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Editorial

Occasionally a look back is not a bad thing. Surveying the seven issues of this *Journal* which have so far appeared we can see what the interests of our contributors are, though whether they coincide with those of our readers is another, and so far unanswered, question. Just over a quarter of our output has had a biographical bent and this is usually popular with readers. Nearly as much has told stories about places, about a school, a charity and three churches. Another significant cluster of articles is strongly connected with record material. In this issue we have two such articles which have recently come to hand. We particularly welcome Dr. Greaves' contribution because our seventeenth century material has been scarce. The nineteenth century continues to attract a good deal of attention and even our own century. Is it strange, however, that we rarely see an article about a book? We have had one. In an age when the world has been thoroughly mapped, Nonconformist literature still remains very largely unmapped, in spite of the fact of its accessibility. The editors continue to hope that readers will send along brief accounts of things they have come across and queries which are so helpful in filling odd spaces! We always want this to be your *Journal*.

JOHN BUNYAN AND NONCONFORMITY IN THE MIDLANDS AND EAST ANGLIA*

Before Charles II issued his Declaration of Indulgence on 15 March 1672,¹ John Bunyan and fellow Nonconformists from the Bedfordshire area had developed an organizational plan designed to provide an ample supply of preachers and teachers for the dissenting churches at Bedford, Stevington, Keysoe, Cranfield, and Newport Pagnell. The results of their work can be seen in the May 1672 application for licenses to preach and for meeting places, which was drawn up by either Bunyan or Thomas Taylor, the London tobacco merchant who acted as an agent for Nonconformists in Bedfordshire, Essex, Northamptonshire, Cheshire, Sussex, and London.² The application includes Bunyan's name and those of twenty-six other men in twenty-six towns and villages in six counties, the focal point of which is northern Bedfordshire.³ Collectively these names reflect the five dissenting churches already named. Stevington, Keysoe, Cranfield, and Newport Pagnell ring Bedford to the north and west, leaving a natural sphere for Bunyan's activities to the south and east. With few exceptions, it was this region, extending to London, that occupied his attention on those occasions when he left the northern Bedfordshire area in the course of his ministerial work.

One of these exceptions occurred on his first Sunday as a free man, 6 October 1672, when he preached at Leicester, licensed locally as 'a congregational person'. The records of the Borough of Leicester indicate that he 'shewed his license to Mr. Maior, Mr. Overing, Mr. Freeman, and Mr. Browne being there present the vjth day of October 1672 being Sunday'.⁴ Only four houses in Leicester were licensed in October 1672. Three of these were Presbyterian, and the fourth was for the house of Nicholas Kestian (Keston, Kestyn). Kestian had been ejected from his position as rector at Gumley (near Market Harborough), Leics., in 1662, and was preaching at nearby Great Bowden in 1669. He was licensed to preach as a Presbyterian at the house of R. Kestian (Kestin) in Great Bowden in 1672, and apparently

*I am grateful to Miss Joyce Godber, Professor Roger Sharrock, and Mr. Gordon Tibbutt, F.S.A., for reading the original draft of this article, and to Dr. Geoffrey F. Nuttall for his assistance at the research stage.

¹*Documentary Annals of the Reformed Church of England*, ed. Edward Cardwell (Oxford, 1844), ii. 333-37.

²*Calamy Revised*, ed. A. G. Matthews (Oxford, 1934), s.v.; Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *Visible Saints: The Congregational Way, 1640-1660* (Oxford, 1957), pp. 26-28; *Original Records of Nonconformity under Persecution and Indulgence*, ed. G. Lyon Turner (1911-14), iii. 402-12.

³The application is reproduced in John Brown, *John Bunyan: His Life, Times and Work*, rev. ed. Frank Mott Harrison (1928), between pp. 216-17; 'Cited in *ibid.*, p. 235.

as a Congregationalist at his own home in Leicester. It was possibly at Kestian's house that Bunyan preached.⁵

There were also Baptists in Leicester. The 1669 Episcopal Returns list five Baptist teachers in this city, viz. William Mugg, William Inge (Juge), William Wells, William Christian, and Richard Farmer (who also taught at Kilby, Arnesby, and Kibworth).⁶ Another Baptist leader in Leicester was the apothecary Richard Coleman, who had served on the Common Council from 1642 to 1654 before becoming a Particular Baptist. After the Restoration Coleman was made an alderman, but was briefly imprisoned in 1667 for Nonconformity. When Bunyan visited Leicester Coleman was rich and influential, and 'had been evangelizing as far afield as Watford [Welford, near Naseby?], which he had supplied since 1655, and which he continued to serve till his death about the end of the century'.⁷ On 9 December 1672, after Bunyan's visit to Leicester, an application was made for a licence permitting Baptists to meet at Coleman's house. Given the date of the application it is not likely that Bunyan preached here, though Coleman's influence might have made it possible.⁸

There remains, however, the enigma of Bunyan's relation with Leicester Nonconformists. There is no known evidence that he knew Kestian or Coleman before October 1672. It has been suggested that Bunyan may have served under Major Ellis with the garrison of Newport Pagnell in their defence of Leicester in May 1645, against Prince Rupert. Yet this is unlikely because Bunyan was mustered in Major Boulton's company on 27 May 1645.⁹ Even if Bunyan was at Leicester in 1645, he would have had to develop ties there in subsequent years, but of this there is no evidence. It is more probable that a leading Leicester Nonconformist, such as Kestian or Coleman, met Bunyan in the course of travels between Leicester and London. Whatever the case, there is no indication that Bunyan returned to Leicester after this visit.

The area to the south and east provided a fruitful sphere for Bunyan's work, as membership records in *The Church Book of Bunyan Meeting* indicate. Moreover, of the sixty-nine licences issued in 1672 for Bedfordshire, sixty were designated Congregational and two Independent, whereas only six were Presbyterian and one was Baptist.¹⁰ As Bunyan ministered in this area he ultimately came into contact with other gathered churches in Cambridgeshire, southern Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, Essex, and Suffolk.

⁵*Calamy Revised*, s.v.

⁶*Original Records*, ii. 767, 769.

⁷'Early Leicester Baptists', *The Baptist Quarterly*, i (April 1922), 76.

⁸*Original Records*, i. 70; ii. 769; *The Baptist Quarterly*, i. 74-77; Douglas Ashby, *Friar Lane: The Story of Three Hundred Years* (1951), pp. 16-18.

⁹*The Baptist Quarterly*, i. 75; Roger Sharrock, in *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (Oxford, 1962), p. 133, note to § 13.

¹⁰'Dr. Williams' Library Turner MS. 89. 18, *Beds.*, fols. 1-2.

One of these was the gathered church of Francis Holcroft in Cambridge. Holcroft, a native of West Ham, had been ejected in 1662 as the Independent vicar of Bassingbourn (northeast of Royston), Cambs., and as Fellow of Clare College, Cambridge. He subsequently organised a gathered church in Cambridgeshire with the assistance of Joseph Oddy, a former Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, Samuel Corbin, a former Conduct of Trinity, and the yeoman John Waite, who later joined the Bedford church. Some information about their activities is provided in the 'Spy Book' assembled by Sir Joseph Williamson, a privy council secretary, who compiled extracts from informers' reports. These alphabetically-indexed extracts were to provide information on men to be watched for potential violation of the penal statutes against Nonconformity or even seditious activity. The work was, unfortunately, not carried out consistently, and was dropped by the end of 1663. Nevertheless it does report that Holcroft 'lyes at Widdow Haukes att Barly in Harfordshire', that he 'hath meetings of 300 at a time', and that he also 'meets wth many hundreds at Cambridge'.¹¹ His assistant Oddy (Audey) was reported living at Meldreth (three miles northeast of Royston), where there 'are convencons of many hundreds both Independts & Baptists'. Oddy and another of Holcroft's assistants, Thomas Lock, took turns riding around Hertfordshire, Cambridgeshire, and Bedfordshire 'to gather concorse of people to their meetings'.¹² Lock is specifically mentioned as riding 'into Harfordshire, Cambridgeshire at Hitchkin [Hitchin] & Pauls Wallden [southeast of Stevenage], and at Bedford, at Shefford, & Romney'.¹³

Holcroft's sphere of activity actually centred at Cambridge but extended to southern Huntingdonshire in the north and the northern half of Hertfordshire in the south.¹⁴ Holcroft was often in prison at Cambridge Castle between 1663 and 1685, though, like Bunyan, he was frequently let out to preach. His position was undoubtedly ameliorated by his friendship, dating back to his undergraduate days at Clare College, with John Tillotson.¹⁵ The Episcopal Returns of 1669 place Holcroft at Cambridge, Oakington, Histon, Over, Willingham, Haddenham (all to the northwest and northeast of Cambridge), and Stow cum Quy (to the east). Like Bunyan, Holcroft had some ties with Leicestershire, for the 1669 Returns indicate that he preached at Hucklescoate. In 1672 he applied for licenses at Cambridge, Meldreth (to the southwest), and Willingham (to the northwest).¹⁶ The absence of licences for other places does not necessarily mean a decline in Nonconformity, for Holcroft's work is known to have been

¹¹Turner, 'Williamson's Spy Book', *Trans. Cong. Hist. Soc.*, v (1912), 250.

¹²*Ibid.*, v, 245.

¹³*Ibid.*, v, 252.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, v, 302.

¹⁵*D.N.B.*, s.v.; Nuttall, *Visible Saints*, pp. 28-29.

¹⁶*Original Records*, iii, 296-7.

especially strong in the villages of the upper Rhee valley, including not only Meldreth but also nearby Shepreth, Fowlmere, Thriplow, Barrington, and Orwell.¹⁷

The northern Cambridgeshire areas were primarily handled for Holcroft by Oddy. The way here had been prepared by Nathaniel Bradshaw, rector of Willingham. When he left in 1667 Oddy went there from Meldreth. Samuel Corbin assisted him at Willingham, and James Day at Oakington. There were other Nonconformist meetings at Histon, Cottenham, Landbeach, and Waterbeach.¹⁸

An even more precise indication of Holcroft's activities can be gained from the Rawlinson Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library, which contain 'The number of ye names of ye disciples in ye church of Jesus Christ in Cambridge-shire on ye 26 of the [*sic*] second Month 1675'. The list is divided into geographical areas.

Geographical Area	Men	Women
(1) Cambridge, Trumpington, Chesterton, Histon	26	83
(2) N.W. — Willingham, Over, Houghton (Hunts)	21	48
(3) N. — Histon, Cottenham	8	22
(4) N. — I. of Ely, Somersham, Needingworth (Hu.)	31	41
(5) N.E. — Stow cum Quy, Burwell, Snaiwell	8	19
(6) Essex — Audley End, Elmton, Debden, Thaxted	15	8
(7) S. — Ickleton, Chishill, Barley (Herts)	8	14
(8) Barrington, Orwell, Thriplow, Croydon	34	65
(9) S.W. — Bassingbourn, Meldreth	27	63

Later in the list, Meldreth ('Mildred') appears again, with the names of 8 women and 9 men. The names of one man and one woman also appear in the list under the additional heading of Meldreth and Foxton ('Meld: and Moxten'). Near the end of the list are the names of 'the Saints gathered by our Lord Jesus out of this his Garden to the Heavenly Countrey; with those who dy'd after they made their Confessions before they were added to the Church'. One of these names is that of Samuel Corbin, minister. The list concludes with the name of a woman from Eversden and a man from Toft. The preponderance of women in Holcroft's congregation parallels that of various other gathered churches including those at Bedford,

¹⁷Margaret Spufford, 'The Dissenting Churches in Cambridgeshire from 1660 to 1700', *Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society*, lxi (1968), 75.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, lxi. 77.

Broadmead Bristol, Fenstanton, and Norwich.¹⁹ Essentially, therefore, the work of Bunyan, John Donne *et al.* in Bedfordshire was paralleled in Cambridgeshire by the activities of Holcroft, Oddy, and their colleagues.

Holcroft and Oddy, like Bunyan, were also engaged in controversy with the Quakers, particularly Samuel Cater (1627-1711). The latter was a carpenter from Littleport, four miles north of Ely. He had been a Baptist, serving as an elder in the Littleport Baptist church (which was associated with Henry Denne, one of Bunyan's friends) by 1655. James Parnell converted him to Quaker persuasions, and Cater and his brother Ezekiel were consequently excommunicated by the Baptists in May 1655.²⁰ The Quakers were attacked by Holcroft in 1664 in his *Six Sheets against Friends*, which provoked a reply from the Cambridgeshire Quaker John Aynsloe; it was entitled *A Besome of Truth, to Sweep away the Refuge of Lies* (1664).²¹ It was not until April 1676 that Holcroft, Oddy, and Cater really tangled. A public dispute was held at Thriplow (south of Cambridge and east of Meldreth), in which Holcroft allegedly argued that 'to affirm that every one is enlightened with the Light of Christ, is Cursed Idolatry'. He accused the Friends of denying 'the Man Christ Jesus, who is now at the Right Hand of his Father in the Highest Heaven' and the doctrine of original sin.²² Holcroft and Oddy objected to Cater's account of the debate, and retorted with the *Apostacy of the People Called Quakers* (1676). The inevitable counter-response was Cater's *The Innocent Cleared and the Guilty Made Manifest* (1676), in which he, John Webb, and Jacob Barker offered to dispute again. One of Cater's remarks in this tract possibly refers to Bunyan's early writings against Edward Burrough. 'And to prove us Deceivers, he [*Holcroft*] tells us of some of his Brethren, he calls Ministers, have writ Books against us, which Books have been already answer'd by us, and their

¹⁹Bodleian Rawlinson MS. D. 1480, fols. 123-6. Mrs. Spufford has compared this list of members with the 1674 Hearth Tax. On the basis of the evidence available, Nonconformists in Willingham were essentially from the class of smaller yeomen, not the poor or the rich. At Orwell, on the other hand, Nonconformity spread throughout the social strata, with no relationship between religious views and material prosperity. Orwell was smaller than Willingham, and was situated on the clay uplands. Willingham, however, was a pastoral village on the edge of the fens. 'The Social Status of Some Seventeenth-Century Rural Dissenters', *Popular Belief and Practice, Studies in Church History*, viii (Cambridge, 1972), 203-11. For statistics on sex distribution in the sects, see Richard T. Vann, *The Social Development of English Quakerism, 1655-1755* (Cambridge, Mass., 1969), p. 82. Vann's research does not reveal female preponderance among the Friends.

²⁰Joseph J. Green, *Biography of Samuel Cater of Littleport in the Isle of Ely* (1914), B. M. Typescript 10855.g.15., fols. 6-16.

²¹Joseph Smith, *Bibliotheca Anti-Quakeriana* (1873), p. 233.

²²[Cater], *A Relation of Some of the Most Material Matters That Passed in a Publick Dispute at Thriplow . . . the 15th Day of the 2d Month 1676* [1676], pp. 3, 6.

dark Works detected . . .²³ Cater specifically attacked Thomas Hicks' *A Dialogue between a Christian and a Quaker* (1673), 'which in Truth and Reality was no such matter, but [Hicks] himself stated what Question he pleased, and answered them how he would . . .'²⁴ Reading the tracts in the debate strongly reminds one of the earlier controversy between Bunyan and Edward Burrough.

With such strikingly parallel interests in the work of the gathered churches and the repudiation of the Quakers, and being neighbouring preachers, as it were, one would expect a close relationship between Bunyan and Holcroft. As early as 1662 the Bedford church had requested that Holcroft join John Donne of Keysoe, William Wheeler of Cranfield, and John Gibbs of Newport Pagnell in periodically conducting services for it.²⁵ These friendly relations were ultimately ruined by the controversy surrounding John Waite of Toft. It was at Toft, in the barn of Daniel Angiers, that Bunyan once preached to the people who organized the Nonconformist church there. By 1669 John Waite was a leader of this church. He Oddy, Corbin, and Bard had been chosen as elders to minister at Great Eversden after Holcroft's ejection. All four were subsequently imprisoned, but Waite escaped whilst Bard left the church. They were admonished to return to the church, but refused, hence 'the church proceeded against them for their not ansoerin their call and some other crims that was against them, and they was coot of from the church but some was dissatisfied'.²⁶

Waite began associating with the Bedford church, which wrote to Holcroft's congregation about the matter in 1670.²⁷ Bedford noted that Waite had been 'cast out' by Cambridge and desired the reasons for this action, especially in view of the past amity between the two churches. In the absence of such reasons, the Bedford congregation stated it would continue to have communion with Waite. The reply from Cambridge was read at a meeting of the Bedford church in November 1670. Waite was charged with being a railer and blasphemer who caused strife and contention in the Cambridge congregation. Holcroft's people were affronted that Bedford would hold communion

²³Cater, *The Innocent Cleared and the Guilty Made Manifest* (1676), p. 9.

²⁴*Ibid.*, p. 13. Hicks was also attacked by George Whitehead in *The Dipper Plung'd* (1673?) and *The Quakers Plainnes Detecting Fallacy* (1674), by William Penn in *Reason against Railing* (1673) and *The Counterfeit Christian Detected* (1674) and by William Loddington in *The Christian a Quaker* (1674). For a broader perspective of Quaker interests in these years, see M. G. F. Bitterman, 'The Early Quaker Literature of Defense', *Church History*, xlii (June 1973), 203-28, especially 225-27, where the Quaker concern with prophecy and victory over their enemies is discussed.

²⁵*The Church Book of Bunyan Meeting 1650-1821*, facsimile ed. with intro. by G. B. Harrison (1928), p. 26.

²⁶Cited in Spufford, *Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society*, lxi. 87.

²⁷*Church Book*, p. 32.

with such a person.²⁸ The Bedford church drafted a reply in the same meeting, contending that the charges against Waite were too general. Holcroft was accused of 'attempting to stirre up a jealousye in our members, against the faithfulness of our teachers . . .'²⁹ Cambridge refused to respond, but Holcroft let it be known that no more letters from Bedford would be read in his church. For its part Bedford admitted Waite to membership (July 1672), made him an elder (September 1672), and assigned him responsibility to teach at Toft.³⁰

The breach between the two churches remained unhealed during Bunyan's lifetime. It also had an impact on Nonconformity at Hitchin, Herts.³¹ Nonconformists were meeting here in the late 1660s, sometimes gathering for services in Wainwood dell, near Preston.³² Earlier Henry Denne had been one of fifteen 'Orthodox Divines' appointed by Parliament in 1642 to lecture at St. Mary's, Hitchin, but he resigned in 1644 after adopting Baptist convictions. There were divergent views among Hitchin Nonconformists on baptism, a fact which led to division in the congregation. Holcroft and Waite preached here on various occasions,³³ as did the Baptist Thomas Hayward of Kensworth, Herts. In 1669 the Hitchin group was caught up in the Waite controversy. They sought advice from two leading Independent divines, Bunyan's friends John Owen and George Griffith, who had received an account of the incident from Holcroft's messengers. Owen and Griffith judged that Holcroft's people had erred and should receive Waite and Beare into fellowship again. 'Nor do we therefore know any rule of the gospel that will be infringed by your [Hitchin's] continuing to honour Mr. Waite for his work's sake. . . .' The members of Holcroft's church who were travelling throughout Cambridgeshire to denounce Waite were in turn condemned by the London divines, especially since the latter had already communicated their judgement in writing to Holcroft's church. The letter also reflects internal dissension and separation at Hitchin: 'As touching those five of your number that dissent and separate themselves from you[r] body, our present advice is that you would be much in prayer for them, carry it in all love, with tenderness towards them. . .' The letter was signed

²⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 33-34, 36-37.

²⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 37-39.

³⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 47, 52, 53.

³¹When Wilson was dismissed to Hitchin (where Waite had preached) in 1677, a group of Hitchin members 'sought their dismissal to Holcroft's church on doctrinal grounds, and later formed a true Independent church in Hitchin'. Spufford, *Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society*, lxi. 88.

³²Edward Foster, *Brief Outline of the Tilehouse Street Church, Hitchin, with a Few Anecdotes of the Foster Family* (Hitchin, 1856), p. 5.

³³G. E. Evans, *Come Wind, Come Weather: Chronicles of Tilehouse Street Baptist Church, 1669-1969* (London and Tonbridge, 1969), pp. 4, 10.

by Owen and Griffith 'in the name and by the appointment of several Elders of churches walking in and about London'.³⁴

Affection for Waite as well as the varying views of the Hitchin people on baptism must have prompted them to turn to Bedford for leadership. At a meeting of the Bedford church on 25 April 1673 a request from Hitchin for the services of Nehemiah Coxe, Bunyan's former fellow prisoner, was taken into consideration. Either the church's refusal to give up Coxe prompted divisive words on his part, or such words persuaded the congregation at Bedford to reject Hitchin's request. In any case, when the Bedford church met at Cotton End on 7 May 1674, Coxe confessed to his wrong doing and Hitchin requested the services of John Wilson. No action was taken on the Hitchin matter at this meeting.³⁵ Not until 29 March 1677 did Bedford acquiesce.³⁶ Wilson's induction as the new pastor occurred on 20 April 1678, with representatives from Bedford and London in attendance. Samuel Fenne represented Bedford, but Bunyan was not there. London sent Anthony Palmer, preacher at Pinners' Hall (1669-79), Thomas Kelsey, a surety for Bunyan in 1677 and almost certainly a member of George Cockayne's Independent church in Red Cross Street, and John James.

The month before Wilson's induction John Donne's Keysoe congregation acted on a matter involving Hitchin. It was willing 'that iff that sentence agst Eliz. Pall be reversed [the offence is not recorded] and Hitchin congregation receive her it will be noe offence to any off us'.³⁷ The good will of Keysoe must have been welcome, for throughout the 1670s and 1680s Wilson and his flock had difficult times. Wilson was arrested in 1681 (the year the church drew up a covenant) and imprisoned in the Hertford gaol for seven years. The congregation met in a variety of places, including Wainwood dell, the village green and Widow Heath's cottage at Preston, and John Harper's house at Maydencroft. According to an oral tradition, Bunyan preached in the 'Tithe Barn' of Harper, and the Wainwood dell, near Preston. The Foster brothers (John, Edward, Matthew, Michael, Joseph, and Richard) of that village, who were members of the Hitchin congregation, are said to have aided Wilson while he was imprisoned and to have allowed Nonconformist clergy to use their house as an asylum.³⁸ John Foster, moreover, owned a copy of the 1691 edition of Bunyan's famous sermon, *Come, & Welcome, to Jesus Christ*.³⁹

³⁴*The Correspondence of John Owen (1616-1683): With an Account of His Life and Work*, ed. Peter Toon (London and Cambridge, 1970), pp. 146-48.

³⁵*Church Book*, pp. 54-55.

³⁶*Ibid.*, p. 63.

³⁷D. W. L. Rix MS. 38. 111, fol. 31.

³⁸William Urwick, *Nonconformity in Herts.* (1884), pp. 641, 645, 648-49. Cf. Evans, *Come Wind*, pp. 6-7; H. C. Jenkins, *The Back Street Meeting House: An Account of the Early Days of Independency in Hitchin* (1970), p. 40.

³⁹Brown, *John Bunyan*, p. 234n.

The Kensworth Baptist church, whose minister Thomas Hayward had preached at Hitchin before Wilson's time, is believed to have had connections with the Bedford congregation. By July 1675 Hayward's congregation numbered 390, with members in Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire. They lived in such places as Preston, St. Albans, Hemel Hempstead, Harpenden, Welwyn, Hitchin, Baldock (not far from Ashwell, in Bedford's sphere of influence), and Pirton (near the Bedfordshire border).⁴⁰ In effect, the Bedford, Cambridge, and Kensworth gathered churches formed a rough triangle with nearly discernable borders of demarcation. Sending Wilson to Hitchin was very nearly creating an outpost in a neighbour's jurisdiction.

If tradition is correct, Bunyan would have antagonized Hayward and his Kensworth congregation when, c.1675, he preached to a group of Luton Nonconformists who had broken away from the Kensworth church. They allegedly met in secret at Dallow Farm to hear Bunyan preach. This farm was not far from Hunsdon House (later called Preston Castle), where the six Foster brothers of the Hitchin church lived.⁴¹ The tradition that Bunyan preached at Coleman Green in the parish of Sandridge (north-east of St. Albans) would also bring him into Hayward's sphere, for Kensworth members came from Sandridge, St. Albans, Wheathampstead, Welwyn, and Harpenden.

Bunyan is also believed to have preached at Bocking, Essex, to the east of Hitchin and Kensworth. The leading Restoration Nonconformist in this area was Samuel Bantoft, who took his B.A. (1642) and M.A. (1645) at Jesus College, Cambridge, and was a Fellow there, 1644-1650. He was vicar of Stebbing, west of Braintree, from 1654 until his ejection in 1662, and was subsequently licensed as a Presbyterian in September 1672 to preach in Braintree.⁴² There was also a Baptist church in this town during Charles II's reign, which met in Back Lane before moving to Sandford Pond Lane. Tradition has it that Bunyan preached in Bocking, staying with the English and Tabor families.⁴³ If so, Braintree Nonconformists presumably heard him. Bunyan's church sent a letter of dismissal to Braintree Nonconformists in 1676, in response to a request for the transfer of one Samuel Hensman. The reply indicates either that the letter of request had outlined the beliefs of the Braintree church or that knowledge of these beliefs had been acquired in some other way, such as a visit from Bunyan. The open communion principles of the Braintree church are praised: 'you are not rigid in your principles but are for

⁴⁰Urwick, *Nonconformity in Herts.*, pp. 212-13, 217.

⁴¹Brown, *John Bunyan*, pp. 233-34.

⁴²*Calamy Revised*, s.v.; D. W. L. Surman's *Index of Congregational Biography (Ministerial)*, c.1640-1956, s.v.; T. W. Davids, *Annals of Evangelical Nonconformity in the County of Essex* (1863), p. 475; Harold Smith, *The Ecclesiastical History of Essex under the Long Parliament and Commonwealth* (Colchester, [1932]), pp. 361-62.

⁴³G. Doris Witard, *The History of Braintree Baptist Church, Essex* (1955), pp. 19-20.

communyan with saints as saints. . .⁴⁴ This would not have been Bantoft's church if he was correctly depicted in 1672 as a Presbyterian, though such designations are sometimes incorrect. Bantoft has been claimed as the founder of the Congregational church at Braintree, and is included in Surman's *Index of Congregational Biography*.⁴⁵ Without further evidence it is impossible to determine whether the Bedford letter went to Bantoft's church or the Baptist church.

Not far to the north-east of Bocking and Braintree is Sudbury, Suffolk, where there is also a tradition that Bunyan preached (in the house of the Burkitts).⁴⁶ The Nonconformist situation in this area certainly does not exclude such a possibility. The Congregational movement throughout Suffolk remained reasonably strong after 1662, in part because thirteen of the twenty Congregational ministers continued to work in Suffolk after their ejection.⁴⁷ In a letter written by Bishop Edward Reynolds on 6 July 1670 we read that the parish church of All Saints, Sudbury, having no minister, 'is made use of by Non-Conformists and Un-Licensed Preachers'.⁴⁸ Reynolds stopped this, but the Declaration of Indulgence gave renewed life to Sudbury Nonconformity in 1672. Samuel Blower was licensed as a Congregational minister to teach at a barn in Sudbury.⁴⁹ (A licence for a Presbyterian meeting was also granted for a local house.⁵⁰) Blower became the minister at Castle Hill, Northampton, c. 1674 or 1675,⁵¹ and was succeeded at Sudbury by the Independent Samuel Petto, who remained there until his death in 1711. Some light on Petto's activities in Sudbury is shed by allegations made against the mayor, John Catesby, in 1684. Catesby was accused of allowing Petto to live in the vicar's house of All Saints' for the preceding ten years.⁵² The mayor was also charged with being favourable to Anabaptists, Independents, Presbyterians, and Quakers, whose conventicles were frequented by strangers as well as local residents.⁵³ Bunyan likely took advantage of this favourable atmosphere. He knew John Owen, who wrote a preface to Petto's *The Difference between the Old and New Covenant Stated* (1674). Petto also knew Holcroft and Oddy, for the three were present in 1674 at Bury St. Edmunds for the ordination of Thomas Milway. Petto also commented in 1658 that there were many Congregational churches in Suffolk containing members who

⁴⁴*Church Book*, p. 61.

⁴⁵Frederick West, *A Sketch of the History of Nonconformity in the Neighbourhood of Braintree and Bocking* [1891], p. 12; D. W. L. Surman's *Index*, s.v.

⁴⁶Ashley J. Klaiber, *The Story of the Suffolk Baptists* [1931], p. 39.

⁴⁷R. Tudor Jones, *Congregationalism in England, 1662-1962* (1962), p. 73.

⁴⁸Cited in John Browne, *History of Congregationalism . . . in Norfolk and Suffolk* (1877), p. 444.

⁴⁹*Original Records*, ii. 920.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, ii. 909.

⁵¹D. W. L. Surman's *Index*, s.v.

⁵²*Calamy Revised*, s.v.

⁵³Klaiber, *Suffolk Baptists*, p. 39.

entertained doubts about paedobaptism,⁵⁴ and thus would have found kinship with Bunyan on this matter.

The thrust of Bunyan's activities to the south-east culminated in London, where he enjoyed the fellowship of the city's leading Non-conformists. The chief of these was John Owen, depicted by one conservative opponent as the centre of a Congregational spy ring.⁵⁵ Owen had been preaching in 1669 in White's Alley, Moorfields, and at a Congregational-Presbyterian lecture at Hackney, but in 1673 he became pastor of the Leadenhall Street church. That year or earlier Bunyan contacted him about writing a preface for his tract, *Differences in Judgment about Water Baptism* (1673), but Owen declined due to pressure from London Baptists.⁵⁶ Owen's friend, Anthony Palmer, was another of Bunyan's acquaintances. He was the pastor of a mixed congregation of Independents and Baptists at Pinners' Hall, where Bunyan later preached his sermon, *Greatness of the Soul* (1682), at the invitation of Richard Wavel, Palmer's successor. Bunyan was also associated with George Griffith, another friend of Owen's. Richard Baxter commended Griffith for his conciliatory attitude and open meetings, which undoubtedly attracted Bunyan to him. Griffith had a congregation at his own home in Addle Street, but by 1684 was preaching at Plaisterers' Hall, and later Girdlers' Hall.⁵⁷ Griffith was in turn a friend of the former Bedfordshire man, George Cockayne, whose church met in his house in Red Cross Street. It was in the home of a member of Cockayne's church that Bunyan died in 1688. A fellow Bedfordshire man, Matthew Mead, was also known to Bunyan, for it was at Mead's church in Stepney that 'about three thousand . . . came to hear him [Bunyan] one Lords day at London, at a Townsend Meeting-house. . . .'⁵⁸

Because Bedford's sister churches at Stevington, Keysoe, Cranfield, and Newport Pagnell handled the territory to the north and west of Bedford, Bunyan was left free to concentrate his activities to the south-east. Beyond the northern Bedfordshire region, many persons, ranging from the fringes of Cambridgeshire to Suffolk, Essex, Hertfordshire, and London, must have heard the former tinker preach what he felt, what he 'smartingly did feel'.⁵⁹

RICHARD L. GREAVES

⁵⁴Nuttall, *Visible Saints*, pp. 96, 119.

⁵⁵*D.N.B.*, s.v. George Vernon.

⁵⁶*The Works of John Bunyan*, ed. George Offor (Glasgow, Edinburgh, London, 1861), ii. 649.

⁵⁷*Calamy Revised*, s.v.; *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, ed. Matthew Sylvester (1696), ii. 193; iii. 19.

⁵⁸*The Works of That Eminent Servant of Christ, Mr. John Bunyan*, ed. Charles Doe (1692), pp. 873-74.

⁵⁹*Grace Abounding*, ed. Sharrock, § 276 (p. 85).

RELIGIOUS DISSENT IN SUSSEX c. 1829

It is the *quality* of the witness of Dissent which is decisive but it is important historically to try to gauge the numerical strength of Dissent at different periods. There are always difficulties about this even in more recent times as the case of the material collected in the course of the 1851 Census itself demonstrates.¹ Nevertheless the 1851 Census material has continued to provide the basis of attempts to assess the religious situation in England during the nineteenth century in quantitative terms.

Almost invariably in such attempts the arithmetic of the 1851 Census bursts on us out of the blue though it is plain that there had been a remarkable growth of Dissent long before 1851. Nor had this development been ignored by Parliament itself and attempts were made from early on in the century to evaluate the changing religious situation in England. In 1810 the House of Lords called for returns by the Archbishops and Bishops of places of worship in every parish "which appears by the population abstract to have a population of one thousand persons or upwards."² The 1810 returns are a valuable source but of course the limitation to large parishes is a handicap particularly in the case of a county like Sussex which contained so many parishes with small populations where Dissent was quite strong even in 1810.

But in 1829 the House of Commons called for a return of Anglican and non-Anglican places of worship in all parishes regardless of the size of population. Unfortunately these returns as they related to the Dissenters were never printed and so were destroyed in the Fire of 1834. Some Dissenters claimed that the failure of Parliament to order the printing in full of the 1829 returns was the result of Anglican reluctance to recognise publicly that there had been a very great increase in the scale of Dissent.³ The fact that the House of Commons on 28 May 1830 ordered the printing of the returns as they related to the churches, chapels and incumbents of the Church of England gave support to this claim.⁴

¹A manageable account of the Census material relating to religious worship is provided by H. Mann: *Abridged Report on Religious Worship in England and Wales* (1854).

²H.L. 48 (1811) xlvi, p. 17. The writer is grateful for the generous help given by Mr. D. Johnson, Assistant Clerk of the Records, House of Lords Record Office.

³For example, see: *The Black Book* (new edition, 1835).

⁴The only Order made for the printing of returns relating to non-Anglican places of worship was that for the County of Lancaster: "Return of the number of parish churches . . . and of the number of places of worship not of the Church of England so far as regards the County of Lancaster": H.C. 664 (1830), xix, pp. 11-34. This version of the returns for the County of Lancaster has been described as "highly inaccurate" by W. R. Ward in his *Religion and Society in England 1790-1850* (1972).

However the originals of the parish returns of 1829 made for Sussex have survived in large part.⁵ Unhappily there is a gap for those parishes in the Eastern Division of the county with the initial letters "A" to "H" (except for the parishes of Hastings) and because of the loss of the returns made to the House of Commons it is impossible to make good this gap. It is a large gap in the context of this paper because Protestant Dissent was particularly strong in many of the "missing parishes" including Brighton, Burwash, Hailsham and Heathfield. Even as early as 1810 the Anglican compilers of the returns for Large Parishes had noted 21 Protestant Dissenting places of worship in the large parishes amongst this group of missing parishes.

It is possible to identify a good many of the groups of Dissenters existing in 1829 in these missing parishes by using other contemporary sources such as Toleration Act registrations, Non-Parochial Registers and Dissenting journals. By 1829 there were at least 10 Congregational Churches alone in these missing parishes. Taken as a whole these other sources point to there having been at least 60 Dissenting places of worship in 30 of the missing parishes: this estimate needs to be kept in view in the examination of the surviving 1829 returns for Sussex.

The surviving returns record a total of 119¹ Dissenting places of worship in 74 Sussex parishes. These were distributed between the two Divisions of Sussex in an apparently even way: 56 places in 36 parishes of the Eastern and 54 places in 38 parishes of the Western Division. But when allowance is made for the missing parishes of the Eastern Division as estimated above the pattern is very different: 116 places in 66 parishes of the Eastern Division and only the 54 places in 38 parishes of the Western Division. Thus Protestant Dissent in Sussex in 1829 continued to be much more strongly represented in the Eastern Division as it had been from 1660 onwards.⁶

The term "place of worship" was not defined in the 1829 returns. A good many of the compilers certainly did not take it to mean a building set aside exclusively for worship and they included "House Meetings."⁷ It is plain however that some compilers did not see fit to include small house meetings. This may have been because such meetings had not been duly registered in accordance with the 1812 Act. It is difficult to gauge the extent to which the Protestant Dissenters complied strictly with the statutory requirements at different

⁵QCR/I/II, E.I and W.I in the East and West Sussex County Record Offices. As always the staffs of the two Record Offices have been most helpful to the writer.

⁶In 1829 the reverse held good for the Sussex Roman Catholics: as it had done continuously from the Elizabethan religious settlement and 6 of the 7 Catholic places of worship recorded in the surviving returns were in the Western Division.

⁷For example: "Rottingdean — Wesleyan Methodists: I House licensed" and "Upper Beeding — Particular Baptist: Private Room in a House."

times but the writer considers it unlikely that these omissions from the 1829 returns exceeded around 30 places of worship across Sussex and some of these would have been small groups (the 1812 Act allowed groups of up to 20 to meet for worship in an unregistered building). Allowing for these and for the places of worship in the missing parishes of the Eastern Division the writer's estimate is that in 1829 there were in Sussex some 190 to 200 Dissenting places of worship.

According to the 1851 Census there were then 267 Dissenting places of worship in Sussex. The rate of formation of Dissenting congregations appears to have been slower in Sussex after c. 1830 than it had been in 1800-1829 and in a number of places the building of chapels or larger chapels led to the cessation of services in two or more house meetings. This relationship between an estimated total of 190 to 200 places of worship in 1829 and 267 places in 1851 is a reasonable one.

But this brief appraisal of the strength of the Dissenting cause in Sussex in 1829 must cast serious doubt on the accuracy of the surveys which were made over the period 1829 to 1836 and which were published by the *Congregational Magazine*. According to the survey published in 1829 there were only 87 Dissenting places of worship in Sussex and even the survey published in 1836 gave only 98 places.

It is hardly surprising that these surveys fell short of the coverage of the Parliamentary returns of 1829. Those responsible for them are unlikely to have had in general as direct and local knowledge as the incumbents, church wardens and overseers who compiled the parish returns.⁸ It is important therefore that these surveys should not be accepted as giving an adequate assessment of the situation in particular counties without critical scrutiny especially in cases where the original returns of 1829 have survived. In the case of Sussex the most striking discrepancy concerns the Wesleyan Methodists. The *Congregational Magazine* both in 1829 and 1836 recorded a total of only 20 Wesleyan places of worship compared with the 35 places recorded in the surviving parish returns: and there were a good many more such places in the missing parishes, probably around 15.

There are of course uncertainties about the denominational allegiance of some of the Protestant Dissenting places of worship as stated in the 1829 parish returns. Despite their local knowledge some of the Anglican compilers may well have been confused by the differences between groups described as Congregational, Independent and Calvinist. But the 1829 returns as a whole suggest that almost all

⁸Though some of these Anglicans may not have had any close personal contact with Dissenters they knew the affairs of their parishes. Some of them indeed asked local Dissenting Ministers to give them up to date information about the numbers of Dissenters involved as at Fernhurst: "I have been to the Pastor."

the compilers made a serious attempt to identify correctly the denominations involved and that they succeeded well in the attempt.⁹ The Table opposite compares the 1829 parish returns with the surveys published by the *Congregational Magazine* in 1829 and 1836 and with the 1851 Census. The denominational identifications made in the 1829 returns have been corrected where this is justified by specific independent evidence but the Table takes account only of the parishes for which the returns have survived.

The close correspondence between all four sources on the number of Roman Catholic places of worship is readily understandable: there would have been no difficulty in identifying groups of Catholics and there were only a very few such groups in Sussex until much later in the nineteenth century.¹⁰

A notable feature of the 1829 returns is the large development of Protestant Dissent in the coastal resorts which reflected the rapid growth of population after c. 1800 and the summer influx of Dissenters who wished to attend services of their own denominations. Had the 1829 return for Brighton survived this would have underlined the importance of this development for Sussex Dissent because Brighton was by far the most important "growth point" in Sussex.¹¹

In addition to recording places of worship the compilers of the 1829 returns were required to estimate the number of persons "belonging" to each Dissenting place of worship and almost all of them in Sussex did so. These estimates indicate that compilers were fully aware of the large and growing strength of Dissent and that they had no inhibitions about admitting this fact in their returns. Inevitably there are uncertainties about the basis of a good many of these estimates. Indeed the 1851 Census material demands careful handling on this score particularly as the main estimates of numbers were related to the number of persons "present at the most numerously attended Services" on Sunday 30 March 1851. Such estimates must have involved an element of double-counting both of Dissenters who attended more than one place of worship on Sundays and of Anglicans who attended a Dissenting place of worship as well as their Parish Church.

⁹Not so however the incumbent of Chidham in West Sussex who wrote: "Some 8 or 10 Persons attend some Dissenting Place of Worship out of the Parish, but of which Sect or Persuasion, the Devil only knows."

¹⁰All six Roman Catholic places of worship recorded in the 1829 returns were parishes with a long history of Catholic Dissent and most of these had been Mass Centres from the sixteenth century: Arundel, Barlavington (Burton Park), Easebourne, Horsham, Slindon (Slindon Park) and West Gronstead. The seventh Catholic place of worship was at Brighton.

¹¹As early as 1810 the Parliamentary return for large parishes in the Chichester Diocese had recorded 8 Protestant Dissenting places of worship in Brighton with estimated total *Sittings* for 3,200 (compared with 3,400 in the 3 Anglican places of worship). In addition there was the Roman Catholic church with 100 sittings and the Jewish synagogue with 50 sittings.

Dissenting Places of Worship in Sussex: 1810-51

Source	Total No.	Roman Catholic	Presbyterian/ Unitarian	Independent/ Congregational	Particular Baptist
1810 Return ¹	57	3	5	19 ²	18
1829 Congregational Magazine	87	6	4	31	13
1836 -do-	98	7	7	41	12
1829 Return ⁵	110	6 ⁹	4	29 ⁷	16 ⁷
1851 Census	267	8	— ⁹	78	50 ¹⁰

Source	Wesleyan Methodist	Calvinistic Methodist	Other Methodist	Friends	Others
1810 Return ¹	5 ³	—	—	7	— ⁴
1829 Congregational Magazine	20	6	—	5	2
1836 -do-	20	6	—	5	—
1829 Return ⁵	35 ⁷	5	4 ⁸	4	7
1851 Census	80	5	— ¹¹	— ¹²	46

Notes

¹The Return covered only the larger parishes i.e. with a population of 1,000 and upwards.

²The Return did not refer specifically to Independents or Congregationalists but clearly covered these denominations as *Calvinists*.

³The Wesleyan Methodists in 1810 were not strongly represented in the larger parishes but were already quite strong in a good many smaller parishes.

⁴The Return included the Jewish congregation at Brighton but this is excluded from the total of 57 places of worship.

⁵This is the total for the parishes whose returns have sur-

vived: the writer's estimate is that in 1829 there were 190-200 Dissenting places of worship in Sussex.

⁶The missing return for Brighton would have shown the Roman Catholic church there which was listed in the 1810 Return.

⁷There were a good many Congregational, Particular Baptist and Wesleyan Methodist groups in the missing parishes.

⁸These were O'Brienite meetings.

⁹Included under 'Others'.

¹⁰Intended to cover all Baptist meetings.

¹¹Included under 'Others.'

¹²Included under 'Others.'

Many of the compilers of the 1829 returns evidently felt the attractions of a good round number when they made their estimates. Some of these round numbers appear to overstate rather than understate the strength of local Dissent at the time. For example the return for Newhaven estimated the number of Dissenters as "around 200" out of a population of only 900 and the estimate for Horsham was almost 1,000 out of a total population of some 5,000.¹² And in 1829 there was the problem of the longstanding distinction between *Church Members* and *Hearers*. Many of the compilers tried to estimate separately the numbers in each of these categories. Certainly in 1829 the number of *Members* often was only a modest proportion of all the adults attending services: as indeed still happens today in a good many Dissenting congregations.¹³

The problem of double-counting is certainly complicated by the fact that quite a number of Anglicans in Sussex also attended services at Protestant Dissenting places of worship. Some of the compilers stated explicitly that their estimates of the numbers involved included members of the Church of England. For example the return for Nuthurst for a Congregational meeting (held midweek) stated: "Between forty and fifty people generally attend, but of these about one half belong to the established Church of England, and attend the Parish Church on Sundays" and at Ripe: "Several Families in the Parish attend and many attend who often are at Church which makes it most difficult to draw any line between them."¹⁴

The surviving parish returns of 1829 point to a total of about 12,000 *Hearers* for the 110 Dissenting places of worship recorded an average of over 100 persons. Allowing for the writer's estimate that there were in all in 1829 around 190 to 200 Dissenting places of worship the total number of *Hearers* in Sussex would have been of the order of 20,000.¹⁵ But such a total does not discount the element of double-counting and it is unlikely in the writer's view that the number of Dissenters in Sussex c. 1829 exceeded around 16,000 to 17,000: about 9 or 10 per cent of the total population. On the basis of the estimates

¹²The 1810 return for Horsham had estimated that there were then 1,000 Protestant Dissenters out of a total population of only 3,400; though Dissent was always strong in Horsham this seems to have been a somewhat inflated estimate.

¹³For example, at Northiam: "One Chapel of the Unitarian Baptists — 26 Members or an average Number of 100 Persons in their Congregation". And at Robertsbridge: "Wesleyan Methodists: 16 in Society and 40 usually attend."

¹⁴The case of Bosham in West Sussex was extreme: the Churchwarden there in his return noted of the Congregational Church that it was: "Now crowded to Excess in consequence of the Parochial Church being so very badly served with an insufficient Vicar which has caused the Parishioners to desert it."

¹⁵It is reasonable to adopt an average of 100 persons for these Dissenting groups in the missing parishes because many of these were large groups especially in Brighton.

of the numbers of persons present at the most numerous attended services the 1851 Census gave a figure of 37,000 Dissenters for Sussex: an average of 140 persons for the 267 places of worship recorded then. But this estimate makes no allowance for double-counting.

The Sussex population had almost doubled between 1829 and 1851 so that taking the Census estimate of 37,000 at face value the Dissenters in 1851 represented about 10 or 11 per cent of the total population. With the factor of double-counting in mind it is unlikely that the Dissenters in Sussex were a higher proportion of the total population than they had been in 1829: there is nothing indeed to suggest that the numerical strength of Sussex Dissent between c. 1829 and 1851 was growing at a greater rate than the population as a whole.

It is clear that though there had been a major revival of Protestant Dissent in Sussex by c. 1829 the scale of this revival was modest enough compared with a good many other counties. This held good also in 1851 when the proportion of total "sittings" provided by the Dissenting places of worship in Sussex ranked below that of every other county in England except Rutland.

The writer has not established the extent to which the 1829 returns made for other English Counties have survived in their original form as in the case of Sussex but it is clear that where such returns have survived they can provide a most valuable source of information about the distribution of Dissent and its numerical strength.

N. CAPLAN

OUR CONTEMPORARIES

The Baptist Quarterly, Vol. XXVI, 1975, Nos. 1-4.

This is a substantial Journal covering a wide range of topics in the theological and historical fields. No. 1 contains an article by B. Haymes on the theology of our own H. H. Farmer, and a review by our President of a new edition of *Association Records of the Particular Baptists of England, Wales and Ireland to 1660*. Dr. Payne has a fascinating article on *Abraham Booth, 1734-1806*. In No. 3, our Dr. Binfield contributes an article on *Congregationalism's Two Sides of The Baptistery: A Paedobaptist View*. In No. 4, Prof. R. L. Greaves provides an article on *John Bunyan's 'Holy War' and London Non-Conformity*.

The Proceedings of The Wesley Historical Society, Vol. XL, 1975, Parts 1-2.

This Volume provides light upon a variety of matters of immediate Methodist concern. Perhaps the article of most interest of a wider readership is that by E. R. Bates on *John Wesley's First Preaching Sunday*.

LETTERS TO A PASTOR (1869)

In his study at Mare Street, Bethnal Green, the late John Gayfer one day showed me a bundle of old church correspondence. Should he throw it away? I advised him to keep it, and after his death, it eventually found its way to me.

It seems worthwhile printing a selection from this correspondence because it is rare in my experience to come across first-hand evidence of what people said to their ministers. And furthermore, the way in which ordinary Christian folk expressed themselves a century ago is now distinct enough from modern expression to warrant putting on show.

The occasion of the correspondence was a circular letter from the pastor, the Rev. H. Ollerenshaw, appealing for subscriptions for an organ and also for certain repairs at Bethnal Green Chapel. The majority of the church was in favour but a minority was not.

1 Aldgate
5th July 1869

My dear Sir,

In answer to your letter concerning the organ fund, I shall be glad to contribute what I can during the next twelve months. I cannot *promise* more than 30/- but if I can do more you may rely upon it I shall be very glad.

I hope we shall find comfort and benefit (*sic*) in the possession of an organ, something is wanted to make our singing "go" better.

Allow me to take this opportunity of expressing my thanks to you for your plain and outspoken preaching — it *must* do good. I trust that soon we shall see our chapel filled to overflowing. Certainly the neighbourhood is populous enough if the people can only be got in the mind to come.

Accept my very kind regards — and believe me

My dear Sir

Yours Sincerely

Geo. H. Sargeant

June 24 1849
105 Mile End Road

Dear Sir,

In answer to your letter respecting the organ and repairs fund I must say that I am and always have been opposed to instrumental music in the house of God but I am willing to forgo my own taste and feelings in this matter and if you think that an Organ will be a

means of inducing any of the surrounding inhabitants to come within the sound of the gospel I promise you a donation of 1/10/- and pray that you may have success and that great good may attend the work you have undertaken.

I am Sir
Yours very truly
Thos Gleed

29 George St.
Turin St.
Bethnal Green Rd.
June 24th 1869

Dear Pastor,

In reply to your appeal on behalf of our Church Organ — warming apparatus, and nessary (*sic*) alterations for the same. I shall be very happy to subscribe my mite to such an essential object which will I think tend to the comfort and attraction of all who worship in the church as well as to a much higher purpose, namely the glory of God and I beg to say that you may when it is required wait upon me for the sum of (1£) one pound. hoping that you will have no difficulty in raising the sum

I beg to remain
Yours Truly
D. Macklin

432 Bethnal Green Road
26 June 1869

Rev & Dr Sir,

In reply to your Circular Letter of the 9th Inst I beg to state that I shall feel it my duty to contribute £5/-/- to the fund when it is required although I do not quite agree with you as to the necessity for an organ or the good policy of so large an outlay under present circumstances.

I am Dear Sir
Yours Truly
B. Phillips

Prospect Cottage
Prospect Place
Victoria Park

Dear Sir,

In Reply to your application (*sic*) for a Chest of musical wind pipes I have been an unworthy attendant on your House of Prayer for more than 30 years, all that time without an organ and have felt content, to hear ower beautiful Hymnary sung and chanted by the

Human Voice to call my Heart to say amen but this being a Sensual age Truths must be spiced or they are hardly Received. We appear to think the Almighty has become fastidious in ower Churches. Prayer to the Throne of Grace must be with music steeped. All may be Right. i know i am old and dull. to me it seams Intoxication. but fossils should not block the way. the age will Progress, besides the Penalty i know, ower Poet has told me that if i have the credit of no music in my soul i am only fit for naughty Company, and am not to be Trusted. So least (*lest some*) from that Rank of my music loving friends should drum me out Five Pounds will i give towards your organ Trusting its strains may draw the masses in that ower House may be full and spirutally organised and with Harmony and Grace be filled and to you a sufficient Portion of God's Grace be given to draw instruct and lead their souls to Heaven

Yours Truly

T Reeder

PS that i was not at Home when the other day you called i am sorry. I am generally at Home except monday. at all other times at Home till 11 or after 5. I know your Power of appreciation. Call, I may show you something.

June 17 1869

Cambridge Heath N.E.
12A Gloucester Street

Revd & Dear Sir,

I scarecely like to offer so small a sum as Five Shillings from myself & my Daughter towards the amount specified in your Letter but my extremely limited circumstances will not permit us to offer more. As we have the Welfare of our Beloved Zion at Heart we hope that even the Widows mite will not be refused.

I remain

Dear Sir

Yours Respectfully

Anne Reading

Wednesday June 23rd/69

Dear Sir,

I am most happy to contribute my mite to the cause of God if 10 shillings is worthy of your notice dear Sir it is at your service. I am a youth only just begun the world and I serve un'er an earthly master as well as an Heavenly one but I have given my heart unto the Lord. Jesus is dearer to me than all the world and His blessing does rest upon me. I would gladly have given more liberally, did my circumstances permit. I have to depend upon God's help and my own

exertions. Dear Sir I am desirous of becoming a candidate for Church fellowship the next time you receive them, for the sanctuary is my delight. Tis there in sweet communion with Him I forget the cares of time and sense. Tis there I hear preached the story of the cross, the delight of my soul. May Jesus our best friend help me to press forward towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

I am

Yours & c.

Arthur Ambrose

The correspondence is now deposited at the U.R.C.H.S., Library.

JOHN H. TAYLOR

REVIEWS

John Foxe the Martyrologist, by Neville Williams, the 29th Lecture in the Dr. Williams's Trust Series: London, 1975, 40p.

This is a polished reassessment of the Life and Times of John Foxe and it further reinforces the current estimate of Foxe as a serious historian who, for all the strands of apologetic and propaganda in his writings, provided for posterity a treasury of valuable documents and records. Foxe is acclaimed in this lecture as 'one of the great worthies of Tudor England'.

Discovering Chapels and Meeting Houses, by David A. Barton, Shire Publications Ltd., 1975, 50p.

This is a beautifully-produced short guide to English non-conformist buildings. It deals with the styles and furnishings of buildings erected in the period from the seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries. It shows the historical background, the social strands, the economic resources and the theological trends which lay behind the erection of a very wide variety of buildings. It points out the buildings of special interest such as those connected with Wesley, but it also points out other buildings of lesser fame which ought to be visited. It also takes into its scope the Free Churches in Wales.

R.B.K.

A Century of Service: A History of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, 1875-1975, by Dr. Marcel Pradervand. St. Andrew's Press, 1975. £4.00.

On 21 July 1875 64 representatives from 21 Presbyterian and Reformed Churches met in the English Presbyterian College, London, and decided to form what is now known as the World Alliance of

Reformed Churches (Presbyterian and Congregational) — the oldest among the world confessional families. In this book Dr. Pradervand, General Secretary of the Alliance (1949-1970) gives an account of the 100 years of the Alliance's history. As secretary during its most expansive years, he was in constant contact with the member Churches in all parts of the world, and his knowledge of, and enthusiasm for the work of the Alliance shines through his record.

Dr. Pradervand has compressed the vast amount of material in the Genevan archives of the Alliance into 300 pages and at the same time he keeps the reader's interest throughout. He has successfully blended historical detail about the twenty General Councils and the people and Churches involved, with an account of the many concerns of the Alliance. Matters on the agenda of early councils have a surprisingly contemporary ring: the need of co-operation between Churches in missionary effort and for indigenous Churches to become independent of foreign aid as soon as possible; concern for the well-being of small or struggling European Churches, shown in a practical way by an early form of inter-church aid; the social responsibility of the Churches; the question of religious freedom and international peace; the interdependence of unity and mission.

Today the Alliance has 142 member churches in over 80 countries. At first the strength of the Alliance lay in Britain and North America. Not until its 16th meeting in 1948 did the General Council meet on the continent of Europe. In recent years the world-wide nature of the Alliance has been emphasised by the increasing number of member Churches in Africa and Asia. At Frankfurt (1964) one third of the official delegates represented the Younger Churches of the Alliance, and the Council of 1970 met in Nairobi, Kenya. Here the formal union of the International Congregational Council and the W.A.R.C. took place, two traditions growing out of the Reformation thus being brought together.

The history reads like a success story, as indeed was inevitable with such an enthusiastic supporter of the Alliance as its historian. And it can be granted that the Alliance has successfully avoided the danger of becoming an end in itself. It has made an effective contribution to bringing Churches together and promoting joint action with other confessional bodies in advancing the cause of Christ in the world.

A. G. MACLEOD