

Minutes of the Monthly Conferences,

held by the Ministers and Officers of the Churches in
Leicestershire, which were the nucleus of the

NEW CONNEXION OF GENERAL BAPTISTS.

Extracts, continued from page 42.

Jan^y 25th 1774 Conference at Barton

At this Conference the followings were considered.
(Viz) Some scriptures was attended that were given
in the last Conference. Matt. 27. 5 Acts 1. 13.
Matt. 8. 17. compared with Isa. 53. 4. The latter
appears to have a twofould meaning, and may be
apply'd to the case of Bodily sicknesses, and soul grief.

2. Agreed that bro^r smith of Burbage shou'd go
to Maltby, and be there (if God permit) the 26 of
Feby 1774.

3. Queries proposed by bro^r Shipman, first from
Tit. 3. 3. How that text is to be reconciled with St
Paul's including himself with walking in all good con-
science before God to this day? Answer. St Paul
is there speaking of natural man and so may justly
include himself.

Query. Wheather it can with propriety be said
of a believer in Christ, that he has a deceitful heart?
Answer Understanding the heart signify the soul he
has not: because it is said the heart is purify'd by
faith in Christ.

Question proposed by Bro^r Hickling Wheather those 12 mentioned Acts 19. 5 were rebaptized, after they had heard what Paul had said. Ans^r in the Negative

April 5th 1774 Conference at Hugglescoat

At this Conference it was agreed to propose the following queries, at the next Association (viz) Will it not be right when any Church desires to join our Connection, to make their desires known to the Ministers, or such persons that compose the Association, and that the same propo[s]al be communicated to all the Churches belonging to the Connection, and this be done before any Church, or Minister be admitted to join the Connection?

June 28 1774 Conference at Hugglescoat

At this Conference the question was again agitated wheather all the Churches in the Connection are obliged to receive any Member from any sister Church, without exception? Bro^r Smith of Burbage thought they ought: But the rest were of a contrary opinion...

Sep^r 20 1774 Conference at Diseworth

... The following question were proposed by Brethⁿ Smith & Shipman. If a person desired to join a Church and there be in the Church a Majority of 12 to 6, shall the person be admitted? It was that, the person shou'd.

Oct 18 1774. Conference at Barton

... The case between bro^r Smith of Leak, and the Loughboro Church, was attended too, Bro^r Smith charged some of the bretⁿ with accusing bro^r Donisthorp [falsly *erased*] in three things First, In not informing the judgment of the people, in his discourses. Secondly, in not reading privately, in order

to inform his own judgment. After an impartial hearing and attending to the several charges, brought by Bro^r against the bretⁿ did not appear to be sufficiently evidenced by him, and professed to be convinced, and acquitted the bretⁿ of the charges that brought against them.

Eleazar Baddaly was at this Conference; and gave a relation of his vows in coming among us, and the steps he had taken to leave the Church at Gamstone: at which time he was advised to join some Church in our Connection that is most convenient for him.

May 2^d 1775 Conference at Barton

. . . A case was mentioned, which seems adopted in general (and intended to be present accordingly) respecting subscribing Articles as a test for fellowship of Churches. Which we in general disapprove.

Aug^t 8 75 Conference at Barton

[At this Conference a Letter was read, that came from Mr^r Worship of great yarmouth, and it was thought right that the said letter should [be sent] to all the Churches in the Connection.

. . . A question arose, and agreed to be agitated amongst us, (viz) Have we any authority to call a member before the Church, who has married an unbeliever? This matter was agitated a long while, but being different in opinion, it was agreed to leave it for the present.

[Minutes of Oct 17 1775 are pasted up so that they shall not be read.]

December. 25 1775 Conference at Barton

. . . Bro^r Hickling gave an account of his journey into Lincolnshire and Great yarmouth.

[A church at Yarmouth had existed more than a century; in 1752 Edward Trivett of Worstead obtained

leave to use the building in King Street, and a revival occurred, so that the church was reorganized in July 1754 with William Cole as pastor. But the question of Calvinism soon split it, and Cole withdrew, with many members. The others applied to the Assembly, and W. Young settled. In the year 1775 Benjamin Worship was ordained by Thompson and Taylor. In 1782 Mr Clare attended the Association as a representative, but the attachment was loose, and in 1797 the name was silently dropped.]

May 14 1776 Conference held at Hugglescote.

... A question from Hinckley Sopose any of our Members in our respective Churches should be put to any trouble and expence in not conforming to the present Mode now used in the Establishment for churching of women will the churches unite in defending such a person or persons? Answer'd in the Affirmative.

Octr 29th 1776. Conferance at Barton.

... Two letters read over, one from Mr Kelsey Baptist Minister at Ashford near Bakewell in Derbyshire, the other from his church, setting forth his present embarasment in his circumstances, occasioned by losses, illness &c, prays assistance from our Churches. Agreed to lay their case before our respective churches in order to see what can be done for him.

[This church was reported to John Evans in 1715 as having John Ash for pastor. In 1727 Samuel White died. Israel Cotton went thence to Epworth in 1738. In 1761 Jeffery of Gamston revived it, and built a meeting-house stationing Benjamin Fox. Kelsey had been there since 1766. As a result of this & similar applications, William Thompson of Boston in 1779 sent particulars to Josiah Thompson of Clapham, & they may be seen in his MSS at Dr. Williams' Library.]

Jan 21 1777 The Conference held at Barton

. . . 2^d Some conversation had relating to the members of our respective Churches attending upon the Ministers of the Establishment at their places of worship. It was universally disaproved for many reasons.

April 15: 1777 Conference held at Barton

Questⁿ 1. Suppose a Christian House be broke and robbed to the vealue of 12 or 14 pounds should they be encouraged to procecute the theif. Ans^r. Did the law require no greater punishment than the nature of the crime deserves then we could encourage a procecuti-
on: but as a person that is procecutet for the above crime is liable to suffer death we look upon it that no person ought to be procecutet for such a crime the law being too severe in its penalty for such offence.

Conference at Hugglescoat July 20th 1779

1. A question propos'd, is it right for one of the ministers in this Connection to preach amongst the Methodists, the Indipendants, the Whitfieldlites, Particular Baptists &c? Ans^r. Yes! provided, the minister is so far from every place in our Connection that he can nether hear nor preach at any of them. . .

Case 4th. Br Perkins ask'd what should be done in the following case, A Person has been baptised, but finds afterwards he was in Unbelief at the time, and afterwards is converted. Answer, he ought to be baptized again. . . .

Conference at Barton August 17, 1779

. . . Case 2nd. Concerning Wakes. 1 Are Wakes Inocent or harmless in themselves? Ans^r. No by 10, Nuter. by 4. 2 Is it right for Christians to observe Wakes by providing more at that time than at other Seasons? Ans^r! No. . . .

Oct^r 12th 1779 Conference at Hugglescoat

1st I desire to know wether it tis posible for Decenters Children to be registerd so, as the Law will take it as evidence; in any case wherein such evidence may be wanted? A^s. We have Enquired of the Com-mitty at London, and have authority from them to say, *there is.*

2. I wish to know how any person must act to have the advantage of Such Register.

[The conference found this too knotty, and left a blank. The Commissioners of 1837 reported on this point, (a) That a local contemporary entry by a Baptist minister or a parent or a witness, was acceptable as evidence: (b) That an entry at Dr Williams' Library, where a register of births was kept by the Dissenting Deputies from 1742, was admissible only if made by a parent.]

15 [March 1780] Conference at Castle-Donington

3. A proposal for Br Taylor to Write and Publish, The Scriptural form of a Church of Christ. The Church of England from the Liturgy, and the Church of Rome from their approved Writers. In three Columns. To show the Contrast and *conciquently* our Reasons for Nonconformity to Ether of the latter. A^{ns}^d in the affirm^e by all Except one Nuter.

4 Is it right to Encourage unconverted Persons to sing in our Public assemblys?—3 yes, 9 no, 11 nuter. Then the Point was contested. Reasons against it. 1 It could not be calld Singing with the Spirit 2 Nor with grace in the heart 3 Contrary to the singers Experiance, So was Lying in fact. Reasons for it. 1 A moral institution of god to the whole Jewish Church which consisted of both beleivers & unbeleivers and never contradicted in the new Testament, So of forse now. 2 a means of instruction that is pleasing to the mind. After considerable

conversation it was put to the vote, and there were 8 yes 8 no & 8 nuter. . . .

Preaching Conference at Hinckley Oct^r 9th 1781

. . . 2. Mr Stanger from Molton attended Conference, & desires to join in our Connection. Advised to be taken into consideration.

[This application has never attracted attention, yet the neglect of it entailed most important consequences. The Stanger family had been the mainstays for a century; but now John had gone to Bessels Green, and the widow who had kept the place alive since 1768 died this year. As the New Connection did nothing, John Stanger applied to Ryland and Sutcliff. Within six years William Carey from Olney was ordained as pastor, and Moulton became the birthplace of the B.M.S.]

Sept^r 24th 1782. Conference at Barton

. . . Case 2nd A woman marrying a man with whom she lived for a considerable time, and after which he enlists for a soldier & goes into the East Indies. After 2 years and a half, she is married to another, with whom she has lived about 10 years, and has never heard from her first husband since his departure. Quæry, Does the woman live in adultery? Ans^r No 13. Neuter 4. . . .

Case 5th The Friends in Leicester desire the advice of Conference respecting joining the New Connection. Agreed unanimously that they send Letters to the several Churches, in order that the union may be formed. ;

Oct^r 7 1783. Conference at Longford

. . . Case 2. Is a Person being a member of a sick-club a sufficient objection against admission into a Church of Christ? Ans^r. NO unanimously except one

Nuter. Reasons. : 1. We cannot find any passage that naturally prohibits such persons for such reasons from fellowship. 2. We conceive persons may do this for very good reasons to themselves, and without the idea of laying up Treasure for themselves on earth. Nor can they ever enjoy it as a Treasure, but merely in cases of Necessity. Yet we dont approve of Clubs of this sort, but wish the Churches would adopt some method of raising a supply for their Poor without put them to the necessity of this method.

Case 3. Is it lawful to use Musical Instruments in our congregations? We conceive NO! except 2 nuters.

Conference at Barton Nov^r 4. 1783

. . . 6 Is it right for a member of a Church of Christ to quallify according to the Laws of the Land to serve any temporal Offices? If not reasons are requested to be given in writing. Ans^r. To receive the sacrament in the Church of England shews communion or fellowship with them, and contrary to 2 Cor. VI & 17. and when it is done to quallify for an office, it seems a prophaination of a sacred institution.

Conference at Hug^t Jan^y 25. 1785

Case 1. Is it right for an unlicenced Minister, to permit himself to be quit paying the militia-money, upon the supposition that he is licenced according to act of parliament? Ans^d by a Majority that it is not right!

Conference at Hug^t Aug^t 23. 1785

Case 1. From Sutton Coldfield. Mr. Austin being invited to London the judgment of Conference is disired with respect to the propriety of his going there. Ans^r 7 that he should go. 2 nuters. none oppose it.
[The invitation was to succeed Ebenezer Smith at Fetter Lane. Smith had been assistant at Eagle Street,

but left on adopting Socinian views. Under Austin the church became Calvinist, and after many years he joined the Board of Particular Baptist ministers. His successor James Elvey amalgamated the remnant of the church with that founded by Elias Keach, which now worships at King's Cross, Arthur Street.]

Conference at ^Hug^t Oct^r 18. 1786

. . . 2. A plan for the education of young ministers appointed to be wrote out by Br J. Deacon and read to the Churches. . .

Conference at Hinkley Dec^r 26. 1786

1. A letter presented by Longford from Geo. Hickling desiring the judgment of Conference respecting his present situation of living with his present concubine, and their advice respecting his future conduct. [Compare 1782] . . . We cannot think that the absence of the husband broke the connection of the man and his wife, in the sight of the Law of God, or the Law of the Land. both mean for life.

Conference at Kegworth, March 3^d 1789

. . . Case 2nd A girl, now between 9 and 10 years of age, about a year and a half since, profess'd to have received the gospel: and is desirous of attending to the ordinance of baptism:—she is well approv'd of among the Brethren where she resides, both as to her conversion and conversation. Would it be prudent in these circumstances to baptize her? Ans^r Yes 17. No 3. Neuter 2.

Conference at ^Melbourn Feby 23: 1790

Question 1 Is it expedient for a Christian to go a Fox Hunting. Ans^r It is the opinion of this Conference that It is not of good report—is a waste of precious time—is expence ill applyed—freequently ex-

poses the person to temptation—will lay a stumbling block in the way of enquiring souls—is a gratification of Carnal nature—nor will it be for the glory of God—And cannot be done without injuring the property of others. Consequently it is the duty of every Christian to refrain from it.

Conference at Leake June 5th 1792.

. . . Case 2. Is it thought advisable by the members present that Bro^r Taylor should write a Commentary on the old & New Testament? Ans. 10 for it, the rest nuter. Bro^r Goddard appointed to write to Bor Taylor upon the subject.

Case 3. The Lincolnshire Conference request a Correspondence with the Leicestershire Conference, by a mutual interchange of the Ministers &c. An^r Approv'd of by all.

[In 1791 the first Lincolnshire Conference was held, attended by Thompson of Boston, Freeston of Wisbeach, Rusling, Wright, Burgess of Halifax, Binns of Gosberton. Boyce proposed to the Association a closer union with the old Lincolnshire Association, but this was shelved. There had been a Yorkshire Conference since 1772, but this Leicestershire Conference was manifestly the mainstay of the whole Connection.]

Conf^{ce} at Diseworth 25 Dec^r 1792

. . . The case of Mr Lile of Jamaica respecting defraying the expence of building a meeting-house which has been erected under his care and for w^h expence he is responsible. Agreed to request Mr Holmes of Kegworth to print a letter w^h he has received from Mr Lile and that it be circulated among the Churches and that it be recommended to y^e churches to assist him in that way they judge most proper.

[For details of this first negro church, see Rippon i, 332. Several churches did take up collections.]

Conference held at Castle Donington 21st May 1793

. . . 3. Is it expedient for Dissenters to relieve by a public Collection the French Refugee Clergy? Ans^r No.

Conference at Hinkley March 11th 1794

. . . Case from the Minority of the Church at Leicester, relative to about 9 of their members having some thoughts of going to America and wish Conference to consider and advise in this case. 1 What Reason have they for wishing to go there? Answer the badness of Trade in part, the Expectation of great Troubles in this Nation &c &c. After much Conversation on the subject, it was thought by some to be absolutely wrong, but others would not give a Judgment in this case. . . .

Conference at Cauldwell June 10. 1794.

. . . II The Leicester Minority being likely to lose the labours of Br Healey wish this Confce to consider what future supply of Ministers can be given them.

[A quarrel at Leicester occupied much attention. Healey with five others did go, and founded the second Baptist church at Baltimore, where he was still pastor in 1833. It is the only case of a New Connection link with America.]

Conference at Leicester April 7th 1795

. . . 3. A letter was read which was written by Bro^r Pollard to the Conference at Donington respecting the Indian Mission. It was observed that as M^r Pierce [Samuel Pearce of Birmingham] was to preach at Loughboro on thursday evening next, Bro^r Pollard should converse with him on the subject, & enquire whether the General Baptist Churches would be allowed to send one Minister of their own Connexion

on the same foundation, provided our Churches in general contribute to the Fund? Mr Pierce's answer is to be communicated to the next Conference at Smalley. . . .

Conference at Smalley May 26th 1795

. . . The Mission Business mentioned at Leicester Conference was again considered when the following Questions were read. 1 Have we any Minister that we can spare for Missionaries, that are Quallifyd for the work. 2nd If we have not, is it not our Duty, consistently with our general Principles, to assist those that have, in a work so good and desirable? 3rd Ought we not to encourage our Churches to exert themselves in this business as soon as can be made convenient? But 4^{ly} If endeavouring to send Missionaries of our own be thought most practicable, would it be esteemed prudent and advisable to unite them with part^r Baptists, whose Sentiments are so different to our own? But as no answer had been received from Mr Pierce as was expected, we thought it most proper to refer the further consideration of this matter till a future opportunity.

[No reply is ever recorded, and the proposed co-operation had to be deferred nearly a century.]

Serampore Bible Portions.

The First Serampore Memoir, reprinted in our last number, told of three rare issues which had been overlooked in European catalogues. Principal Howells of Serampore now writes to say that none of the Bengali portions there mentioned are in the University Library. But in a glass case may be seen one of the five hundred copies of Matthew which were circulated in 1800, and one of the two thousand copies of the New Testament which according to the Memoir was published in 1801, but according to Principal Howells, in 1800. There are many pitfalls as to dates, and careful statements as to these are made by Messrs. Darlow and Moule, in their great catalogue for the Bible Society.