic doctrine evangelical experience is the divinely constituted guardian: more venerable, more effective, more apostolic than the whole episcopate of Reformed and Unreformed Christendom.”<sup>87</sup> Furthermore, the Church Meeting concerned itself with the godly disciplining of its members – always a delicate matter; but at least it reinforced the sense of the accountability of the individual saint to the whole body, and at best it tuned the whole fellowship up for mission.<sup>88</sup>

By contrast, as we have seen, English Presbyterian structures had broken down, or had never fully existed post-1662; and while the continuing, geographically patchy, associations of ministers did what they could to regulate and superintend ordinations, the Presbyterian church members were very much more in the position of “having religion done to them” than were their Independent counterparts. Moreover, church discipline was normally in the hands of the Presbyterian minister, who would approach others only in the more scandalous cases; but seldom would the entire membership be involved.

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86. See A.P.F. Sell, “Confessing the faith in English Congregationalism,” *The Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society*, Vol. 4 no. 3, October 1988.

87. B.L. Manning in *Congregationalism Through the Centuries*, 1937, pp. 73-4. It is interesting to note that as early as 1723, the church of which Isaac Watts was minister decided that whereas Independent church members might enter the roll by letter of dismission, enquiries concerning the reason of their hope would be made of Presbyterians. See the Church Book in *Baptist Annual Register*, ed. J. Rippon, IV (1801-02), pp. 599-600.

88. See further A.P.F. Sell, *Church Discipline*, London: United Reformed Church, 1983.

In some cases attitudes were so generous (or lax) that Priestley could say that even if a member utterly disgraced a congregation, "there are many who would never disclaim, or even censure him."<sup>89</sup>

When to all of this we add the general consideration that Presbyterian trustees played an increasingly important governmental role, we can see how an oligarchy could come to rule a Presbyterian congregation in a *quasi*-papal manner. Calamy noted that a Presbyterian minister would sometimes appoint his own assistant and successor;<sup>90</sup> but more usually the trustees took a hand in such matters. Thus, in Exeter at the time of Salters' Hall, there existed a Committee of thirteen laymen, who do not appear to have been office-bearers in the churches, whose task was to manage the temporal affairs of the five meeting-houses in the city. It was this Committee which excluded Peirce and Withers from their meeting-house – "the first instance in English Nonconformity of the exercise of legal power by Trustees."<sup>91</sup> Colligan further observes that "the Trustees of that period by quietly transferring the property and endowments to new Trustees did more to bring about the Arian Movement among the Dissenters than did the ministers themselves"<sup>92</sup> – a statement which applies more generally to rationalistic Arminianism as a whole, with the caveat that while the trustees could not *make* the ministers Arminian, they could *place* them when they were.

From many examples of the dealings of trustees we may select a few. When, in 1756 four orthodox trustees at Poole died the congregation, theologically "in advance" of its minister Samuel Phillips, gave him six

89. J. Priestley, *The Proper Constitution of a Christian Church* (1782), in *Works* XV, p. 53.

90. E. Calamy, *Historical Account*, I, p. 361.

91. See J. Hay Colligan, "English Presbyterian trust-deeds," *The Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society*, I, no. 2, May 1915, p. 52. It should be noted that the so-called "open trusts" of the post-1689 period which were apparently non-doctrinal and did not specify denominational names, *presupposed* concurrence with the Articles of the Church of England, this being the ground of toleration: they were not "open" in a free-wheeling liberal sense. See e.g. William Whitaker, "The open-trust myth," *Unitarian Historical Society Transactions* I, no. 3, Dec. 1918, pp. 303-14; F. Kenworthy, "The Toleration Act of 1689," *ib.*, VII, no. 1, Oct. 1939, p. 29. The appointment of trustees was necessary because the voluntary congregations were not corporate bodies, and so could not hold land. Charles Beard (followed by others) thus gave a wrong impression when he wrote of the forbears of the Unitarian cause at Mill Hill, Leeds, that they were Presbyterian "and in founding their places of worship, whether by what I must call a divine prevision of future theological enquiry, or as their enemies say, by a happy accident, they refrained from limiting their use by doctrinal trust deeds." Quoted without comment by J. Johansen-Berg, "Arian or Arminian?," *The Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society* XIV, no. 2, May 1969, p. 45. The Unitarians appear to have "invented" the openness claimed by some during the property struggles of the nineteenth century. For John Withers (1669-1729) see FAE.

92. *Ib.* Allan Brockett writes, "Elected solely to look after the Ministers' Fund, the 'Thirteen' had no authority to demand [doctrinal] assurances from their pastors." See *Nonconformity in Exeter 1650-1875*, Manchester UP, 1962, p. 88.

months' notice to leave. He objected and, "after much indecorous altercation . . . was locked out of the pulpit." He and his sympathisers subsequently withdrew from the congregation.<sup>93</sup> Again, by the middle of the century the long-standing right of the Penrith congregation to appoint both its minister and its trustees had been assumed by the trustees – a circumstance which c. 1779 prompted a dispute between the congregation and the trustees which was to last for twenty-six years.<sup>94</sup> Trustees did not always act in the appointment of ministers. A letter of 29 December 1727, signed by John Crompton and Thomas Mather, explains that since the Chorley trustees have declared that owing to their distance from the new chapel "they are not fit persons to choose a minister to preach constantly at the said chapel," the two signatories will do it for them. Thus Samuel Bourn the Elder was appointed in accordance, it is said, with "the true intent" of the will of the late Abraham Crompton of Derby. On all of which Toulmin comments,

The above nomination has more the air of patronage to a living, than is consistent with the principles of Protestant Dissenters, who, with great propriety, claim it as their right and their privilege to choose their own ministers; amongst whom patronage ought not to be admitted, whether exercised by a principal member or by trustees; the former, on all just principles, has only a single voice; the latter do not constitute the congregation, nor are representatives of it, but only guarantees for the legal security of the property of the congregation . . . But the proceedings of Dissenting Congregations have not been always agreeable to these principles.<sup>95</sup>

The irony is that it was to the advantage of the likes of righteous Toulmin that the principles had been regularly breached during the eighteenth century. It remains only to add that occasionally the power of the trustees was successfully resisted, as at Ravenstonedale, the pastorate of which James Muscutt accepted in 1811 "on condition that the Church be reorganised and put upon the Independent or Congregational plan."<sup>96</sup>

We have said enough to show that, unlike the Independents, their "advanced" *individuals* notwithstanding, the English Presbyterian congregations of the eighteenth century did not for the most part have the ecclesiological support system and safeguards which might have held them

93. See W. Densham and J. Ogle, *The Story of the Congregational Churches of Dorset*, [1899], p. 196 (where they twice give seventeenth-century dates for eighteenth-century facts). Cf. J. Murch, *op. cit.*, p. 292.

94. See J.H. Colligan, "English Presbyterian trust-deeds," p. 53.

95. J. Toulmin, *Memoirs of The Revd. Samuel Bourn*, 1808, pp. 20-22.

96. See A.P.F. Sell, *Church Planting*, p. 76.

within the trinitarian faith of the ages.<sup>97</sup> It is our suggestion that the story of eighteenth-century *English* Presbyterianism, especially when contrasted with that of the century's Congregationalism, underlines the importance of the *church* as the *community* of biblical interpretation, and thus has much to teach those who, in our own time, ponder the question of hermeneutics.

Under the influences we have described, eighteenth-century English Presbyterianism to a large extent betrayed the Reformation in facilitating the giving back of the Bible to the "priest" with all his Enlightenment individualism. Congregational *churches*, by reason of their ecclesiological inheritance and its concomitant social conservatism, were on the whole spared a like fate *in that century*. With his often superior education, with favourably-disposed trustees, and in the absence of the constraints of Presbyterian polity, the Presbyterian minister could be a free agent in a way not open to most of his Independent peers.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, however, Enlightenment individualism had caught up with the Congregationalists – sometimes as a result of its own native strength, sometimes as processed by the individualism which could result from the Evangelical Revival with its emphasis upon the individual soul. Among the signs of this are the rapid decline, from 1830, of local covenants, the "invention" of mission stations, the concomitant weakening of emphasis upon the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers *corporately conceived*, and the resulting decline of the Church Meeting and, with it, of church discipline under the gospel. Congregationalism acquired its liberals on the one hand and its (relatively few) fundamentalists on the other – individualists all, who, in failing to "discern the body" handed on a maimed understanding of authority.<sup>98</sup> Only the principle that the will of God and his Word are to be discovered by the Spirit through the Scriptures and within the fellowship can allow for those checks and balances in place which will preserve that fellowship against idiosyncratic and autocratic ministers,

97. For other points of comparison and contrast see Roger Thomas, "The difference between Congregational and Presbyterian in the chapel-building age," *Studies in the Puritan Tradition*, a joint Supplement published by the Congregational and Presbyterian Historical Societies, Dec. 1964, pp. 28-40. It may not improperly be suggested that the majority of English Presbyterians exchanged one form of individualism, namely, that to which federal Calvinism could lead (for which see M. Charles Bell, *Calvin and Scottish Theology. The Doctrine of Assurance*, Edinburgh: The Handsel Press, 1985, p. 104) for another. However much federalism may have commended itself to some Independent ministers, their ecclesiology tended to neutralise its more baneful effects.

98. For an account of these matters see A.P.F. Sell *Theology in Turmoil: The roots, course and significance of the conservative-liberal debate in modern theology*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986. There is also, of course, a "catholic" variety of individualism which goes off "to make *my* communion" often before the streets are aired. In the following important work the hermeneutical importance of the church is emphasised: Gabriel Fackre, *The Christian Story. A Pastoral Systematics. Volume 2. Authority: Scripture in the Church for the World*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987.

and against individualists whether biblicist, spiritualistic or liberal who, for all their differences are united in having little use for the *people* of God.

So much for the *general ecclesiological-hermeneutical* lesson to be learned from our study – a lesson whose ecumenical implications are as important as they are too often neglected. But there is a further point to be made concerning the *specific* doctrinal issue at stake in the eighteenth century. The Arians and Arminians were in protest against a God who, in scholastic Calvinistic circles, had been reduced to an inscrutable will. Against this distortion they pitted another distortion. Their God accorded well with the first principle required by the new science of their day (which contains a warning for contextual theologies of any day). But, may we not say that they were sorely tempted to take the direction they did not only in opposition to particular doctrines such as original sin, election and predestination, but by the incipient unitarianism of classical Calvinistic theological *method*? We have only to examine the classical Calvinistic confessions of faith to see that, for all their merits, they time and again begin from the unity of God, proceed through his communicable and incommunicable attributes, and only then come to his self-revelation as Trinity. What the Unitarian Robert Spears wrote of the General Baptists has a wider application too: "Can any one be surprised when a Church that has planted itself on an article of faith such as the following:- 'We believe and are confident that there is but one God the Father,' as was agreed at a meeting in 1660, that both ministers and laymen should in the end come to interpret this in a most natural and Scriptural sense, as has been the case among the Churches under notice."<sup>99</sup> As Donald MacKinnon has averred, "It is a weakness of the western Trinitarian tradition so to conceive and so to stress the unity of God that the whole theology of the divine attributes tends to be treated independently of the treatise on the divine tri-unity, and the unity of God itself regarded as conceivable independently of the tri-unity through which it is realised."<sup>100</sup>

Perhaps we may combine our general and specific findings and say that the outstanding need revealed by our study is of a genuinely trinitarian ecclesiology; that is, of the idea of the Church as a people graciously called out by the Father through the Spirit, and given to the Son as Bride. In relation to such an ecclesiology prevailing church-state relations, the para-church

99. Robert Spears, *Record of Unitarian Worthies*, [1877], p. 23. The Assembly met in London in March 1660. The quotation is from "A Brief Confession or Declaration of Faith" and, *pace* Beard, its authors were "verily confident." See *Minutes of the General Assembly of the General Baptist Churches*, ed. W.T. Whitley, London: Kingsgate, 1908, p. 10.

100. Donald M. MacKinnon, *Themes in Theology. The Three-Fold Cord*, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark 1987, p. 155.

movements, the practice of mission, the fact of consumerism in much Western Christianity, and all "sectarianisms" whether of the doctrinal, ecclesiological, methodological or issue-based kinds, could not legitimately pass unchallenged.

## VI

We have attempted an impartial analysis of an intricate strand of churchly life and thought, and have reached a conclusion. We might well have left matters there. But since the issues with which we have been concerned have provoked subsequent reactions which are contradictory and questionable, we shall, by way of an epilogue, briefly subject the critics, both positive and negative, to adjudication.

In introducing his account of the period between 1710 and 1740 the orthodox Presbyterian historian A.H. Drysdale loftily wrote, "We now pass into an altogether less exalted and less significant epoch. We are sinking from the *notables* to the mere *respectables* of the Kingdom of Christ."<sup>101</sup> On the other hand, of the major theological decision of the same period the Unitarian historian, A. Gordon wrote, "The rift at Salters' Hall will be for ever memorable; for then and there the future of the liberties of English Dissent was at high cost secured."<sup>102</sup>

A generation earlier, William J. Hocking, who was President of the Bible Christians in 1871, declared that he would rather be a Roman Catholic than a Unitarian minister: "The one, notwithstanding the erroneous views we think he holds, does believe and preach the divinity of Christ, the other provokes the exclamation, 'They have taken away my Lord.'"<sup>103</sup> His contemporary, the Unitarian Henry Solly, welcomed the fact that under the freedom of Unitarian church order, Christians have "freedom from creeds, *even in name*, the fullest right of private judgment."<sup>104</sup> With all such views the Baptist C.H. Spurgeon made merry:

You shall go into our small towns, and you may find an ancient chapel which was once an Independent, or a Presbyterian, or it may be a Baptist chapel; but if you see over the door '*Unitarian*,' you have, as a rule, seen all that there is. There is neither church nor congregation worthy of the name; frequently the place is never opened at all, and the grass grows knee deep on the path to the door. Even where these little places are used, you will generally find that they contain half a dozen

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101. A.H. Drysdale, *op. cit.*, p. 489.

102. A. Gordon, *Addresses*, p. 153.

103. Thomas Shaw, *The Bible Christians 1815-1907*, London: Epworth Press 1965, p. 106.

104. H. Solly, *Our English Presbyterian Forefathers*, 1859, p. 36.

nobodies who think themselves everybody as to intellect and culture. It is a religion of the utmost value to spiders, for those insects are able to spin their webs in the meeting-houses without fear.<sup>105</sup>

If Spurgeon is less than cautious in implying a necessary connection between doctrinal change and church decline, the following paragraph indicates a possible terminus of Solly's and Gordon's freedom:

Within the ranks of the Unitarian Church and its fellowships . . . the spectrum includes people of a wide variety of religious backgrounds willing to meet in an atmosphere of tolerance. These include people who are seeking a philosophy by which to live, people with an orthodox faith (in this country most of these are Christians) who usually have certain reservations about following dogma blindly (nevertheless, many Unitarians would be upset not to be considered true Christians), people with a faith which springs from a diversity of religious experience (such people often hold Buddha, Swami Vivikenanda and other prophets in the same esteem as or higher than Christ), Humanists with a faith in mankind but doubts about God. The common factor is that all these people, and more, are willing to come together and make a positive effort to communicate with and understand other Unitarians in the belief that barriers only produce misunderstanding.

In reality much of what I have said is just an ideal. There are Unitarian Churches which would do better to put up a Methodist sign for the amount of tolerance they show to the visiting parson who does not take his text from the Bible. Conversely there are Fellowships who consider a Bible text old hat, although the latter tend to be more tolerant.<sup>106</sup>

This Unitarian self-characterisation, together with our randomly-selected verdicts upon the period we have studied, throws into relief one of the abiding questions of our ecumenical times: What degree of tolerance is permissible within the Church? If the doctrinally orthodox can err in thinking that confessional subscription constitutes the ground of fellowship, the liberal can overlook the fact that Christian freedom is freedom in the gospel, not from it. The way was paved for both erroneous positions by eighteenth-century intellectual developments which the story of Presbyterianism in England during that century admirably exemplifies. Among the ironies of the aftermath is that some heirs of those who appealed against "harsh" confessionalism on what they took to be biblical grounds, have consigned both Bible and confessions to the attic with a zeal which is, to say the least, foolhardy. Another is the way in which the reversal is so complete from the

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105. C.H. Spurgeon, *Twelve Sermons on Conversion*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House 1974, p. 29; cf. *id.*, *An All-Round Ministry* (1900), London: The Banner of Truth Trust 1960, p. 94.

106. *The Unitarian*, no. 828, Nov. 1972, p. 132.

position of the Presbyterians at the Westminster Assembly who, against the Independents could not agree that "every one must have a liberty suitably to his own principles; which opens a gap for all sects to challenge such liberty as their due,"<sup>107</sup> to what, according to preference, may be regarded as the charitable openness or the utter doctrinal licence of some of their Unitarian successors.

Over against all of this, the persistence throughout the eighteenth century of the few orthodox English Presbyterian congregations, and the presence in England of their various, but generally orthodox, Scottish counterparts, at least cautions us that, as the prodigal's elder brother had to learn, there is more to the gospel inheritance than simply living in one's forbears' house, or being a blood relation.

ALAN P.F. SELL

## REVIEWS

*Law and Local Society in the Time of Charles I: Bedfordshire and the Civil War.* By Ross Lee. Pp. 160. *Bedfordshire Historical Record Society*, 65, 1986. £10

This is a useful addition to the body of seventeenth-century local studies. It attempts to take an over-view of the reign of Charles I from the standpoint of the Bedfordshire experience, taking advantage of the historiographical debate about government in the provinces and making use of some of the available manuscript material. If not entirely successful, it does have the merit of expanding our knowledge of Bedfordshire society; it makes a valuable attempt to look at the continuities as well as the disruptions of Charles's reign, and highlights the ideological and religious divisions between the King and his people.

The work is not a coherent whole but rather three essays touching upon different aspects of local government during a period when many of traditional and unquestioned assumptions about English society were challenged. Like Clarendon, Lee dates this challenge from the accession of Charles I and the first section concentrates on "Bedfordshire Before the Civil War", examining the Forced Loan, the political and religious conflicts of the Personal Rule of Charles I, the drift into war between 1640 and 1642 and concludes with a "postscript" on "War, Revolution and Reaction". Lee's analysis draws attention to the growing politicisation of Bedfordshire society and he looks at all those ranks of society involved in the government of the county, the nobility and the county gentry, as well as the subsidymen, who combined respect for the law with an intense Puritan godliness. Here was a

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107. Quoted by John Waddington, *Surrey Congregational History*, 1866, p. 38. Cf. n. 31 above.

“county community” indeed, but an alienated one, whose social, political and religious priorities were profoundly at odds with those of Charles I: a beautiful example of the cultural conflict recently examined by David Underdown. It is a pity that the author here chose to focus on a model of reaction and resistance to the encroachments of central authority, because it is not one which does justice to his material.

The second and third sections are much more satisfactory and publish Sir William Boteler’s charges to the Grand Jury given at Quarter Sessions during the 1640s, along with inventory and rentals of 1648 made in obedience to the Sequestration Ordinance against royalists and delinquents. The Grand Jury charges are particularly fascinating, being written by a highly intelligent and committed public servant whose career in office began as a ship money sheriff and continued as a loyal servant of the Parliament, leading Justice of the Peace and possibly a Commonwealth MP. Here is what Richard Cust and Peter Lake have called the “rhetoric of magistracy”, reflecting a hierarchical notion of society, a commitment to the rule of law and to the Protestant religion, a deep-seated prejudice against Popery and a revulsion against “doctrines of disobedience”. Here the law, both as the voice of God and the voice of order, reinforces a political community, giving to each section of society a distinct role in administering government appropriate to their social position. The work of the county Sequestration Committee illustrates some of the ways in which the county came to terms with the divisions created by Civil War, as well as showing us another facet of the public career of Sir William Boteler.

It is a shame that Mr. Lee did not make more of Sir William, who collected ship money in a recalcitrant county, contested parliamentary elections, managed the county committee and the Commission of the Peace and tried to reconcile the conflicting obligations owed to county and country, to the King and to the Parliament. Men like Boteler, godly magistrates of local standing, were the governors of seventeenth-century England; however conservative and conventional their opinions and their priorities appear, they are as important in understanding the period as those of the most radical and revolutionary of the Levellers. Thanks to Mr. Lee something of the Bedfordshire experience is more accessible than it was.

ALISON GILL

*The Idea of Tolerance and the Act of Toleration.* By Johannes van den Berg. Pp. 23. Forty-third Annual Lecture of the Friends of Dr. Williams’s Library. 1989. £1

In the tercentenary year of the Act of Toleration of 1689 it was a happy idea to invite Professor van den Berg, the distinguished Dutch church historian, to give the annual Dr. Williams’s lecture on “The Idea of Tolerance and the Act of Toleration”. Not only was the Netherlands the scene of an unusually wide measure of toleration in the seventeenth century, but Locke’s Letter on Toleration was first published in Gouda, just two or three weeks before the

Act was passed. Moreover among the persons mentioned here, Gilbert Burnet also wrote an introduction to his translation of Lactantius's *De Mortibus persecutorum*, analysing the phenomenon of persecution, while he too experienced Dutch toleration at first-hand as an exile from James II. The Anglo-Dutch dimension is never very far away.

As Professor van den Berg's deliberate choice of the word *tolerance* to translate Locke's *tolerantia* indicates, he is primarily concerned with attitudes of mind, rather than pragmatic solutions to the problems of disputes within an established church, relations between churches, or relations between the state and the church. "How can that be called the church of Christ which is established upon conditions that are not his, and which excludes from its communion persons whom Christ will one day receive into the kingdom of heaven?" is a question which still has its resonance; and Locke says in a letter of the Act itself, "I hope that with these beginnings the foundations have been laid of that liberty and peace in which the church of Christ is one day to be established." Conscious of the Act's imperfections, and indeed supporting the exclusion from its provision of Catholics, because of their allegiance to the Pope as worldly ruler, and atheists because "the taking away of God dissolves all the bonds of human society", Locke, like the Act, still deserves to be commemorated after three hundred years.

K.H.D. HALEY

*Reasonable enthusiast: John Wesley and the rise of Methodism.* By Henry D. Rack. Pp. xvi, 656. London: Epworth Press, 1989. £25.00

For his contemporary, the Countess of Huntingdon, John Wesley was as slippery as an eel. For J.N. Figgis, reflecting in 1901 on the experience of the nineteenth century, he was "a herald, the founder not so much of Wesleyanism as of undenominationalism". A modern generation of students of Methodist history has become familiar with the use of such phrases as "the ambiguous legacy of John Wesley" and "a crisis of identity" as tools for handling the several dilemmas of Methodism in the generations after the death of Wesley. The experience of the union of Methodist bodies in Great Britain and of ecumenical engagement in our own day has given an extra impetus and a wider perspective to recent Methodist historiography, and it is noteworthy that the freshest writing in the *History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain* (HMGB) published 1965-1988, has come from authors who have been formed in Methodism after the Union of 1933, or moved into Methodism from outside. It is, perhaps, not too mischievous to note also that some of the best English Marxist historians have come from Methodist backgrounds. So if Henry Rack's *Reasonable enthusiast* will stand on the shelves along with J.M. Turner's *Conflict and reconciliation* as complements to *HMGB*, they will be there also as correctives, not least because of Rack's description of parts of Vol. 1 of *HMGB* as "largely a lost opportunity".

The authority of this book derives from Rack's ability to hold together two perspectives, rooting Wesley firmly in his own time, and simultaneously

presenting his development and the impact of his work in the light of later developments and later understanding. Alexander Knox (1757-1831) provides the formula for Rack's title: "I . . . think he would have been an enthusiast if he could . . . (but) there was a firmness in his intellectual texture which would not bend to illusion." Knox was close enough to Wesley to assess his personal intellectual qualities, and secure enough in his own convictions to be neither overborne nor exasperated by his personality, as so many of his contemporaries were. Rack, writing from within the Methodist tradition, can acknowledge Wesley's stature and, at the same time, vindicate the maturity of that tradition with the objectivity of a theologian and historian, not least in the wry irony of such asides as this on Wesley's use of the word "properly": "( 'properly' is a signal for Wesleyan wriggles out of difficulties – like his definition of sin 'properly so called' to allow for perfection)". Such judgements are properly the most useful starting points for an investigation not only of Wesley, Wesleyanism (only a Wesleyan could have invented the word Wesleyoid to patronise and belittle another Methodist body) and Methodism, but of much else also in the behaviour of ecclesiastical man.

Rack devotes the first third of his text, some 150 pages, to an account of Wesley's early years in the religious and social environment of the early eighteenth century under the heading: "Primitive Christianity" the young John Wesley (1703-1738). In the next section, John Wesley and the rise of Methodism, some 150 pages, he covers the period from 1738 to 1760; his last section, 220 pages, John Wesley and the consolidation of Methodism, deals with the period between 1760 and 1791. A substantial Bibliographical note lists and assesses the literature of the subject, and some 80 pages of notes support and reinforce the argument of the text, frequently and most valuably indicating where further work needs to be done. Throughout the work Rack balances his account of Wesley's personal development with the context of his activity, and shows the almost kaleidoscopic interplay of the man, his opinions and personality and the institutions which formed him, in which he sought to express his ministry, and which he created to secure the continuation of his mission.

Macaulay said of the Act of Toleration of 1689 that "it removed a vast mass of evil without shocking a vast mass of prejudice"; Wesley's England, especially in its religious aspects, enjoyed tolerated diversity qualified by suspicion and fear; it had space but not spaciousness. His complex personal inheritance, partly Anglican, partly Dissenting, his own formation at Oxford University in an atmosphere of High Church piety, his Fellowship at Lincoln College and ordination, his experience as an academic, the fiasco of his missionary escapade in Georgia, his contacts with Lutheran pietism through the Moravians, may amount to what Rack describes as a "protracted adolescence". It was certainly in this period that Wesley developed both the intellectual equipment that was to enable him to argue, develop, justify and expound his experimental theology and the organisation of his system for the

rest of his life. This and his severe personal religious discipline constitute the "Rational" of Rack's title. The "enthusiasm" derives both from his search for a congenial sphere of ministry, which overlaps the "rational" element, and from the hot-house atmosphere of the internal life of the religious societies and of the congregations attracted by the preaching. Where the tension arises is in the detachment with which Wesley sought both to evoke "enthusiasm", to distance himself from some of its manifestations, and to develop it in the societies by the system of mutual correction and pastoral discipline by Wesley himself and his "helpers". Rack's discussion of the experience of 24 May 1738 leaves very little for the doctrinaire or entrepreneur to exploit as "usable history"; if it was a "conversion", it was only so within the quotation marks which must attach themselves to any term used to fit Wesley into a rigid programme of ideological manipulation.

George Whitefield's example and encouragement in outdoor preaching and the various networks of evangelical societies provided the context for the middle period of Wesley's life. Recent work has shown how much interchange went on among these societies, as they were handed from one leader to another, were poached, cannibalised or absorbed into regular church life or drifted into complete marginalisation, and Wesley can be presented as a determined empire-builder in his intervention into this scene, as earlier in his career. The historian has to explain why the "Societies in connexion with Mr Wesley" came to be differentiated from the rest and to develop their own continuing authentic denominational identity. Wesley's own longevity, his sustained, systematic and dedicated itinerancy must be one cause as must his jealous autocratic management of his system with all its improvisations, and his readiness to rationalise them and justify the rationalisations. The historian must reckon equally with the faithful and more costly service of the other itinerant preachers, and with the ability of the local chapels, with lay leadership and patronage, to articulate and define a "folk religion" which could be compatible both with the established church and with old Dissent. Wesley's heirs could rationalise some of this as a "voluntary establishment", but it could also be suspect to the respectable and cautious as recapitulating the disorderliness of the radical elements of seventeenth-century Puritanism. It is here that the intractable "mass of prejudice" that Macaulay discerned comes into play. How well Macaulay knew his England! The more that the fruits of local historical investigation are brought together the more it is clear that generalisations will collapse if they do not reckon with the shifting patterns decade by decade, region by region, generation by generation and class by class, not only for the eighteenth century but for the whole ecclesiastical and ecumenical scene since. The tragedy was not so much that the Church of England could not find a role for John Wesley – it is doubtful whether anybody could – but that the existing patterns of parish or independent ministry were often clumsily inflexible in handling all the kindled religion of the fruits of the revival. At the theological level, as John Kent has emphasised, Wesley's distinctive evangelical

Arminianism, authenticated perhaps by Charles Wesley's hymns more than by John's copious polemical writings, set up an unbridgeable gulf between Wesley's Methodists and the stricter Calvinism of other Evangelical Anglicans and classical Dissent. Rack's discussion of Wesley's evolving theology reminds us of how wise the Wesleyan Conference of 1919 was in its acknowledgement that Wesley's Sermons and Notes on the New Testament were something less than "a system of formal and speculative theology", a concession that helped to make possible the union of Methodist bodies in 1933.

Of the 68 itinerants in connexion with Mr. Wesley in 1751 only 25 remained in the work to the end of their lives. By the time of Wesley's death in 1791 there were some 200 in the connexion working in a much more clearly defined and differentiated organisation, yet one that had built into it all the dilemmas, tensions and possibilities for development that had been carried along in the expansion of the movement. There was a commitment to the revival of religion and a suspicion of mere revivalism; the nurture of personal religion and a discipline within the societies which could counteract any tendency to religious individualism and yet stimulated a cult and culture of one-sided personal responsibility; a capacity to live "on the frontier" and a zeal to discern a frontier, a space, an episode, to be made holy by the word and fellowship of grace.

Rack deals in depth with the several crises which punctuated Wesley's long career, and has penetrating things to say on all of them. His theological development, his qualities and defects as a leader are explored in the light of recent scholarship and while Rack eschews anything in the way of psychobiography, he leaves a picture of an unattractive personality concealed behind a charismatic *persona*. The element of tragicomedy in Wesley's dealings with women is allowed to speak for itself; there is perhaps nothing more eloquent than the bleak, inhuman Latin in which Wesley handled the breakdown of his marriage; "Non eam reliqui; non dimissi; non revocabo;; [I did not leave her; I have not sent her away; I shall not ask her to return]. Wesley's political views are discussed in a way which indicates that they have nothing to offer to those who pretend to be his heirs and parade him as their mascot two centuries and several revolutions later. As a masterpiece of historical scholarship, informed by sustained and subtle theological reflection, *Reasonable enthusiast* bears re-reading and dipping into as a source of delight, enlightenment and stimulation. Rack's final judgement presents his subject as "the paradox . . . of a precise clergyman reaching and organizing the submerged religious frustrations of his time. Wesley's achievement, and it was not a small one, was to bring some parts of those two sides of Georgian England together. Few, if any, of his successors have achieved so much". This establishes more fruitful guidelines for our understanding of Wesley and Methodism as historical phenomena than the tendentious verdict to be found in the *Oxford dictionary of the Christian Church*: "beyond doubt . . . one of the greatest Christians of his age". We may speculate on what might have

happened if Wesley had never returned to Britain from Georgia, and savour the irony that the collected edition of his works, begun by the Clarendon Press, has been abandoned by Oxford and rescued by the Abingdon Press, Nashville, Tennessee.

A.N. CASS

*A Social History of the Nonconformist Ministry in England and Wales 1800-1930.* By Kenneth D. Brown. Pp. xi, 234, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1988.

James, Jay, Dale and Horton: all leaders of Congregationalism but none representative of its ministry. Kenneth Brown has painstakingly constructed a picture of the typical Nonconformist minister: the men after whom no streets were named, by whom no lasting hymns were published, or whose very chapels may have been demolished but who nourished the faith of over two fifths of Christian worshippers in nineteenth-century England.

Brown describes origins, education, career patterns of Methodists, Baptists and Congregationalists, to the last of which this review will confine itself. (Presbyterian ministers were too few, for much of this period, for comparison.) His study demonstrates the social constraints upon the minister. It thus helps to explain the decline of Nonconformity and the secularisation of religion as a whole.

His materials have demanded enormous sensitivity, and disciplined statistical analysis. The original labour may well have proved a heavy task but the result is lode-bearing. The College applications reveal the youthful, inner motivations; the obituaries the expectations of the successors. Brown shows that even stereotypical obituaries leave fingerprints.

Once the Congregational model for English Christianity had been set in its Dissenting mode, its national appeal remained restricted. Brown's painstaking recreation of ministers' social origins demonstrates how insufficiently representative they were of the nation as a whole, and therefore how vulnerable their natural habitat to social change. Ministers were too rural: in 1900, for example, when four-fifths of the population was classified urban, one half of the ministers had rural/market town roots. How well could they adapt to patterns unfamiliar to their youth? Ministers were too Celtic: out of every ten ministers, six were English, three Welsh or Scots. The English, who increasingly dismissed the ministry as an avenue of upward social mobility, were producing insufficient candidates. On an extensive occupational analysis of socio-economic class, the Congregational ministry was particularly middle-class. Not only was one third from S.C.III (artisan and white-collar) but half those in SCII and five-sixths of those in SCI were thus classified because they were, respectively, teachers or Manse children.

How did their training prepare them for the rapidly changing society? Only seventy percent had formal ministerial training. College life was not easy. Dale wrote to Allon (1861) of "the follies, mistakes and failures by which College life is too often marked". Earlier College application letters testified to evangelical convictions. As the specific age of conversion disappears from

obituaries, one detects a redefinition of discipleship in terms of conviction. This shift not only mirrors the denomination's acceptance of the Higher Criticism but also the acceptance it sought from wider society.

College drop-out rates were significant, New losing twenty percent of its 580 students between 1851 and 1900, largely on account of "education" and "indiscipline". Congregationalists, suspicious of formalised creeds were vulnerable to intellectual storms as the old certainties left a vacuum. Forsyth commented in 1905 that "We have never really faced the spiritual situation created by the collapse of Biblical infallibility for communities that had long ago repudiated the final authority of the Church". One in seven ministers (between 1830 and 1870) went overseas or took non-pastoral employment within four years of ordination. Another one in seven was "lost to secular work, resigned or vanish". Why could ministers not cope with ministry?

Brown attributes major blame to the College Principals, 54 in 17 Colleges between 1815 and 1939. He bases their relative isolation from rapidly changing society in their over-representative Manse, Celtic and rural roots and in their lack of secular experience. Whilst the Principal's influence is paramount in curriculum and in ministerial formation, surely two other factors Brown discusses are of comparable strength. First, Principals faced three intractable problems. (a) There were seventeen Colleges, each of which fought for itself and opposed centralised proposals for reform. The Independent principle was a handicap. (b) There were mounting financial problems. Demands upon wealthy local purses increased whilst the number of members stabilised. (Cheshunt could not afford a new Principal in 1905.) The voluntary principle was a handicap. (c) Not only did many Colleges have to offer both general and theological education, there was a shortage of sufficiently good candidates. Some Colleges attempted solvency by accepting poorer students. The brighter were being attracted to the other developing professions. The Call had competitors.

Secondly, the men who became ministers share some of the blame. The quotation from Principal Vaughan is chilling: "What [many men] covet in the ministry is its comparative quiet, and the sense of being useful without ever taking much part in the worldly contentions ever going on around them" (1864). Certainly an unsettled, poorly paid ministry will act cautiously. From a careful treatment of obituaries, Brown adduces strong evidence of a significant and growing abstention from involvement in public life. Between one-half and two-thirds of ministers (1850-1930) have no extra-mural activities mentioned. For those who have, teaching is the major activity.

Hence Brown's demythologising task: we have often presumed this denomination's story as one which, as it abandoned the old evangelical and sectarian tenets, responded enthusiastically to the new articulation of the Christian Gospel in social forms.

Brown reveals the contrary. As the century advances, ministers retreat: into denominational work, children's work and the penumbra of Church activities competing for increasing leisure time. An absorption with

traditional forms of personal morality distracted them from seeking an effective basis on which the Church might effect social change.

Other careers offered earthly security, other denominations worldly status (why were Western and Cheshunt men more prone to go Anglican?). Salaries could fluctuate with the prosperity of the congregation or depend entirely on one wealthy purse. Salaries were often inadequate to sustain the appearance of being professional middle-class, but resistance to central involvement in pay-scales lasted until 1910. A fresh call offered a form of escape: for most of the nineteenth century, three quarters of all pastorates lasted less than ten years. Compulsory education probably helped diminish the authority of the call but removals were fraught with difficulties until the introduction of Moderators. Retirement was expensive.

What of personal and domestic life? The averages will take us some way: marriage at 29 (usually within the denomination), three children (before 1880, just two after 1900). Despite generally increasing longevity, one in seven ministers retired early on grounds of health, and one-third died on active service. Much physical and emotional stress fell on Manse wives: it would be interesting to know about their health- (and life-) expectancy. It is just these areas of opportunity and restraint within the family where the evidence is, naturally, so sparse. How did accommodation affect ministry? What leisure was taken? Which parties supported? How did the Manse family meet its public expectations? What forms of social mobility were followed by Manse children? Would a wider class base, or better conditions, have helped ministers discern and meet the changes in English life and religion?

The social limitations of the ministry indicate those of the Church. Nonconformist Colleges are sensitive barometers of denominational pressures and by 1860 it was widely realised that candidates were insufficient and training programmes inadequate. The former was even more true in 1900, by which time one candidate in five was a son of the Manse. The ministry had never been a vocation with a clear career structure. Now the expansion of middle-class career opportunities showed that ministry was no longer a major vehicle of social advancement. The Great War had a disastrous effect upon recruitment and provoked an increasing reliance upon ageing ministers. In 1851, one-third of serving ministers was aged under forty, in 1931 only one-sixth. The average age of serving ministers was 53. The ministry was no longer a young man's vocation. With such analyses as these, Kenneth Brown's book is a major addition not only to Nonconformist history, but to the debate about Nonconformity's decline. The ministry itself is presented as a contributory cause to secularisation.

PETER JUPP

*The Baptists in Scotland: A History.* Ed. D.W. Bebbington. Pp. xi, 346, Glasgow: Baptist Union of Scotland, 1988. £7.95 plus postage and packing.

The renewal of a scholarly interest in church history in recent years has shed the kind of light that has encouraged many of us to look again at events

and their circumstances which have long since been forgotten. *The Baptists in Scotland* addresses geographical, social and economic factors and, most importantly, considers the reasons for church growth, or lack of it, today. It is a useful introduction to Baptist witness in Scotland and is written in the kind of style that all can enjoy. I still have a copy of the standard work, *The History of the Baptists in Scotland*, issued by the Scottish Baptist Union in 1926. It was an impressive account, church by church, which produced statistics and information from the assemblies themselves. Since 1926 various articles and works have appeared but this is the most substantial and is the result of work done by the Scottish Baptist History Project.

It is a collection of essays by twenty contributors from Baptist churches which explore the growth of Baptists in Scotland from the seventeenth century to the present day. The first four chapters offer a historic analysis and show something of the struggle which early Baptists had. As in England, the Cromwellian period was advantageous for Independents and Baptists but it was soon eclipsed by the return of the Stewarts in 1660. By the later eighteenth century Independency had struggled into existence again through the beliefs and practices of John Glas of Tealing and other dissenters, and by the end of the century centres of Baptist witness were to be found in Edinburgh, Glasgow and eight other towns. The nineteenth century was strongly influenced by the Haldane brothers and their enthusiasm for missionary activity mainly at home, although not exclusively. Their decisive move towards believer's baptism brought dissension among Independents but was a stimulus to the Baptist cause, a factor reflected in the dates of the foundation stones of Baptist churches built during the early 1800s. By this time English Baptists like Andrew Fuller exercised a strong influence towards single pastor leadership and this more English tradition was to become the dominant pattern for the future.

As the age of revolution proceeded there was a noticeable erosion in the older brand of Calvinism towards a more moderate kind and by 1894 Baptist worship had become less clerical and had broken away from the singing of psalms as the sole vehicle of worship. By 1914 there were 137 Baptist churches and 21,053 members as against 91 and 5,500 in 1844. In 1984 the Bible Society census found that the highest rate of church attendance in Scotland was among the Baptists and that church membership was rising largely, it seems, through evangelism and careful housekeeping within the churches themselves. More recently, of course, the charismatic phenomenon has made its impact on public worship. By 1986 there were 16,632 members in 173 churches but although this is an improvement on the earlier figures in real terms it only represents 0.5% of the total population of Scotland.

The fourteen chapters of regional studies form part of the history of evangelicalism in the north. Predictably, the Edinburgh and Glasgow areas had the strongest concentration of Baptists but there is a fair coverage not only of larger churches like Charlotte Chapel but of weaker causes like Lunnasting in Shetland with its three members. The far north-east has an

absorbing history which includes the Haldanes and a strong Wesleyan Methodist tradition. The nineteenth-century pioneer, Sinclair Thomson, who in his lifetime travelled all over the islands on foot, on pony and on boat preaching six thousand times, is a key figure in the growth of the Baptist movement there. His is a story which needs to be told in great detail and to a wider public.

J.F. BRENCHER

*The Poems of Phillis Wheatley.* By Julian D. Mason, Jnr. Revised and enlarged edition. University of N. Carolina Press, 1989.

Phillis Wheatley is a name unknown in Britain, revered among American blacks. She was a slave, brought to Boston at an early age and employed as a servant – almost as a member of the family – by the Wheatley family. She was manumitted, married, and died in 1784 at the age of about 31. She was probably the first American black to publish a book, and certainly the first significant black poet.

Publication about her has been quite extensive, and now Professor Mason has produced a revised, enlarged, and it is believed complete edition of the extant poems and letters. The presence of original manuscripts in the Cheshunt collection at Westminster College has produced a complimentary copy for that collection.

Phillis was a member of the Old South Congregational Church, interestingly not the church to which her owners belonged, but her writings show no evidence of the strongly liberal trend of Bostonian theology. She was a child of the revival and writes enthusiastically of Whitefield and the Countess of Huntingdon. When she visited England she and the Countess were both eager to meet, but sadly they missed each other.

Assessment of the quality of her poetry have varied widely. Professor Mason quotes estimates which put her among the major poets of her century and others which treat her work as quite worthless; others again speak of it condescendingly as remarkably good for a woman, or a black, *a fortiori* for a black woman. Her addiction to heroic couplets produces a good deal of sub-Pope verse characterized by the artificiality and love of classical allusion beloved of her age. But certainly she often rises above the level of mediocrity, and at worst her choice of themes – pre-eminently the death of loved ones or public notables – forms an interesting commentary on public affairs and contemporary attitudes.

STEPHEN MAYOR

*The Memoirs of Charles G. Finney: The Complete Restored Text,* eds. Garth M. Rosell and Richard A.G. Dupuis. Pp. xlvii, 736. Academie Books, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1989. \$29.95

This volume is a remarkable achievement and a cause for celebration. It will fascinate all those, particularly of the Reformed tradition, interested in the development of modern revivalism. Richard Dupuis and Garth Rosell

have produced a meticulously annotated edition, not of James Fairchild's well-known published version of the great revivalist's autobiography (1876), but of the original longer and more astringent manuscript memoirs lodged in Oberlin College. The expanded text gives a more sharp-edged account of many episodes, including Finney's two evangelistic tours of Britain. In their introduction and more particularly in their formidable scholarly footnotes Dupuis and Rosell give us the most complete picture of Finney's career yet published. Despite Keith Hardman's recent study, admirable in its way, we still lack a truly critical modern biography of a man who must be regarded as the most influential of nineteenth-century revivalists. With this volume the editors go some way to filling one of the most scandalous gaps in American historiography. Zondervan are to be congratulated and thanked for sustaining this enterprise. Only in the bibliography, with its many typographical errors, and the index, adequate but no more, have the publishers failed to match the highest standards set by their editors in the remainder of the volume.

RICHARD CARWARDINE

*Keeping the Faith. Essays to Mark the Centenary of Lux Mundi*, ed. Geoffrey Wainwright. Pp. xxv, 399. Philadelphia: Fortress Press and Allison Park, PA: Pickwick Publications, 1988. \$34.95

Geoffrey Wainwright here gathers sixteen authors between the covers of a book which is substantial in bulk and in content. The objective is both to commemorate *Lux Mundi* and, more importantly, to interpret the catholic faith in our day as the authors of a century ago did in theirs.

Whereas the eleven authors of *Lux Mundi* were Oxford Anglicans, the present contributors include six Anglicans, three Reformed, two Lutherans, two Methodists and a Roman Catholic; they are drawn from a number of universities on both sides of the Atlantic. It is especially cheering that each has something which is at worst interesting, and at best important to say: Dr. Wainwright does not succumb to "tokenism"!

Authors and titles are as follows: Stephen Sykes, "Faith"; Robert W. Jensen, "The Christian Doctrine of God"; Brian Hebblethwaite, "The Problem of Evil"; Richard Norris, "Human Being"; Alasdair Heron, "The Person of Christ"; Paul Avis, "The Atonement"; David N. Power, "The Holy Spirit: Scripture, Tradition and Interpretation"; George Lindbeck, "The Church"; Theodore Runyon, "The Sacraments"; Keith Ward, "Christian Ethics"; Duncan B. Forrester, "Christianity and Politics"; Daniel Hardy, "Rationality, the Sciences and Theology"; Lesslie Newbigin, "The Christian Faith and the World Religions"; Geoffrey Wainwright, "The Last Things"; Dikran Y. Hadidian, "A Bibliographical Epilogue: Before and After *Lux Mundi*".

The following random notes may whet the appetite and, in one case, make the blood boil. In his lucid paper Stephen Sykes reminds us of the way in which the content of the idea of faith has "swung uneasily" between those theologies which emphasise divine grace, and those which seek to do justice

to human freedom. His call to theologians to pay due heed to the differences between their dilemmas and those of laypeople is timely. The trinitarian thrust is strong in Robert Jenson's essay. Here are references to Jonathan Edwards *qua* anti-mechanist, and to Barth in connection with Jesus Christ's eternal actuality as the ground of creation. He is needlessly disjunctive, if fashionable, in asserting (without argument) that "the real God is not the securely persisting Beginning; he is the triumphant End." He introduces the term "deification" without the qualifications it requires; and at times he lapses into rhetoric: "Western Christendom is now baffled by its God" – to which one possible retort might be, "Large tracts of Western Christendom are insufficiently baffled by their God: they know exactly where they have him; he endorses their favoured set of doctrines, or he reads the Bible as they do, or he joins them on their socio-political platform."

Alasdair Heron quotes A.M. Fairbairn's perceptive remark upon *Lux Mundi*: "Curiously the Incarnation is the very thing the book does not, in any more than the most nominal sense, either discuss or construe," and demonstrates its validity by reference to the contributions of Moberly, Talbot and Illingworth. They failed, he declares, "to develop the idea of a *trinitarian theology of the crucifixion*" (author's italics). In the course of his account of the church as "the messianic pilgrim people of God typologically shaped by Israel's history," George Lindbeck makes one astonishing, and one strangely insensitive, claim. First: "Until a hundred years before *Lux Mundi*, a chapter of the kind that Walter Lock wrote [on ecclesiology] would have been a novelty. Specific topics such as ecclesiastical structures and discipline were addressed at length . . . but separate treatments on the church as a whole are modern phenomena." Readers of this *Journal* may feel tempted to force-feed Dr. Lindbeck the *Works* of John Owen, to name but one. Secondly: "The historic episcopacy . . . is the only ministry that exists to promote the unity and responsibility of the worldwide church. Those churches which lack it have no substitute. To the degree that they are concerned about unity and mutual responsibility, it is to this ministerial ordering of the church they need to turn."

Having no space for detailed rebuttal, we simply inquire, where now is the Trinity?

If Dr. Lindbeck overlooks the Trinity at a crucial point where reference to it might have been expected, Duncan Forrester builds strongly upon it in a context from which it is sometimes banished – political theology. He expounds his view that "the most politically relevant and distinctive element in Christian faith is its trinitarian nature," and warns us against "the twin seductive perils of a privatized and a politicized Christianity." Indeed, it is not too much to say that the Trinity, historical particularity (strongly asserted in different ways by A. Heron, D. Hardy and L. Newbigin), and eschatology are the recurring themes in this collection. To the last-named the editor devotes his attention. He has considerable recourse to the Bible – except at a notable point where he writes, "If there is to be progress in the heavenly

service and enjoyment of God, there is no reason why the earlier stages may not be 'purgatorial'." In which connection he allows himself the cheekiest remark in the book: "Apart from some of us Methodists, few attain on earth even to that carefully limited perfection which Wesley preached."

An index at least of names would greatly have assisted the student. But the more serious lack is of a carefully analytical "then and now" paper relating the intellectual environment of *Lux Mundi* to that of the present day. Undeniably, many pointers are to be found throughout the book, and D.K. Hadidian's bibliographical epilogue touches upon some of the sources, but the deficiency remains. What would we make of the presuppositions of the *Lux Mundi* divines – for example, that philosophy and theology are partners; that Christianity is the culmination of the world's religions; that evolutionary development cashed in incarnational terms is the key to theology? Moreover, we have to articulate the catholic faith not only in a context of religious pluralism, but in relation to cultural expressions of Christianity which sometimes appear only tenuously related to certain catholic verities, and in face of new sectarianisms, whether "issue-based", or deriving from theologico-ideological method. Geoffrey Wainwright alludes to the cultural factor in his preface, and David N. Power raises the hermeneutical issue. But a probing and sustained concluding discussion along the lines indicated would have rounded off what is, even as it stands, a most stimulating and welcome volume.

ALAN P.F. SELL

*Politics and the Churches in Great Britain, 1869 to 1921.* By G.I.T. Machin. Pp. xi, 376. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987. £35.00

Professor Machin – the author has recently been appointed to a personal chair in the Department of History at the University of Dundee – has written a successor volume to his widely appreciated *Politics and the Churches in Great Britain, 1832 to 1868* (1977). The new book is as thorough and authoritative as the earlier one. Its subject is not the whole range of issues that were of concern to the churches during the period. Temperance and foreign policy, though inevitably mentioned in passing, are not given detailed analysis. Rather, the themes are ecclesiastical issues in the sense that they were created by the churches as churches. Thus the central story is the persistent struggle over the Nonconformist demand for disestablishment of the Churches of England and Scotland. The material is arranged chronologically rather than thematically, which allows the interaction between different issues to become plain.

The account begins with the large number of politico-religious controversies that preoccupied Gladstone's first administration between 1868 and 1874. Liberal unanimity over Irish disestablishment gave way to sharp divisions over education and other matters. The party's leadership and the Nonconformist radicals fought each other to a standoff. Professor Machin goes on to recount Disraeli's professions of High Churchmanship when

persuading Lord Salisbury to join his administration in 1874, the Queen's successful initiative to secure legislation against ritualism and Joseph Chamberlain's remark when chairing a disestablishment meeting at C.H. Spurgeon's Metropolitan Tabernacle in 1876: "Ye Gods, think of a Unitarian in the seat of the Prophet". Under Gladstone's next administration, the author shows, the question of English disestablishment was beginning to recede even before Home Rule divided the Liberal Party. Welsh disestablishment, boosted by national sentiment, gained a vitality of its own. Salisbury managed to achieve a significant measure of church reform, but in the 1890s the ritual controversy embroiled both parties. By the beginning of the twentieth century the education controversy was reviving the political aspirations of Nonconformity and Liberalism in its wake. Just before the First World War fierce wrangling over Welsh disestablishment contributed to the strange death of Liberal Britain. By 1921, apart from the education and ritual questions, ecclesiastical issues had moved a long way towards settlement.

The marginalisation of religious issues Professor Machin attributes primarily to the decline of church membership and attendance, secondly to the division of the Liberals and the rise of Labour, thirdly to the growing demands for social reform and fourthly to the emerging ecumenical spirit. It would be hard to dispute this overall conclusion of the book. Furthermore the work is firmly based on a huge bibliography embracing many manuscript sources and a remarkable array of unpublished theses. Perhaps more could be made of the Roman Catholic contribution to Labour's early counsels that forced religious neutrality on the movement – but even that is mentioned. The denominational allegiance of M.P.s is the one area where slips can be detected. Several alleged congregationalists were not in fact so: James Keir Hardie was ex-Evangelical Union while George Barnes and Will Crooks were brought up as Congregationalists but did not remain in the denomination. Conversely Herbert Cozens-Hardy, described as a Free Methodist, was a Congregational church member though he attended a Free Methodist church when in Norfolk. J.A. Picton, called an Anglican here, had been a Congregational minister but subsequently lectured at South Place Ethical Society. In general, however, the author is particularly knowledgeable about Congregationalists and Presbyterians because he has belonged to both traditions. So this is not only a remarkably reliable and judicious study. It also has particular attractions for readers of this journal.

D.W. BEBBINGTON

*Eric Gill* by Fiona MacCarthy. Pp. xiii, 338, London, Faber and Faber, 1989. £17.50

On 30 May 1844, a week before the meeting which is now regarded as the foundation of London YMCA and, by extension, of YMCAs everywhere, George Williams, the young Westcountryman who was to be the motive force behind that meeting went with two friends to view the *John Williams* missionary ship: "saw her over". They then walked to the Barbican Chapel

for the ordination to missionary service in the South Seas of George Gill, another young Westcountryman. George Williams of the YMCA was on the verge of middle management in a leading City drapery house. He had its sole control, a knighthood and Evangelical Anglicanism ahead of him. George Gill of the South Seas was to go to Mangaia near Rarotonga, the first European in a now promising field where only thirty years previously all had been cannibals. That was to be followed by a pastorate in Woolwich. Arthur Tidman, Gill's pastor who was also the London Missionary Society's formidable foreign secretary, described the field of labour. Gill was questioned on his conversion, his call, his doctrinal "Tenants". There was "a very impressive charge". Thus one Evangelical Nonconformist enjoyed the setting apart of another.

George Gill's collaterals and descendants, like George Williams's, have enriched diverging poles of Christian experience. Fiona MacCarthy's book is about one of Gill's grandsons.

Eric Gill's marriage certificate described him as a calligrapher, his death certificate as a sculptor. Some would argue that his chief claim on fame is as a typographer. He was born a son of the manse (more or less) as well as a nephew and grandson of manses. He was buried in a Baptist graveyard. He was best known and is best remembered as a Roman Catholic.

Until recently Robert Speight's biography of 1966 held the field for the intelligent general reader. Now Fiona MacCarthy takes pride of place. There are two reasons for this. The first is Miss MacCarthy's authority when it comes to the world of Arts and Crafts. The second is the fearless sensitivity with which she explores and displays as many aspects of Gill the man as might be documented. This is not a book for the squeamish, although it is nowhere prurient. Readers must draw their own conclusions about this man whose practical enjoyment of sex embraced sisters, daughters, mistresses and friends as well as his wife. Was he simply in youth a rather rude young man and in maturity a dirty old man (plainly he could not have survived unsullied by the law in Cleveland)? Or was there quite simply an extraordinary innocence about him? One thing is clear. Gill's art cannot be enjoyed (and it is very enjoyable) without a fuller appreciation of his sexuality than earlier biographers have given it. Neither can it be understood without reference to his Catholicism, which was a convert's Catholicism far different from that of men like Evelyn Waugh although it came close to that of Bradford's Father O'Connor, the original of "Father Brown", who was one of Gill's most enduring Catholic friends.

And Gill the person, Fiona MacCarthy reminds us, cannot be understood without reference to his pre-Catholic formation.

The Gills, as we have seen, had mission and ministry in their bones. Eric's father, Arthur Tidman Gill (named after George Gill's pastor and missionary mentor) was trained at Lancashire Independent College, ministered briefly at a new cause, Rainhill, near Bury and then settled in Brighton. There he taught and also assisted at the Countess of Huntingdon's Chapel where J.B. Figgis

held sway. That chapel was generally listed in *Congregational Year Books* but Gill nowhere appears in a *Year Book* as one of its ministers. Why? Family lore held that Arthur Gill left Rainhill because Rainhill wanted hell fire and Gill would not give it to them. No doubt. The 1870s were a great decade for that sort of refusal. It need not have signified, for A.T. Gill seems to have been able and characterful. He was also lazy. He preached with a view at Victoria Road, Cambridge, another new cause and a most hopeful one since in the 1880s and 1890s its membership exceeded Emmanuel's and like Emmanuel it attracted university men (and women) to its pews. But the call was not proceeded with. Was A.T. Gill's subsequent decline into the Establishment (he left Figgis's church in 1896) a scamper into undemanding social security rather than a flight from hell? All this has relevance for his son's career: perhaps for his choice of career and his attitude to it; perhaps for some of his commissions (Highbury Bristol and Ealing Green both turned to Eric Gill in the 1920s); perhaps for his attitude to women, even sex – his was D.H. Lawrence's generation, after all.

Yet, although Fiona MacCarthy asks the right questions, readers of the *Journal* may find some of her answers less convincing: "How was it then that Gill had so vague a comprehension of woman's sexuality? . . . [A] deep instinctive shyness seemed to hold him back". Miss MacCarthy attributes this variously to the differentiation between women and men in middle-class Nonconformist circles and to "the influence of the hell-fire sermons and the *double entendres* of his Nonconformist upbringing". That won't do. Late Victorian and Edwardian Congregationalism was an uneasy place for the differentiation of gender. Too many of its educated women had to work. Soon it would produce (indeed, was already forming) women missionaries, women deacons, even women ministers. Josephine Butler's firmest supporters were Congregationalists. It was a very threatening denomination for male chauvinists of the cruder sort. As for the hell-fire sermons, Margaret Masson has examined some of those which D.H. Lawrence heard or heard about (*J.U.R.C.H.S.* Vol. 4 No. 2 May 1988 pp. 146-157). The Gills' Congregationalism was different from the Lawrences' but hell-fire is unlikely to have been a regular part of it. There must be other reasons for this inner reticence of so voyeuristic a man. Was it perhaps that the vogue for social purity was a more likely inhibitor than hell fire? Congregationalists were all for social purity even as they were less and less for hell, however much in moderation. Their chivalric world of Enids, Elaines and Erics met up with the stained-glass and plaster world of the B.V.M. and wrought memorably upon one highly-sexed genius.

J.C.G.B.

*Maude Royden: A Life.* By Sheila Fletcher. Pp. 294. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989. £22.50

Maude Royden is one of the great women of the twentieth century, and this meticulously-researched, scholarly biography of her is most welcome. Now

that more than thirty years have passed since her death, some assessment of her significance and achievement is possible. And in a year in which the issue of the ordination of women in the Anglican Church has again captured the headlines, her prophetic witness is both timely and salutary.

It was Dr Emil Oberholzer Jr, an American church historian, who first started to research Maude Royden's life in 1962. After his untimely death in 1981, Sheila Fletcher was asked to take over the project; she was fortunate that women's studies had by this time opened up new perspectives on the history of feminism, enabling her completed biography to become a valuable, detailed commentary on the development of the women's movement in this century. She has largely succeeded in conveying the force of Maude Royden's personality, and her moral authority and integrity, as well as presenting a kaleidoscope of her writing from a wide range of sources. She also deals sensitively with the extraordinary story of Maude Royden's relationship with Hudson and Effie Shaw, movingly described in Maude Royden's own *A Threefold Chord*.

Maude Royden believed that the women's movement (including the movement for the ordination of women) was "the most profoundly moral movement . . . perhaps with the exception of the movement against slavery . . . since the foundation of the Christian Church". This conviction led her to support the women's suffrage movement, to attack the double standard of sexual morality for men and women, and to challenge the Church's attitude to women.

The story of Maude Royden's life belongs in small part to the United Reformed Church, for she acted as assistant minister to Dr Ford Newton at the City Temple from 1917 until 1920, before establishing her own religious centre at the Guildhouse in Eccleston Square with Percy Dearmer and Martin Shaw. It was the quality of her preaching, at the City Temple and elsewhere, that convinced many that it was wrong to deny a woman's vocation to the priesthood. Later, she was an active member of the Society for the Ministry of Women, and a close friend of the Congregationalist Constance Coltman, the first woman to be ordained to the Christian ministry in England.

"To work for peace was to work for the woman movement, and to work for the woman movement was to work for peace", she once said. Though she finally renounced pacifism in the Second World War, the search for peace was a consistent thread of her life. Her connection of feminism with peace is a relationship now being explored afresh by the feminist movement.

One might wish that the index were more comprehensive, but this is a small quibble. Much hidden history is brought into the light in this important book, which will not quickly be replaced.

ELAINE KAYE

## ALSO RECEIVED

*A History of Tabernacle United Reformed Church Llanvaches 1639-1989.*

This account of a historic church, which claims the ministry of William Wroth and Walter Cradock, includes a photographic reproduction of Wroth's will (1638). The writer is a member of the church who since 1983 has served as Interim Moderator.

## SOME CONTEMPORARIES

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No. 1: F.M.W. Harrison, "The approach of the New Connexion General Baptists to a Midland industrial town", Kenneth Dix, "All change: An East End of London Baptist church in the nineteenth century", F. Bowers, "Religion amongst the properties of life: George M'Cree and the Bloomsbury Domestic Mission". No. 2: P.J. Anderson, "A Fifth Monarchist appeal and the response of an Independent church at Canterbury, 1653". No. 3: K.G. Jones, "The authority of the Trust Deed: A Yorkshire perspective"; I. Sellars, "John Howard Hinton, theologian", M. Ball, "A North American journey: The Reverend John Stock and the American churches, May-June 1867"; S. Copson, "Two ordinations at Bridlington in 1737". No. 4: D.E. Meek, "Baptists and Highland culture"; T.W. Moyes, "Scottish Baptist relations with the Church of Scotland in the twentieth century"; D.B. Murray, "The Scotch Baptist tradition in Great Britain"

*Bulletin of the Strict Baptist Historical Society* (No. 16, 1989)

K. Dix, "Baptists in fellowship, 1630-1660".

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R.A. Muller "Arminius and the scholastic tradition".

*The Chapels Society Newsletter* (No. 2, 1989)

C. Stell, "Funeral of William Huntington, S.S."

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R.M. Healey "The preaching ministry in Scotland's First Book of Discipline", C. Wallace, Jr, "Some stated employment of your mind": Reading, writing, and religion in the life of Susanna Wesley".

*Cylchgrawn Hanes* (1987)

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M. Fitzpatrick, "Varieties of candour: English and Scottish style", J. Money, "Joseph Priestley in cultural context: Philosophic spectacle, popular belief and popular politics in eighteenth-century Birmingham" (part 1); K.E. Smith, "William Godwin: Social critique and philosophy in fiction".

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J. Wright, "The Baptists of Potter Street".

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A. Long, "Ministerial training in the Unitarian tradition".

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K.M. Brown, "In search of the godly magistrate in Reformation Scotland".

*The Journal of the Friends' Historical Society* (LV)

No. 5, 1987: K.L. Carroll, "Humphrey Norton's 1656 visit to Ireland". No. 6, 1988: J. Tual, "Sexual equality and conjugal harmony: the way to celestial bliss. A view of early Quaker matrimony", G.F. Nuttall, "A letter by James Nayler appropriated to George Fox", D.M. Butler, "Friends' sufferings 1650-88: A comparative summary", J.E. O'N. Gillespie, "'Every material of the best quality': The foundation of Bloomfield Hospital, Dublin"; M. Grubb, "The Beacon separation".

*Journal of the History of Ideas* (XLIX, no. 4, 1988)

J. Spurr, "'Rational religion' in Restoration England".

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P.T. Phillips, "The concept of a national Church in late nineteenth-century England and America".

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