



*The  
Congregational Historical Circle Magazine*

Price:

Members 25p

Non-Members 35p

(including Postage)

The Congregational Historical Circle Magazine No.4.

May 1980

Secretary

Mr. John Bray,  
"Shangri-La"  
14 Pillar Crescent,  
Brixham, Torbay,  
S.Devon. TQ5 8LE.

Editor

Rev. Trevor Watts,  
"Wayside",  
31 Woodfield Road,  
Shrewsbury, Salop.

Treasurer

Mr. David Morrell,  
66 Golden Park Avenue,  
Torquay, Devon. TQ2 8LS.

---

CONTENTS. Editorial; From the Secretary; Items from The Postbag; Our Congregational Heritage; Job Orton 1717-83 by Rev. Trevor Watts; Church Treasures by Mr. C.J. Stell; Records Discovered: Cuckfield (Sussex); Congregational Church by Mr. Neil Caplan, M.A.; The Story of our Hymns by Mr. R.J. Bray; Reviews; Our Contemporaries.

---

EDITORIAL I am grateful to those who have supplied material for this issue of the C.H.C. Magazine. Don't please withhold straw from the brickmaker. I had hoped to have a contribution from our friends in the E.F.C.C. but am assured that this is in hand.

Readers of Congregational News will have read of the passing of Mr. Alan H. Morris and wife in Dec. His article on Swan Hill records etc. has stirred Mr. Stell of the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments and Mr. Neil Caplan to respond. I have added an article on Job Orton to help fill space.

Readers will be interested to read Mr. John Wilcox's article in Congregational News for March/April 1980. We extend our congratulations to the Rev. Alan Argent, whose lecture to the Annual Meeting of the C.H.C. in Norwich appeared in our last issue, on being awarded his Master of Theology from the University of London.

His subject being "Christian Doctrine in the 20th Century".

oOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOo

FROM THE SECRETARY May I bring to the attention of members a number of important items as follows:

I. ANNUAL MEETING 1980: This will be held at the

Congregational Federation Annual Assembly which is to be held at the Bristol Methodist Mission, Central Hall Old Market Street, Bristol on Sat. 10th May 1980. This will commence at 11.00am and the A.G.M. of the History Circle will be held in the Hall of Memories during the dinner hour commencing at approx. 12.45pm. The Agenda for this meeting will be as follows:-

1. Opening Remarks.
2. Apologies for absence.
3. Previous Years Minutes, reading and approval.
4. Secretaries Comments.
5. Treasurers Report.
6. Appointment of Committee 1980/81.
7. At this point the Meeting will be opened to anyone from the Assembly to come along and Mr. John Wilcox of the Cong. Fed. and until recently one of the representatives on the Memorial Hall Trustees Sub-Committee concerned with the future of the Memorial Hall Library will address the meeting. The Meeting then will be open for discussion.
8. Any Other Business.
9. Date and Venue of next Meeting.

At the Annual General Meeting of the Cong. History Circle this year an important resolution regarding the finances of the Circle will be put to the Meeting by the Treasurer as follows:

"It is hereby resolved that the membership fee for the period ending December 31st 1980 will be 50p for U. K. Members and 75p for overseas members and that from January 1st 1981 the Annual Fee will be £1.00 for U.K. Members and £1.50 for overseas members. Back copies of the magazine will be available as stocks permit at 50p per copy including postage & packing"

This will implement the decision of last years meeting to increase the membership fee to £1.00 per annum from this year & change over the Annual Financial Year Ending to December 31st each year so that Accounts can be audited & got ready every year for the A.G.M. In addition the motion will introduce an overseas membership fee as with the increasing amount of overseas business being dealt with by the Circle & with Overseas postage rates above those of the U.K. rates a higher membership fee is necessary in order that we meet our

costs on this. In addition it is intended to circulate with the December 1980 C.H.C. Magazine forms so that subscriptions to the C.H.C. can be paid direct through members banks if required. The existing method of payment will still be available, if required.

## 2. INTERNATIONAL CONGREGATIONAL FELLOWSHIP

CONFERENCE - INTEREST EVENING - This event will be held at the University College of North Wales, Bangor, North Wales from 8th - 12th July 1981 & we have been invited as a Circle to help arrange some History Interest Evenings at this event in conjunction with Dr. Arvel Steece (American Cong. Churches) & Rev. Dafydd Wyn Williams (Union of Welsh Independents). I would greatly appreciate any views that readers may have regarding what might be prepared for this event in the forms of displays, lectures, site visits etc. It is hoped that we shall have a joint display stand for magazine sales, literature display etc. with the other Cong. History Societies represented at the Conference.

3. MEMORIAL HALL AND LIBRARY, LONDON. - Since the last magazine five basic proposals have been suggested regarding rehousing the library. These are:-

- (a) To build an extension over the hall at Westminster Chapel.
- (b) To site the library at Nottingham as part of a new Congregational Centre. This would have left microfilmed copies of the books and the very valuable books in the library at the present site at Memorial Hall.
- (c) A Plan to utilise part of the premises of Islington Chapel, London to house the library.
- (d) A removal of the library to either the Evangelical Library or Dr. Williams Library in London.

At the Annual General Meeting of the Memorial Hall Trustees held on Fri. 11th April 1980, it was decided that the removal to Nottingham or the provinces was not feasible as was removal to either the Evangelical Library or to, Islington Chapel, so basically now three schemes remain namely removal of the library to new premises over Westminster Chapel, London; removal to Dr. Williams Library or for the library to stay where it is at Memorial Hall. Certainly the library will

now remain in London however. Mr. John Wilcox will be addressing our Annual General Meeting at Bristol on this matter so it is essential that as many members as possible try and attend this important meeting. The representatives on the Memorial Hall Committee would greatly appreciate our views.

Also decided at the Memorial Hall A.G.M. was a decision to carry on with cataloguing the library contents & the fact that Mr. David Watson (one of our History Circle Members) will be replacing Mr. John Wilcox on the sub-committee of three looking into the plans to re-house the library.

PUBLICITY - A new leaflet giving up to date details of the Circle and incorporating a membership application form has now been produced by the Circle. If you would like copies to send to your friends or if you would like a copy sent to a friend the Secretary would like to hear from you.

Congregational History Circle literature and magazines etc. will be on display at the Congregational Federation Assembly at Bristol on Sat. 10th May and we are to have a special stall at the E.F.C.C. Annual General Meeting to be held at Westminster Chapel on Sat. 17th May 1980. Why not come along and see us?

A new reprint of Magazine No. 1. has recently been produced because of popular demand & copies of magazines No. 2. and 3 will shortly be produced. Copies are available from the Secretary at 50p each copy inclusive of postage and packing.

Distribution of this magazine to date has been - Ordinary Membership 87 (79); Exchanges with other History Societies and Denominations 24 (20); Overseas Contacts and Members 33 (15); Colleges and Libraries 6 (6) making a total of 120.

FROM THE POSTBAG 1. The U.R.C. History Society will be holding a Summer School at the Bristol Baptist College from Friday Evening 12th September 1980 to Sat. 13th September 1980. The lecturers for the main sessions will be Dr. Geoffrey Nuttall on "Methodism and the Older Dissent" and Dr. John Kent on some aspect of Nineteenth Century Nonconformity. Dr. John Huxtable will preach at the Sunday Morning service in Whitfields Tabernacle and there will be talks on the religious



history of Bristol and two alternative excursions. The first will be on foot, visiting Wesleys New Room, Lewins Mead Chapel and many other places of interest and the second will be by car visiting Trinity Chapel, Bath and Monk's Chapel. It is understood that accommodation is already full at the college but if you would like to go along as a day visitor contact Mr. David E. Evans, 17 Kingshill Park, Dursley, Gloucestershire, GL11 4DG for full details.

2. Since the death of Rev. Dr. Maldwyn Edwards (Methodist) the manuscript of his last book has remained unpublished. In it he traces John Wesley's relationship with the women in his life, from his mother to Elizabeth Ritchie who closed his eyes in death.

John Wesley was an eligible and attractive man. Why then did his wife leave him within a few years of marriage? Why did his brother, Charles, take Grace Murray away from him and marry her to someone else? What happened between him and Sophy Hopkey in Georgia? Did his mother's influence remain so strong that he could not be easy with anyone else? These questions & many others, Dr. Edwards answers in his book.

This book as proposed is the story of a human Wesley. The book supplies material for addresses or discussion groups. Dr. Edwards was a scholar who knew how to be interesting and who was a noted preacher in Methodist Circles and a past President of the World (and British) Wesley Historical Societies as well as a past President of the Methodist Conference. If support is sufficient it is proposed to publish this book to be available by the Methodist Conference in June 1980. Likely cost will be about £2.85. If you are interested in obtaining a copy please contact Rev. John Banks, M.A., Central Hall, Oldham Street, Manchester, M.1. 1JT. for full details.

3. Venues and dates for the "Change and Decay - The Future of our Churches" Exhibition for the remainder of 1981 are as follows :-

April 26th - 31st May - Newark Museum  
May 31st - June 30th - Bradford Museum  
July/August - Shrewsbury  
Aug. 30th - Oct. 13th - St. Boniface Church, Crediton,  
Devon.

October 13<sup>th</sup> - Nov. 30<sup>th</sup> Chelmsford & Essex Museum.  
 November 30<sup>th</sup> - January 15<sup>th</sup> 1981 Castle Museum,  
 Nottingham.

If you can get along to see this interesting exhibition please do.

4. Mr. W.J. Chapman of 36 Westbourne Range, Manchester M18 7LQ (Tel: 061-223-5769) would like to hear from fellow Circle Members of a good history book on Congregationalism and particularly dealing with Lancashire and Cheshire.

R. J. Bray.

00000000000000000000

OUR CONGREGATIONAL HERITAGE - Job Orton 1717-1783.

Job was born to Job and Mary Orton on the 4<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1717. According to Hulbert's History of Shrewsbury they lived near to site of the Birmingham Dudley Bank; and somewhere opposite the Unitarian Church where the Ortons were in business. His mother was descended from William Perkins an Elizabethan Puritan. Hulbert says that Orton 'was nourished in the lap of piety and honest integrity'. Following the advice of his mother he never married.

Job was sent at an early age to the Free School in Shrewsbury remaining there until 1733 when he was sent to the academy run by Charles Owen at Warrington. After one year he went to assist the Presbyterian Minister at Whitchurch, Salop. The following year on the advice of Dr. Isaac Watts he went as student and assistant to Dr. Philip Doddridge at the celebrated academy at Northampton. During his seven years there he made such an impression as tutor and scholar that Doddridge entertained the hope of having Orton as his successor in the academy. During this period he preached in the dissenting Churches of the County and assisted Doddridge at the monthly communion services at Northampton.

Doddridge's wish was not granted of having Orton as his successor for in 1741 the two dissenting congregations in his home town sent him a 'call' with a view to uniting the Presbyterian and Independent congregations, & so follow other parts of the kingdom in the so called 'Happy Union' movement of unity between these two denominations.

Orton had received many pressing invitations from Churches including one from Salters Hall, but the prospect of returning home induced him to accept the invitation from Shrewsbury. Very conveniently for the furtherance of this project, it would appear that John Dobson of the Independent congregation was vacating his pulpit in favour of that in the Walsall congregation, and the death of Charles Berry had similarly left a vacancy in the Presbyterian fold. Orton settled in his new charge in 1741, caring certainly for the larger Presbyterian body and increasingly the lesser Independent body of which his father was a member. The fact that Orton did not accept Presbyterian Ordination until 1745 suggests that some in the congregation had scruples about the wisdom of the 'union'. Orton's father died a little after his returning home and so he task of caring for the family business as well as failing health, led to the appointment of assistants, Francis Boulton until 1745, Moss Carter until his death in 1747, James Founes followed in the assistantship and remained a true help and friend of Orton until the 'Happy Union' broke up in 1765, and after.

When Job Orton was ordained, preaching on that occasion was led by Philip Henry, father of Matthew Henry. Yet it did not take place until four years after his coming to the charge. The regard for the views of the minority and the sensibilities of those wishing to remain Independent must have weighed and caused the delay, and when the 'Happy Union' terminator Orton gave his support to the Independents when they settled in their new chapel at Swan Hill in 1766.

The split was occasioned by Orton's retirement when James Founes was to become Pastor and enquiries were made for an assistant. It would appear that a certain Benjamin Stapp, a Warrington student, gained the support of the Trustees who acted under the Old Presbyterian system, and although they were a small minority as compared with the congregation carried the day as they only had the right to vote. The Independents objected, insisting that the congregation should be consulted. This was not allowed & so the end came to the by then 'unhappy union'.



The event in 1765 as they effected Congregation-  
alists were quite different to those in 1972 under  
the U.R.C. Bill, when Continuing Congregational  
Churches with drew from the proposed 'union' with  
their right and properties intact. What happened in  
Shrewsbury was very similar to what was taking place  
all over the country during those years. The real com-  
plaint went even deeper, not only was it a question  
of the nature of church Government but also one of  
the doctrines. Benjamin Stapp was influenced by the  
Arian and radical teachings of Priestly & others who  
were to become Unitarians, it was this tendency which  
was in vogue that offended the conventional and evan-  
gelical congregation ministered to by Orton.

A Mr. Gounsell put a Malthouse at the disposal of  
the dissenters and with Job Orton's blessing plans  
were made for a new chapel at Swan Hill. Also on his  
advice Robert Gentleman doubtless one of Orton's pup-  
ils was appointed Minister with Orton on an honorary  
position. When the new chapel opened in 1767 a tablet  
was erected bearing words that reflected the troubles  
recently experienced in the matter of appointing of a  
minister.

'This Church was erected in the year 1767  
For the public worship of God,  
And in defence of the rights of minorities  
In Protestant dissenting congregations  
To choose their own ministers.

The years between 1741 and 1765 laid the foundations  
of Ortons importance as - to use his word for minist-  
ers - as a divine and author. Yet for all his writing  
he left very little by way of an autobiography. We are  
indebted to Andrew Kippis for a bare outline pres-  
erved after Orton which is set out at the beginn-  
ing of 'The Practical Works of Job Orton' published  
posthumously in 1820. Those were years of considerable  
literary activity, with Orton having the good fortune  
to have the publishers Eddowes among his congregation.  
He published over 14 books including sermons and dis-  
courses as was the custom at the time. In fact he  
must be Shrewsbury's most prolific author until Charles  
Darwin in the following century.

His first book was "A Summary of Doctrinal and Pra-  
ctical Religion" published anonymously in 1749, and  
the funeral sermon in memory of Dr. Philip Doddridge  
who died in 1751 in Lisbon, and who had spent a month

at Ortons home presumably on his way to recuperate in Portugal. Speaking of the work connected with writing the biography of Doddridge he said, "it almost broke my constitution". Many other works flowed from his pen. The British Museum catalogue takes three columns to list his works and other works he edited.

His 'letter to a young Clergyman' present us with a picture of a learned Independent divine in his relations with clergyman of the Church of England. The letter was written from Kidderminster where Orton was living in retirement, to Thomas Stedman, curate at Little and Great Cheverell in Wiltshire. In the first letter he wishes Stedman well in his new living, and in reply no doubt to questions sent, Orton speaks of the difficulty of preparing two sermons each Lord's Day and suggests that one, take the form of a comment on the Gospel or the Epistle for the day. "Use" says he, "long texts and short sermons, that is exposition. In letter two he speaks of the usefulness of catechising, 'I find it difficult to get people to open their minds' 'There is no judiciously suiting and fitting remedies without knowing the disease' .... and this can only be known from themselves". On the question of the pluralities Orton writes as a true dissenter, 'I have no room for pluralities, but you're so circumstanced, that I see no material objection to your accepting the Curacy of Great as well as Little Cheverell'. He then discusses parish duties, and warns against having funeral services late in the day. 'Have funerals early. Last night in the midst of a thick snow storm and severe frost, our Vicar and his curate were burying two corpses after 5.0'clock by candlelight. This ought not to be endured.'

In the eighth letter, Orton acknowledges a letter received and that with added pleasure because of the quality "of shorthand used in it". This practice of using shorthand, or quick writing as it was then called was common amongst Ministers in the 19th Century, and was the system by Jeremy Rich revised by Philip Doddridge for the benefit amongst others of his pupils at the Northampton Academy. Speaking of its usefulness to preachers and therefore anticipating its commercial use, Orton comments, 'it added ten years

to my life.' ) speaks in every letter of reading and frequently writes of a parcel of books being on the way to young Stedman. On this occasion he sends his own 'Life of Philip Doddridge' adding, 'I wish his life be useful to you. It almost broke my constitution'.

The ninth letter commends the life of a country parson. It shows his dislike of city life, he was a sort of recluse, and adds "rural ministry will make a more respectable showing in that day which is to come. It is enough that we work where God has placed us, and on preaching says, that someone told Bishop Latimer that he did no good by preaching and was giving it up. 'That is weak talk' said Latimer, 'Why do you give it up?' (Because no good is done by it' was the reply. 'That brother is a very naughty reason. What good did our great Master do? Who hath believed our report' was the comment of Latimer that Orton commends to young Stedman. Concluding the letter with a reference to William Perkins the Elizabethan Puritan his ancestor on his mother's side.

In letter I3 reference is made to Stedman's decision to have nothing to do with a certain troublesome Mr. X, Orton quotes Matthew 10 'Beware of men', for 'there is no mending wrong heads, especially when they are influenced by what they think a zeal for God'. James Stonehouse the Vicar Stedman served had just published a little book of prayers and the sacrament to be distributed in the parish and drawn this comment from Orton, 'beware of mere forms, just reading without seriousness, and taking pains to impress the sentiments in the heart' Orton comments on the divide between youth and age, "there is little hope of doing any good upon old sinners, especially formalists. Bend your spiritual attention to the rising generation, where you will find the heart more impressionable". Commenting on the chill winds and his frequent illness, he mentions the 'dullness of the winter' and expressed a wish to be about again and 'see the human faces divine'. There are consolations however, 'But I take pleasure in my books,... I commune mostly with the dead'.

Those written in the years between 1767 & 1783, when he died, present us with a picture of a divine who kept alight the flame of devotion in his own heart & encouraged younger men to do likewise. Letter I4 tells us, 'I have long been very weak & have no strength to write anything' yet we see in that year 1774, Orton had

published a little book on "Christian Zeal". It was a reply to the wave of Liberationism that was sweeping the country. He makes no onslaught upon it but makes a plea for a true 'Christian Zeal' and piety. Again his young correspondent complains of wayward members in his congregation. Orton consoles, 'but what minister has not such under his care? Young ministers often set out with expectations set too high and expect more than they are likely to find.. Old Adam will be too hard for young Melancthon". Dr. Stonehouse has been visiting his Curate and Parish - one of his sinecures - and may have unruffled young Stedman. Orton cares not to say anything about his old friend Stonehouse, but adds, 'I wish Dr. Stonehouse would ride on horseback every dry day, as I do".

There are hints of what is taking place in the Old Chapel from which he had led the Independents in 1765, where a new form of liturgy was being introduced, but he is on good terms with his old friend Founes the minister, and things are going well at the New Chapel in Swan Hill. He frequently visits Benjamin Fawcett though a prominent preacher is beset with many troubles. His letter breathes concern for the work of God and the well being of his servants.

Of his many books the 'Life of Philip Doddridge' whose hymns we sing was perhaps Orton's greatest work. It is said to have been something new in biographies. These were often mere dolops of eloquence and rhetorical flights concentrated on the piety of learning the subject. Orton strives to show the motives and the inwardness of the man himself. In his preface to the book which was published at the time of the rift at Shrewsbury in 1765-6 he wrote 'My purpose is to set before the world...what appears to me to be the most instructive in Dr. Doddridges life and character. I could have embellished it with the beauties of description and language, and it would have been more agreeable to the modern taste, but I am convinced that it is the more private part of a mans character from which we can expect the greatest benefit;

Orton is describing a thinker who spanned the chasm between the radicalism which attracted so many of the dissenters and, the keen evangelicalism so many of them were to display later in anticipation of the Evangelical Revival sometimes and in appreciation of it at others. Doddridge had bridged these two great



movements in English History. Dr. R. Tudur Jones says, 'Its careful & minute spiritual analysis makes it the last flowering of the great tradition of the Puritan soul physicians'. The book presents a picture of a divine who stands in the foremost rank of that vast array of Independents who have contributed so much to theology, hymnology and history.

Ortons gifts were all dedicated to the task of being a christian minister. The grace of God was sufficient for every human need. The grace and the love of God in Christ must be the object of every sermon. In one of his letters he holds out the example of one minister who died leaving behind 200 unused sermons prepared ready for delivery. He worked while it was day. In preparation for his own demise, he instructed 'I desire that they (at the funeral service presumably) say nothing of me, but exhibit the flory of the gospel & the honour of the Christian ministry...all my time & studies were directed in that way & I wish that they esteem their present pastors highly in love for their works sake & love one another.

He gave instructions that Joseph Founes minister of the Old Chapel in Shrewsbury, later & now Unitarian, preach on the text I. Timothy I:II-12, 'I think Jesus Christ our Lord he hath found me faithful & for putting me into the ministry'. Memorial Services were held at the Old & New Chapels. Founes sermon appeared entitled 'The Glory of the Gospel'. He was buried according to his wish near the grave of John Bryan in Old St. Chads Churchyard on the 19th July 1783. Young Stedman was by this time Vicar of Shrewsbury and Stonehouse wrote to his former curate, 'you did prudently to preach on that text at St. Chads...It was proper piece of respect..the clause you sent me of his will is like himself... He has left Mrs. Holland, (widow of a Presbyterian Minister who had succeeded Colhurst at Whitchurch where Orton had served as tutor in the early years) & housekeeper to Orton a legacy valued at £500 for services over many years.

The Editor.

oOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOo

RECORDS DISCOVERED: CUCKFIELD (SUSSEX) CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

---

I was fascinated by the article in Magazine No.3. about the splendid records of the Swan Hill Cong. Church at Shrewsbury: if only other Cong. Churches had shown the



same care for old records! Yet even today it is not always too late to set about trying to safeguard early records because a real search of old cupboards & boxes could bring to light treasures. This is not a pious hope because when the Cuckfield URC Church was closed last Spring, I was able to make such a search & found treasure indeed (as a Cong. lay preacher, I had often led services for this URC Church & wondered what might be in its old deed boxes). These treasures are described below & it is hoped that these records will be deposited with the West Sussex County Record Office before long & thus find safe & expert keeping while being readily accessible to all who are interested in the history of Dissent.

The Independent (Ebenezer) Chapel at Cuckfield was formally constituted as a Cong. Church in July 1832 when six members subscribed to the Church Covenant & Rules which had been drawn up in great detail by the minister, the Rev. John Owen. But there had been an Independent Congregation meeting for public worship for a good many years before this, thanks to the work of Stephen Wood of Birghton with help from Cong. Churches in Brighton & Lindfield & the Countess of Huntingdon Chapel at Ote Hall, Wivelsfield (led by its distinguished minister, the Rev. Thomas Jones). Stephen Wood was a successful & wealthy builder & - in modern parlance - developer who was a generous benefactor of several Independent/Cong. Churches in Sussex. In Dec. 1820, there was a Toleration Act Registration for public worship:

'In a new-erected building situate in Cuckfield belonging to Mr. Stephen Wood.'

The first Chapel building proper was built in 1828 on a site given by Stephen Wood.

The other records of the Church are:

1. First Church Book for 1832-50; of great significance for it contains the lengthy Covenant & set of Church Rules of 1832.
2. Succeeding Church Books in unbroken sequence from 1850 to 1979.
3. Church Committee Books for most of the period 1893 to 1942.
4. Registers of Attendance at the Lord's Table in continuous series from 1869 to 1974.

5. Registers ( ) Baptisms, Marriages & Burials in continuous series from 1904 to 1977.
  6. Various Church Accounts Books, mostly for the period 1909 to 1978.
  7. Minute Book of the Sunday School from 1837 to 1892.
  8. A large Album containing a fascinating miscellany of old photographs, many press cuttings & some holograph letters - mostly for c. 1860-90.
  9. Minute Book of the Management Committee of the Cuckfield British School from its foundation in 1852 until its absorption in the State system in 1903.
- The Minute Book for the British School is of outstanding importance because this provides so much information about the financing & work of the school which was founded by the Congregational Church. The British School played a large part in public education in the large parish of Cuckfield. It reflects in a vivid way the great national debate over the issue of State intervention in education, including the strong views of many Dissenters about the use of public funds for 'sectarian' schools. I have noted some of the highlights in short articles in the Cuckfield Parish Magazine & I hope that a fuller account will be published during 1980 in the Sussex Genealogist & Local Historian. So many people today know nothing whatever about the tremendous part played in public education by the Congregational Churches of the nineteenth century, especially before 1870 when the State first stepped in under the Elementary Education Act.

I hope very much that this little paper will help to spur on members of the C.H.C. to try to track down similar records and especially to search for records of the British Schools sponsored by Congregational Churches.

N. CAPLAN, M.A.

oOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOo

Reginald W Cleaves: CONGREGATIONALISM 1960-1976 -  
THE STORY OF THE FEDERATION (John Penry Press '77)

From the Office: 13, Canal St, Nottingham, Price £1.25  
Postage Extra.

Reading this excellent account of events causes two questions: Why did the URC arise? Why did congregationalism nevertheless continue? Both questions are important.

The advantages of centralization have not, in the present century, been questioned until recently. Multinational companies have dwarfed the huge commercial aggregations of nationalised industries. The corner shop & the locally-governed co-op have alike declined before the supermarket chain. The individual school has been organised for its material requirements as a subdivision of the local education authority's domain, & the classroom teacher has been increasingly visited by advisers & organizers.

It was inevitable that pressures arise for parallel developments in congregationalism. Local church meetings make mistakes; let us, then, transfer their powers to smaller groups at the centre, groups of experts. Moreover, in this complex & discouraging world, a local church will hand over its autonomy with a sigh of relief; its affairs will now be overseen by the experts; &, if things do go wrong it will not be our fault, but the experts' fault!

That was one kind of pressure. There were others. The present age may be the age of the common man, but it is also the age of the expert. The vicar has been trained for his job, so he gets on with it, with a minimum prescribed consultation with his parishioners. (It's true that the Church of England has made considerable strides towards more congregational participation, but perhaps not much is known of this amongst their non-conformist neighbours!) So let us admit that we have been over-zealous in our enthusiasm for the priesthood of all believers. Let us demonstrate this by giving the parson a clearly defined superior role - he alone in normal circumstances shall preside at communion.

There is a similar case amongst laymen. Let us invent a visible order of elders, ordained & separated for ever (for our care in choosing will ensure that no elder ever falls from grace) from the common herd.

Now what went wrong? Or, to put it another way, what must be done by congregationalists to ensure that similar - or other - pressures do not produce some other URC to which we or our successors will succumb? Two things. First, we must

ensure that the Federation & the EFCC do not develop along centralized lines. Second, we must see that all members of all our congregations are brought up to value the special attributes of congregationalism. As we are congregationalists, & have parted from our friends who no longer value those attributes, it is inevitable that the peculiarities of congregationalism will be at the backs of our minds as we preach & speak. But let us also bring them to the front.

Cleaves' book dwells especially upon the autonomy of the local church; & indeed that is our starting point. But in his account of the growth & development of the Federation, he gives space to the Ten Points for Unity (I25ff) issued over the signatures of congregationalists & others, in answer to the Ten Propositions of the Churches Unity Commission. Many of us would start here. I am a congregationalist because I believe that the Holy Spirit works where two or three are gathered under the Lordship of Christ.

Varieties of gifts are God-given and must not fractionate the body of the church. We value a trained ministry, but we do not have a priesthood-or, rather, we do not have a laity. This point arises several times in Cleaves' story (eg p30). It lay behind two of the three major reasons for the collapse of the 'Happy Union' of presbyterians & congregationalists in the early years of the eighteenth century. The third reason was interesting, but does not seem to feature in the events related by Cleaves. It was doctrinal in essence. Presbyterians believe in rules; congregationalists don't. This is obviously so if we are thinking of how individual churches run. But it is an outcome of an emphasis on the ultimate uselessness of rules of all kinds. We are saved by freely given, undeserved Grace. Do all our people know this? Or do many of them rather suppose that God is more likely to accept us if we manage to live decently? I fear so. Having, however, thus seen that keeping rules is no help to salvation, we see that it is no use for a church, & we go on to realise that Christian rule-keeping is a poor travesty of the free response to the living Christ in the heart which is the essence of the Gospel.



This we must teach & emphasize—and see the joy of our hearers as they, too, enter into the glorious congregational heritage...

Ashley Smith

oOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOo

A Calander of the Correspondence of Philip Doddridge  
(1702 - 1751) by Dr. Geoffrey F. Nuttall.

Historical MSS Commission H.M.S.O. price £40 1979.  
420 pp. Dr. Nuttall has once more placed us in his debt with this truly monumental work of research and collation. The bulk of the letters were at New College others are scattered around the country. They are letters to and from Dr. Doddridge over 1700 in all, each is summarised. They trace Doddridge's youth, love adventures, marriage—and what a wonderful help-mate was Mercy - and his contacts with the great Independent of the century.

A 26p introduction to Philip Doddridge introduces the letters. The book is about the size of the Congregational Prize so is not bulky as the price would suggest. I don't propose to buy, but have myself borrowed from the local library. I suggest this course to the reader, with admiring thanks to Dr. Nuttall.

T. Watts.

oOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOo

Our Contemporaries

Baptist Quarterly xxviii (January 1980) No.5.  
includes an interesting article By Dr. L.G. Champion on 'Evangelical Calvinism and the Structures of Baptist Church Life.' Agreeing that the all-important initial influence was that of the American congregational pastor Jonathan Edwards, Dr. Champion traces the progress in the (Particular) Baptist denomination of the new understanding of Calvinism. No doubt similar studies could be made of congregationalism, the London Missionary Society and the various home evangelisation efforts which lay behind the development of congregational unions.

oOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOo

History of Education vol. 8. no. 4  
(December 1979)



opens with an article in which Dr. Feingold discusses Professor Jordan's views on the importance of Puritan influence in establishing patterns of charitable giving in sixteenth and seventeenth century England.

oOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOo

Cofiadur, No. 44, 1979, journal of the Union of Welsh Independents historical society. Contains an appreciation by its editor Rev. Dafydd Wyn William, Llwyn Llinos, Bodedetn. Ynys Mon, (Anglesey), N. Wales of the late Rev. Evan Lewis Evans, M.A., D.Th second editor of Cofiadur who a leading historian, author and doyen on Assembly platforms. His leading work was that on the Mysticism of Jacob Boehme on Puritanism and Morgan Llwyd The Editor of the CH Circle has the lecture delivered at the Historical Society in 1779 on William Wroth 1570-1641, the father of Welsh Nonconformity. The industrious editor has given us in print a copy of a booklet 26pp, written by Anglican zealots who seek to contain the growth of dissent in Anglesey in the 18th century.

T. Watts.

oOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOo

The Stories of our Hymns in the Congregational Praise Hymn No. 479. My Faith looks up to Thee

Dr. Ray Palmer, the writer of these words began his life working as a clerk in a dry goods store, & ending it as a much loved pastor of the Congregational Church America, a learned Doctor of Divinity and a famous hymn writer. Number 479 in Congregational Praise is but one of his best known and the best loved of the hymns that he wrote.

From being a clerk in a dry goods store he passed to an academy and then to Yale College where he took his degree in 1830, at the age of 21. After leaving college he took a teaching appointment and it was during this period that he wrote his first and finest hymn Number 479. He said of its composition "I gave form to what I felt, by writing, with very little effort these stanzas. I recollect I wrote them with very tender emotion, and ended the last line with tears", the last line reading;-

Oh bear me safe above -

A ransomed soul.

Even then the hymn might never have been published as Mr. Palmer placed the words of the hymn in his pocket book and carried it around with him for some time until one day in Boston he met Dr. Lowell Mason who was then compiling, in conjunction with Dr. T. Hastings, a new hymn book entitled Spiritual Songs for Social Worship.

Dr. Mason asked Mr. Palmer if he has some hymns to contribute to his new book whereon Mr. Palmer produced his manuscript from his pocket book & handed it to Mr. Palmer. On reaching home Dr. Mason was so impressed with the verses that he wrote for it the well known tune called "Olivet" to which the tune is often sung. Although not at first being widely acclaimed the hymn has found its way into many countries and hymn books and has been translated into many languages.

Probably the second best hymn whose writing can be attributed to Dr. Palmer and which appears in the Congregational Praise Hymn Book in Number 188 Jesus these eyes have never seen' which was composed in response to a request for contributions to a new book. The author in writing to the editor of the Hymnal Companion said of it "It was introduced into England in 1840, has been translated into other languages, and has been referred to as one of the last hymns that dying saints have sung, or desired to hear. It has been a comfort to Christian hearts, doubtless chiefly because it expresses in a simple way that act which is most central in all Christian life - the act of trust in Atoning Lamb".

N.B. Dr. Mason is supposed to have met Mr. Palmer in the street after reading the hymn and exclaimed "Mr. Palmer, you may live for many years and do many good things, but I think you will be best known to posterity as the author of "My faith looks up to Thee".

R. J. BRAY

Church Treasures

The list of records and relics belonging to Swan Hill, Shrewsbury (CHC Magazine 3) is a timely reminder of the rich variety of the hardware of history which often by chance rather than design, now forms an important part of our nonconformist heritage. Of particular interest is Communion Plate: with the introduction of individual glasses about 30 years ago by Dr. J. H. Jowett of Birmingham, an innovation much favoured by his own Congregational denomination, cups and flagons have been disposed of an unfashionable pewter plates replaced by valueless though shiny dishes or even miniature plates more appropriate to a doll's house.

Swan Hill is fortunate in retaining its older vessels which, although not of particularly high quality, deserve to be more correctly listed. These which I inspected through the kindness of our Editor, the present Minister, comprise: Cups, pair, silver, plain bowl with everted rim, hollow stem with central band and moulded base with inscription below 'SWAN HILL CHAPEL' added in late 19th century, London 1777-3 maker T.W. for Thomas Wallis of Little Brittain, London, height 7 5/8 in.; Flagon, Sheffield plate, tall cylindrical body with domed lid, anthemion thumb-rest, handle and moulded base, no spout, later inscription below as on cups, mark of crossed arrows on base, c.1840, height 13 1/2 in; Plates, five, pewter, marked below N M for ? New Meeting, touch of an engrailed chevron between three leopards' heads, and a 'LONDON' label, diam. 9 1/2 in. The name of the pewterer is unknown, two similarly marked plates belong to Unitarians in Stockport, and Cotterell, Old Pewter its makers and marks (1929), illustrates

the touch (No. 6046) and suggests that, in spite of the 'London' mark which some provincial pewterers did not scruple to adopt, the maker may have been based in - ? 'Birmingham or Bewdley: c.1770', a date which accords with the revised date of the cups and is not too distant from the opening of the meeting-house in 1767. It may here be noted that the side

wall of that building still remains in spite of the 1868 rebuilding and that a small faded photograph of the former front is also amongst the church treasures.

Other churches of the FEDERATION possessing interesting communion plate include Carlisle (pair of late 18th-Century Sheffield plate cups), Chinley (cup of 1637, one of the earliest pieces of nonconformist plate though not of course made for that purpose). Norwich Old Meeting (very fine set of six large cups of 1757) and Trudoxhill (cup 1803). Of the FELLOWSHIP, Briston and Guestwick possesses two small delicately embossed cups of 1658 and two larger cups of 1683 and 1689; while the Congregational College, Manchester has in its care the plate from Great George Street, Liverpool, Grosvenor Street and Zion Chapels, Manchester, and an unusual 'coconut cup' with silver mountings said to have belonged to Oliver Heywood. Any further information on this or of the existence of other items of plate would be most welcome and may be sent to the writer, Mr. C. F. STELL, Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, 23 Savile Row, London, W1X 1AB.

C. F. STELL

oOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOoOo

Typed, Duplicated and collated by:

Q.P. PRINTING SERVICES,  
81, The Terrace, Torquay, S. Devon.  
Telephone: Torquay (0803) 212458



# ***Clifton Books***

We buy General Second Hand Books and particularly those on English Congregationalism and the history of Dissent.

We issue regular Catalogues. Please send now for the current list.

Contact: J. R. HODGKINS B.Sc.(Econ)  
25 Clarence Street Southend  
Essex.

Telephone: 0702 331004 (shop)  
0702 40537 (home)

