

This thesis is entirely the product of my own work except where otherwise acknowledged.

Richard Fenwick

This thesis has never been submitted in full or in part for any degree either previously or concurrently with this submission.

Richard Fenwick

S U M M A R Y

On 31 August 1863 the Free Church of England was registered in the High Court of Chancery, its roots having been in Devon during the 1840s. Largely reacting to the Puseyite sympathies of Bishop Phillpotts of Exeter, "Free" liturgical churches were established in association with the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion, controversy being exacerbated by Phillpotts' prosecution of James Shore, Curate of Totnes. But whilst the Connexion moved towards Congregationalism, in 1876 a separated and far-spreading FCE received episcopal orders from the American Anglican secession, the Reformed Episcopal Church, later causing the Established Church many problems.

Two secessions followed - the Reformed Episcopal Church (UK), and the Reformed Church of England. The politics and lives of the three resulting Churches were labyrinthine. Complications included the falls of Bishops Gregg (RCE) and Richardson (REC), after which both denominations united in 1894. The path to unity between the FCE and the REC (UK) in 1927 was also fraught, the REC (UK) nearly moving to Anglicanism in 1920. Meanwhile, the new century saw public indifference to theological "issues", and cataclysmic changes from the Great War.

A survey from 1927 to 1993 identifies leadership problems and decline through the 1950s and 1960s; however, new opportunities are offered through unity discussions with the Established Church. Finally, a chapter of Case Studies analyses the mercurial nature of the newly-founded churches in the last century - conclusions linking closely with the broader study. In Wales, however, there were also other issues.

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From 200 congregations established through the years, 34 remain (in England, New Zealand and Russia). The study aims not just to re-construct the narrative, but to identify and analyse the political, personality and other complex dynamics involved.

Above all, bound theologically and liturgically by its doctrinaire stand, the FCE remains essentially a 19th century institution struggling to meet the very different demands of the 20th. Nevertheless, its durability emerges strongly. However small, it stands as an honourable part of the wide spectrum of Christendom, with its own traditions and integrity.

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A B B R E V I A T I O N S

In the course of the study the following abbreviations are used:

CHC = Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion
FCE = Free Church of England
REC = Reformed Episcopal Church
RCE = Reformed Church of England
ECE = Evangelical Church of England

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THE FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

OTHERWISE CALLED THE REFORMED EPISCOPAL CHURCH - c.1845 TO c.1927

In which are examined the birth of the Free Church of England, together with the Reformed Episcopal Church (United Kingdom) and the Reformed Church of England which grew from it. A study of the processes of denominational development and growth, division, and finally re-union in 1927. Containing also a survey of the united denomination to the year 1993.

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A THESIS
presented for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
of the University of Wales

by

Richard David Fenwick

A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T S

First and foremost, I acknowledge my great indebtedness to my tutor, the Reverend Canon D.T.W. Price. Without his constant help and most generous support both in my M.A. thesis and this present study, this work would not have been possible. To his wife, Alison, and his family, my thanks are also due - for their welcome and sustenance during my visits to Lampeter.

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The work would also have been impossible without the endless kindness and courtesy of many members, clerical and lay, of the Free Church of England. It would be difficult to name the great number who have given or loaned me, or given me sight of important printed and manuscript materials. Again, very many have spoken to me at length over the years, and they have shared their thoughts and memories with me. In fact, the accurate recall of facts and personalities goes back a very long way - as I have often found by comparison with other sources. Above all here, I extend my warmest thanks to the three Bishops of the denomination, Dr. Arthur Ward, Dr. Cyril Milner (Primus), and the Rt. Rev. Kenneth Powell. Having seen the manifold gifts that they have, it is hardly surprising that the FCE is in good trim, and looking forward to the opportunities of the next century.

Amongst the other clergy of the FCE, I owe a debt of gratitude to the (late) Rev. John Knight (Harlesden), and the Rev. Dr. Mark Gretason (Balham) - for many hours of good company, conversation and food with both. The (late) Rev. Neave Knowles was a central figure in the FCE for many years. His thoughts, memories and papers have been freely and generously shared with me. The Rev. Arthur Fryer has very kindly given me much time, and free access to the records held at Christ Church, Teddington - likewise the Rev. Colin Waltham, when he was at Balham. Also my thanks go to the Reverends David Sadler (Broadstairs), Peter Gadsden (Exeter), David Page (Exmouth), Geoffrey Collins (Farnham), P.J.L. Maudesley (formerly Farnham), and S.M. Townsend (Walsall) of the Southern Diocese. In the Northern Diocese I would like to thank the Reverends J.D.M. McLean (Morecambe), W.J. Lawler (Tottington) - but especially the late Harry Livsey (sometime Tue Brook, and later, Liscard) who was my first contact with the denomination 30 years ago.

From many of the laity of the denomination, I have had endless kindness and help, both with documentation and memories. To name them all would be impossible, but I think particularly of those from Broadstairs, Farnham, Leigh-on-Sea, Balham, Harlesden, the former church at Hemel Hempstead, Teddington, and Willesborough in the South. Also in the South, great kindness and assistance has been given me by the churchwarden of the former "flagship" church in Southend, the late Lena Dixon. In the North, I have received much assistance from members of the churches at Tue Brook, Morecambe, Oswaldtwistle, Preston, Tottington and Workington.

Valuable insights have been afforded by Mr. Harry Vaughan, Bishop Vaughan's son, and Miss Mildred Catt, Bishop Vaughan's step-daughter. Again, I am particularly grateful to the Rev. Dr. Allan Guelzo, former Professor of Church History at the Reformed Episcopal Seminary in Philadelphia. Hours of trans-Atlantic telephone conversation have been supported by the sending of

photocopies of much recently discovered manuscript and printed documentation from storerooms at the Seminary. One of his colleagues from the REC has also been most generous with his assistance, the Rev. Dr. Jon Bigsby, Chaplain of the United States Air Force.

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Great kindness has been shown in the help given to me in this study by a number of the senior members of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion. In particular, the Rev. Gilbert Kirby, Chairman of the Trustees of the Connexion and former Principal of the London Bible College has provided both information on the Connexion itself and a number of introductions to others who have been able to render further assistance. In this respect, my grateful thanks also goes to Mr. and Mrs. D.G. Staplehurst for their most generous help. Mr. Staplehurst is one of the Trustees of the Connexion, and Mrs. Staplehurst is the denominational Archivist. Once more, I must pay tribute to several of the senior lay members of the Connexional Church near Dorking, St. John's, Westcott.

During my enquiries regarding the earlier and Connexional side of the FCE, I have received help from a number of other people outside both the FCE and the CHC. Amongst these, my gratitude goes to Mr. Michael Messer, a heraldry specialist, from Bath.

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Many Anglican friends and clerical colleagues have given great assistance in the matter of collecting archival material and information. Amongst these my grateful thanks go to an old and valued friend, the Rev. Dr. Donald Baker, for his memories and thoughts - the results of a lifetime's acquaintance with the FCE. Another Anglican colleague, the Rev. Andrew Knowles (Neave Knowles' son) has provided me with a number of memories and insights. A former FCE Presbyter, now a distinguished retired Anglican Priest, has provided me with much information about the denomination during the 1940s, 50s and 60s. He would prefer to remain anonymous. Again I thank the Vicar of Kirkburton, Yorkshire, the Rev. Dennis Barraclough; also the Rev. Fr. Brian Taylor, former Vicar of St. Nicholas, Guildford.

In my examination of the complex situation surrounding the FCE and the RCE in Wales, I must pay tribute to the most generous assistance of several clerical colleagues. The Rev. Dr. Brian Lodwick (Rector of Llandough with Leckwith) has helped clarify many of the questions about church life in South Wales during the last century. In this particular field I must also pay warm tribute to the Rev. Roger Brown (Vicar of Welshpool) upon whose time and very considerable expertise I have been glad to draw. The generous interest and assistance of Dr. Chrystal Davies (Chrystal Tilney) has, once more, been most gratefully received. Again, my thanks are due to Mrs. Elizabeth Hughes of Sarnau, Powys for her materials on the RCE churches in Welshpool.

However, in the field of the Welsh churches, the REC in Yeovil, the work of Dr. T.H. Gregg, and in so many other parts of this study I must pay great tribute to the Rev. Dr. John Guy (Rector of Bettws Cedewain, and former Archivist of the Marsh-Jackson Post-Graduate Centre, Yeovil District

Hospital). One of my oldest friends, the constant help and support of both himself and his wife, Dr. Jean Guy, has been incalculable.

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It would be impossible for me to single out the many librarians, local history Archivists, and local historians who have given so much generous assistance in this study. A number of these are acknowledged in the notes. Nevertheless, I must make special mention of the late Laurie Gage, a Methodist Local Preacher from Westcliff-on-Sea, and a specialist in non-conformist history. Again, kindly assistance has been given by Dr. Terrence Crosby, Secretary and Sub-Librarian of the Evangelical Library. I must also mention Dr. Brenda Hough from the Church of England Record Centre, and Dr. Judith Pinnington, Archivist for the Orthodox Church of the British Isles.

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Inevitably, I will inadvertantly have left some people out - for which, my sincere apologies. But to all who have borne with my all-consuming interest in the Free Church of England I give my hearty and most sincere thanks. It is, therefore, with this latter point in mind that I give the greatest thanks of all - to my wife Jane, and our two children, James and Rachel. I am conscious of the countless hours that I have spent (and will probably still spend) in my library rather than with them. To them I give my gratitude, and my love.

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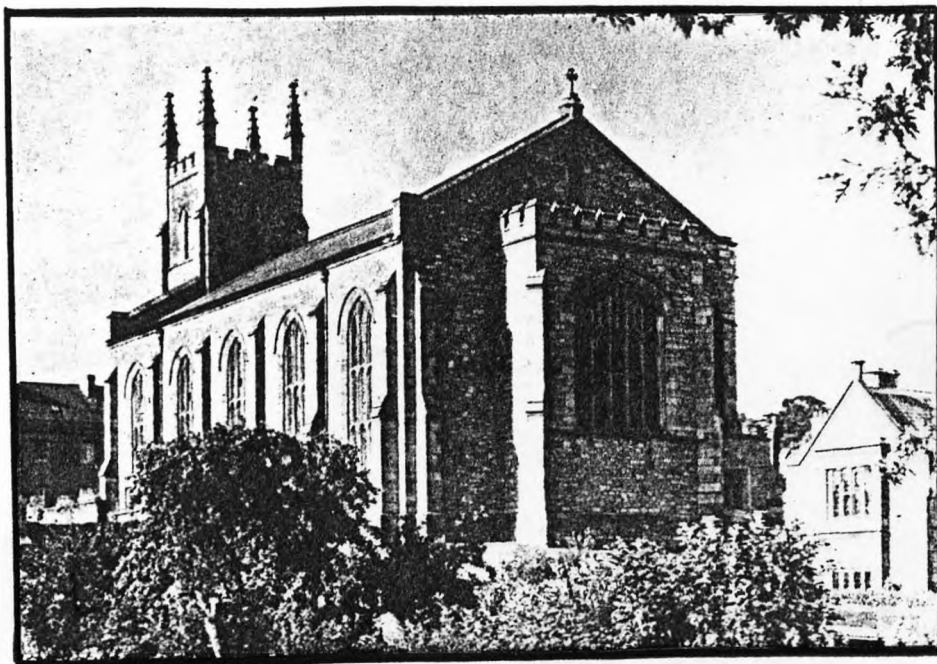
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I L L U S T R A T I O N S

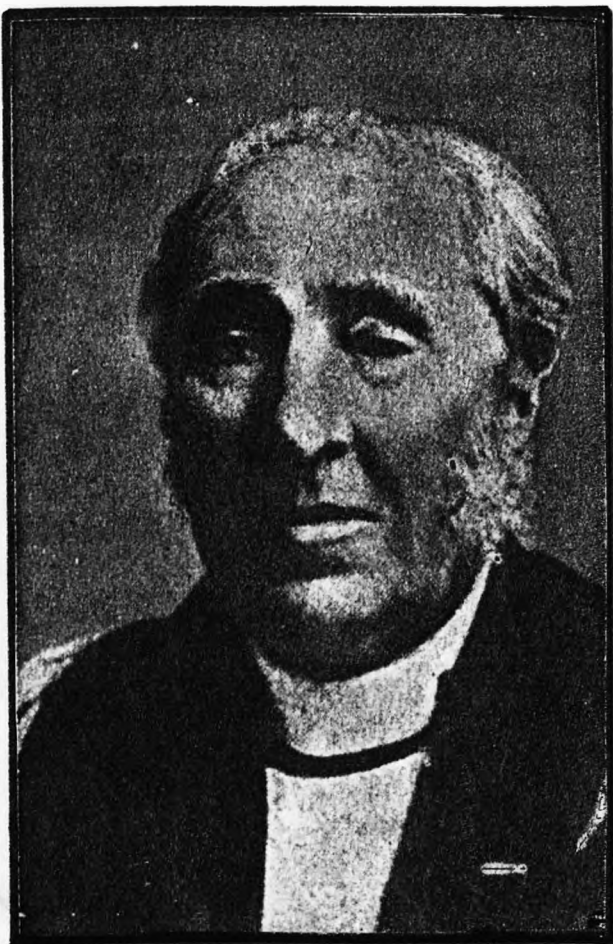
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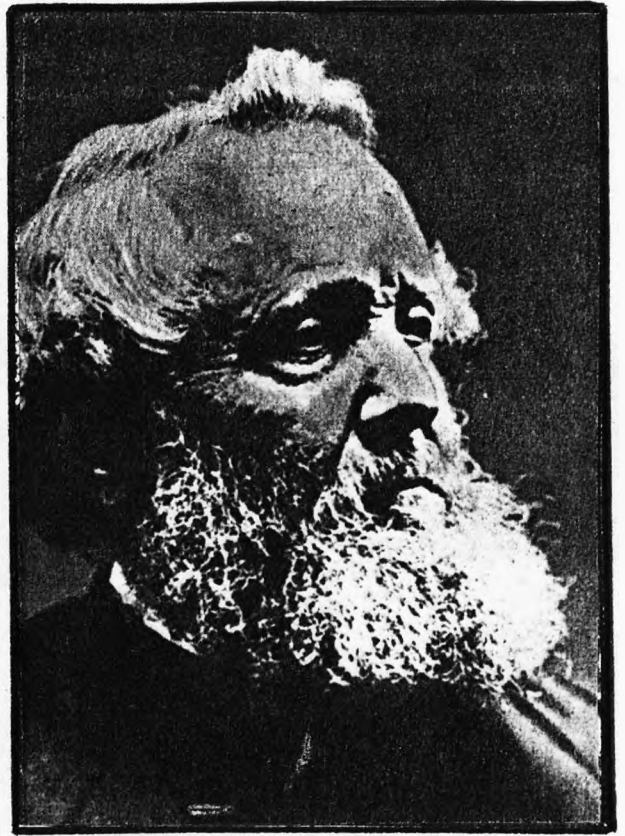
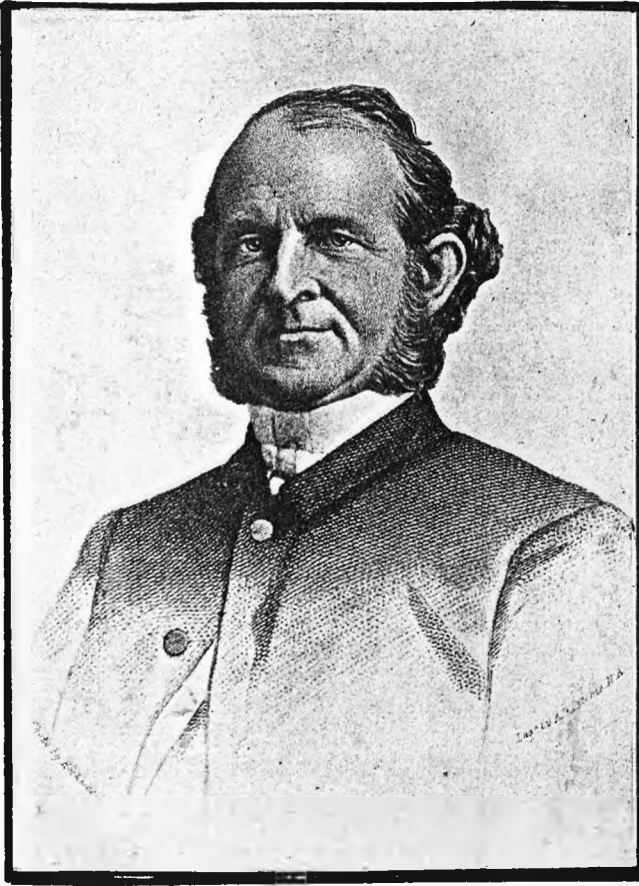
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Top: Bridgetown Chapel, Totnes
Left: Rev. James Shore
Right: Bishop Benjamin Price
[Neave Knowles archive]





Top L: Bp David Cummins
Below: Christ Church REC, Philadelphia
 and Seminary adjoining
 [both illus. from Annie Darling Price]
Top R: Bp Edward Cridge
 [Neave Knowles archive]





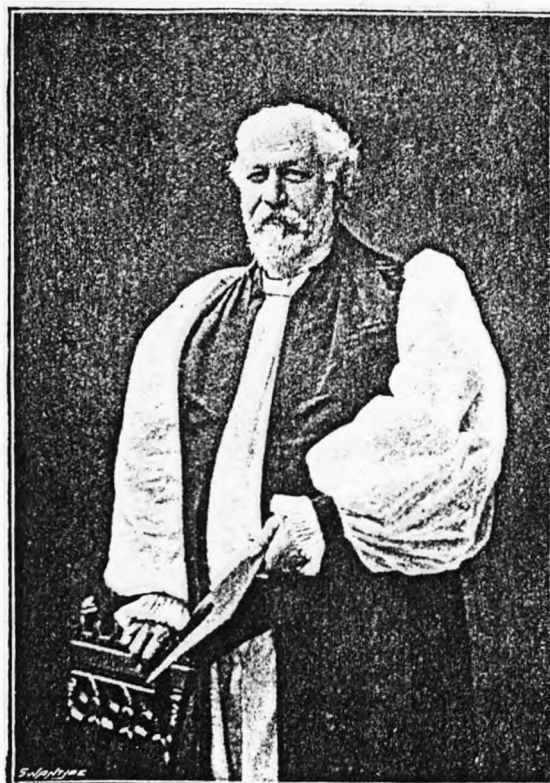
THE RIGHT. REV. T. HUBAND GREGG, D.D., M.D.,
LORD BISHOP OF VERULAM.



RIGHT REV. BISHOP SUGDEN, D.D.



THE LATE RIGHT REV. SAMUEL J. C. DICKSEE
(Primus of the Free Church of England, and a Member of the
Council of the Imperial Protestant Federation)
[By permission of Laurence, Tunbridge Wells]



RIGHT REV. PHILIP X. ELDRIDGE
(Presiding Bishop of the Reformed Episcopal Church, and a Member
of the Council of the Imperial Protestant Federation)



Left: Bp Frederick Newman
[from J.H.H. Whisson]
Below: Bp William Troughton
[FCE Dioc. Quarterly Mag.
Jan., 1915]

Previous page:

Gregg: Biographical Magazine,
Feb., 1887

Sugden: Work and Worship,
Jan., 1901

Dicksee and Eldridge, cuttings
from unknown Evangelical mag.



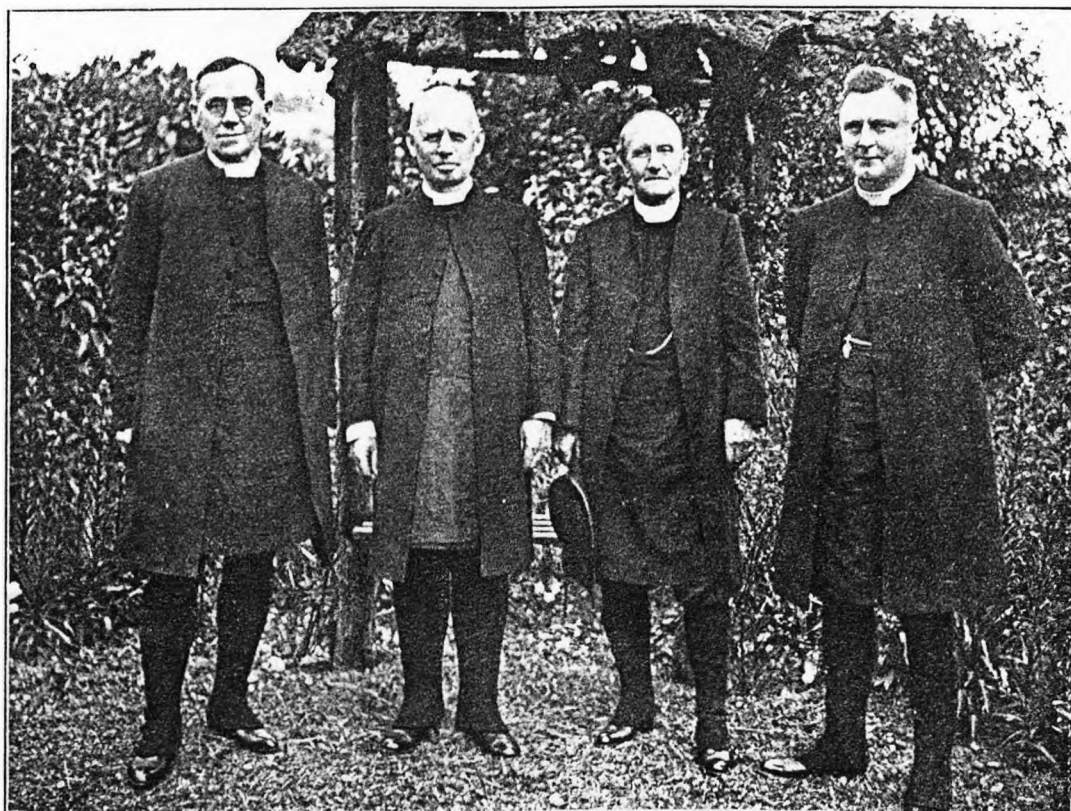
The Rt. Rev. William Troughton.

Bishop Primus of the Free Church of England.
Incumbent of Emmanuel Church, Morecambe.

THE NEWLY UNITED DENOMINATION 1927-8 [both from Knowles archive]



CONVOCATION OF UNITED CHURCHES, 1927

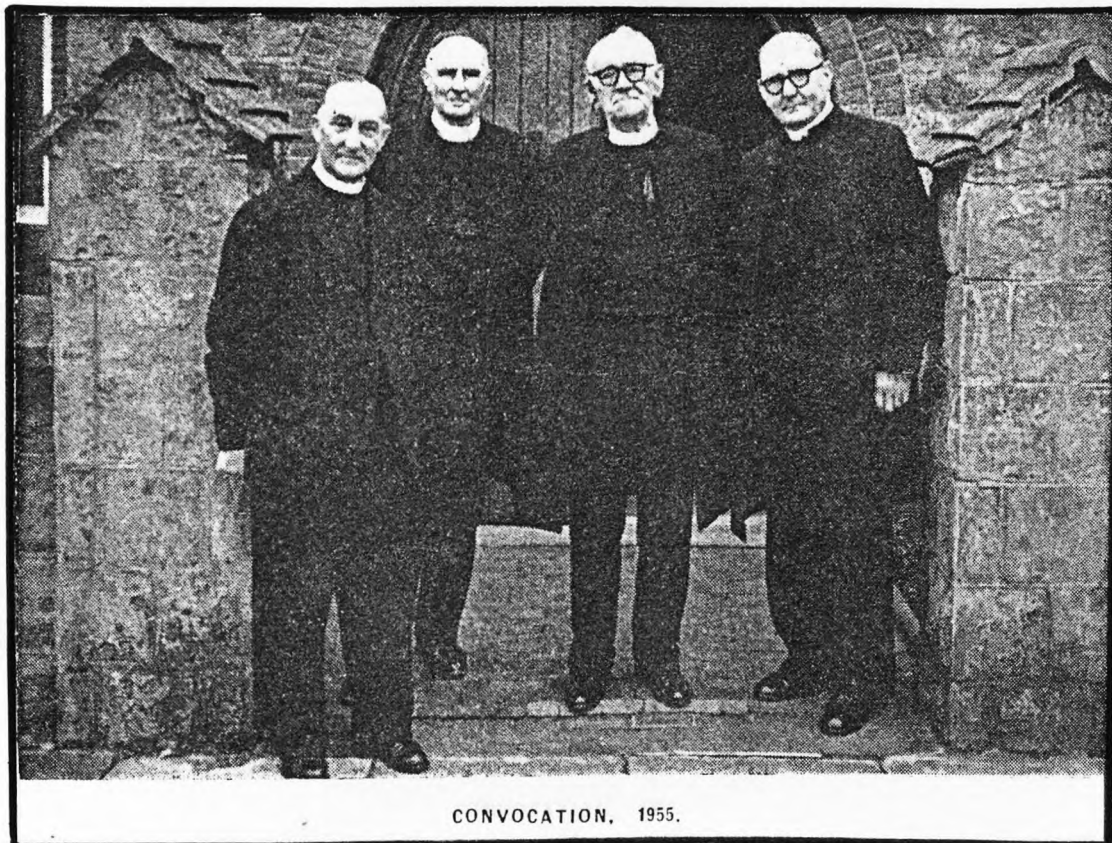


The Rt. Rev. F. Vaughan, D.D.
Bishop of the Northern Diocese.

The Rt. Rev. R. Brook Lauder, D.D.
The Bishop Primus.

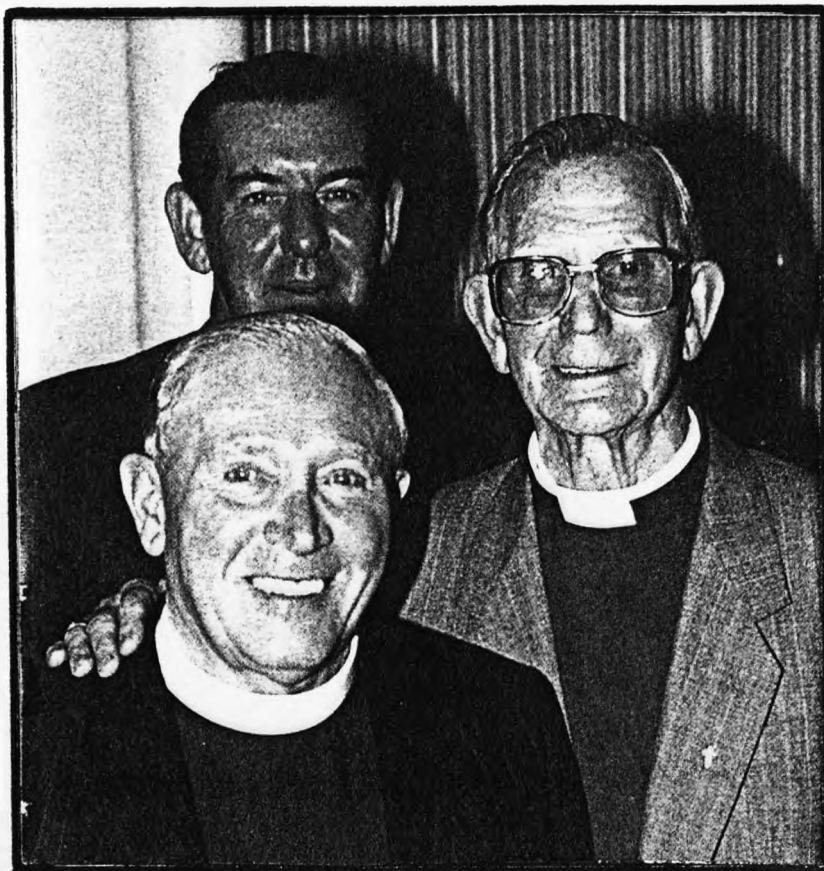
The Rt. Rev. J. Louis Fenn, D.D.
Bishop of the Southern Diocese.

The Rt. Rev. W. E. Young, O.B.E., D.D.
Bishop of the Central Diocese.

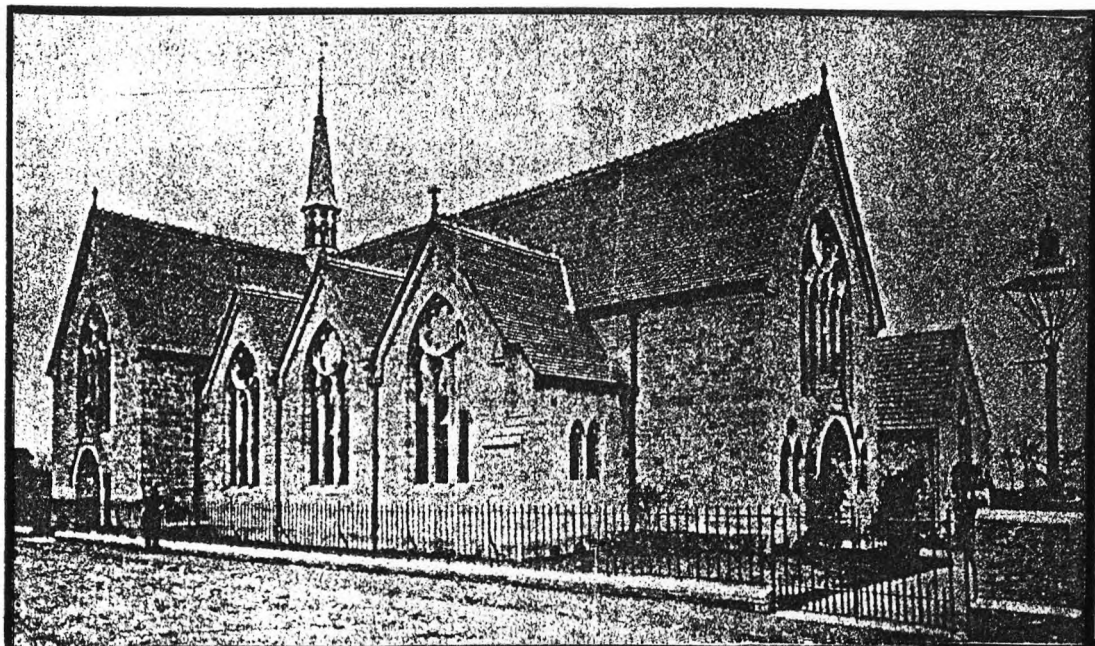


CONVOCATION, 1955.

L to R: Bishops William Rogers, G.W. Forbes Smith, Frank Vaughan & Thomas Cameron [Year Book, 1955-6]



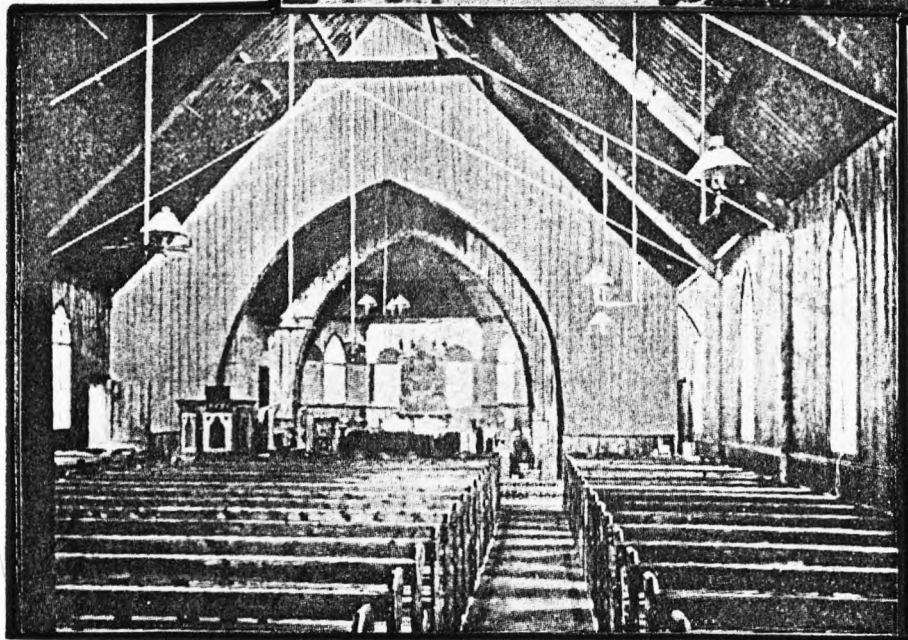
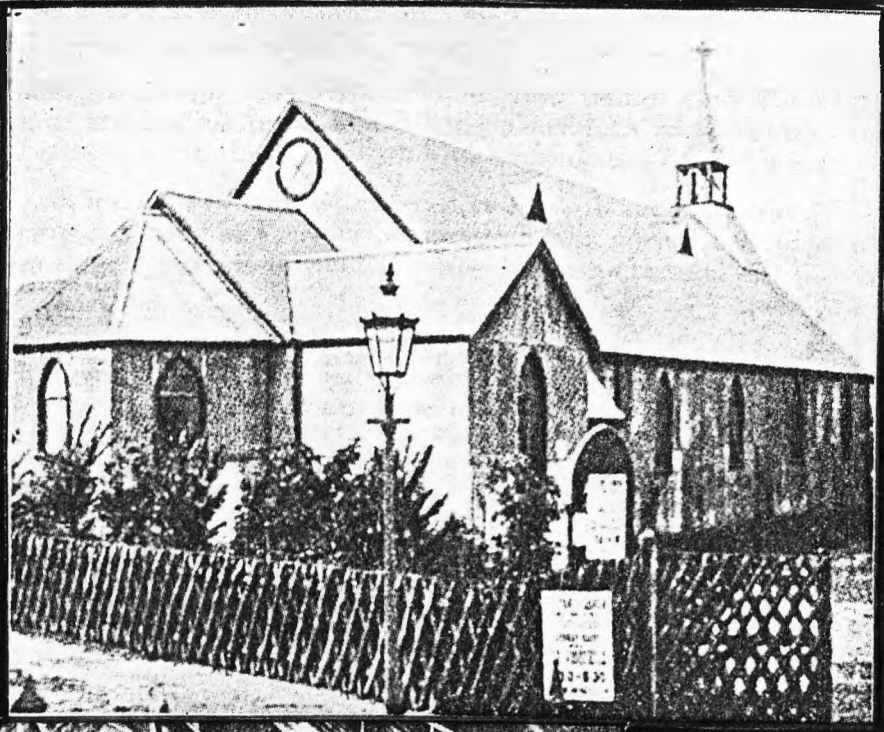
Top: Bp K.J.W. Powell Left: Bp Cyril Milner Right: Bp Arthur Ward



Top:
 Christ Church, REC (UK)
 Yeovil c. 1885
 [Yeovil Reference Lib.]

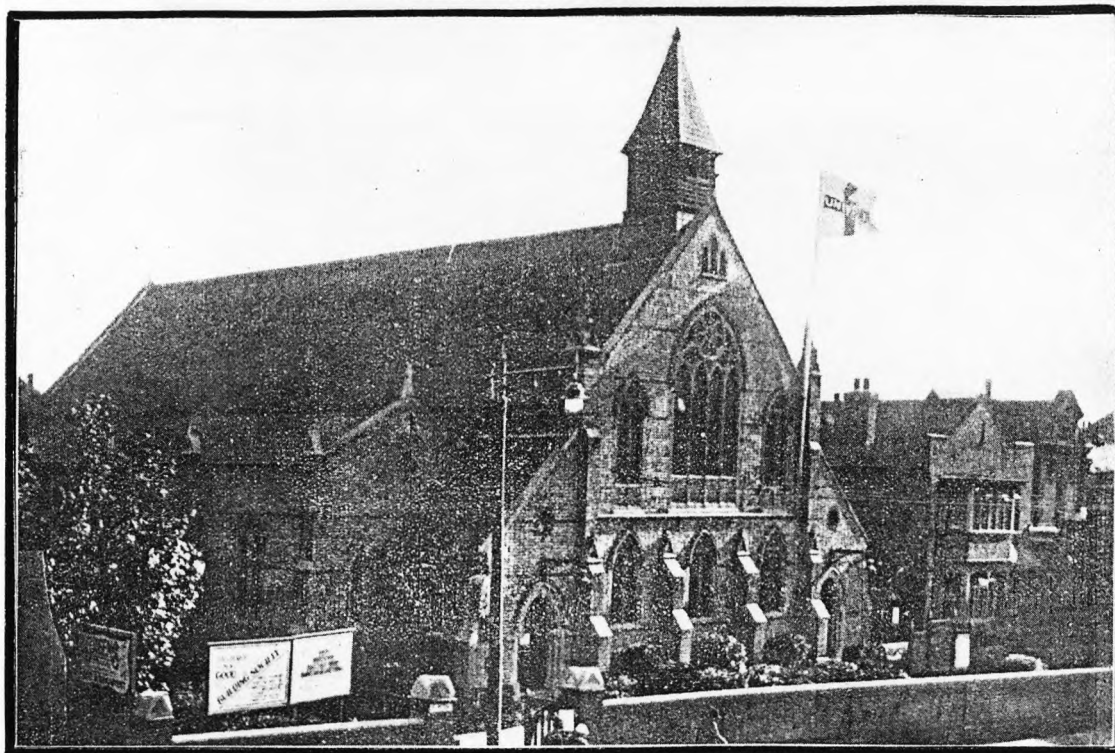
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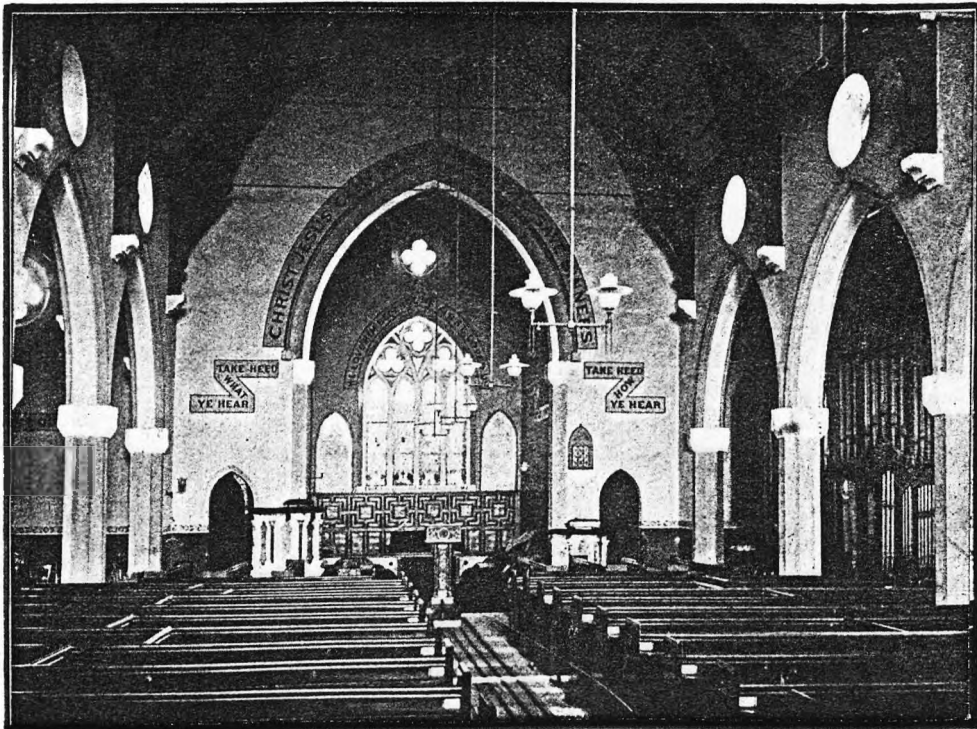
St Paul's, REC (UK)
 Skegness, c. 1891
 [Illus. from Rev.
 Norman Walker's book]



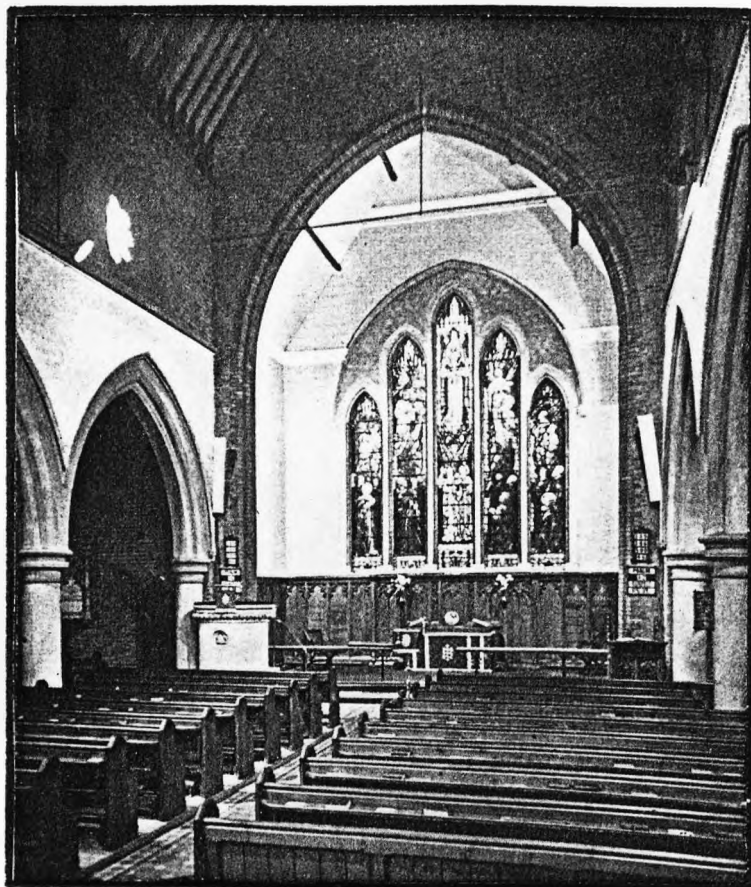


Top: Background left, Trinity FCE, Cathays, Cardiff, c. 1888 [Stewart Williams, Vol I, Plate 67]. Below: Trinity Church & Rectory, Southend, c. 1936 [Concerning this House].

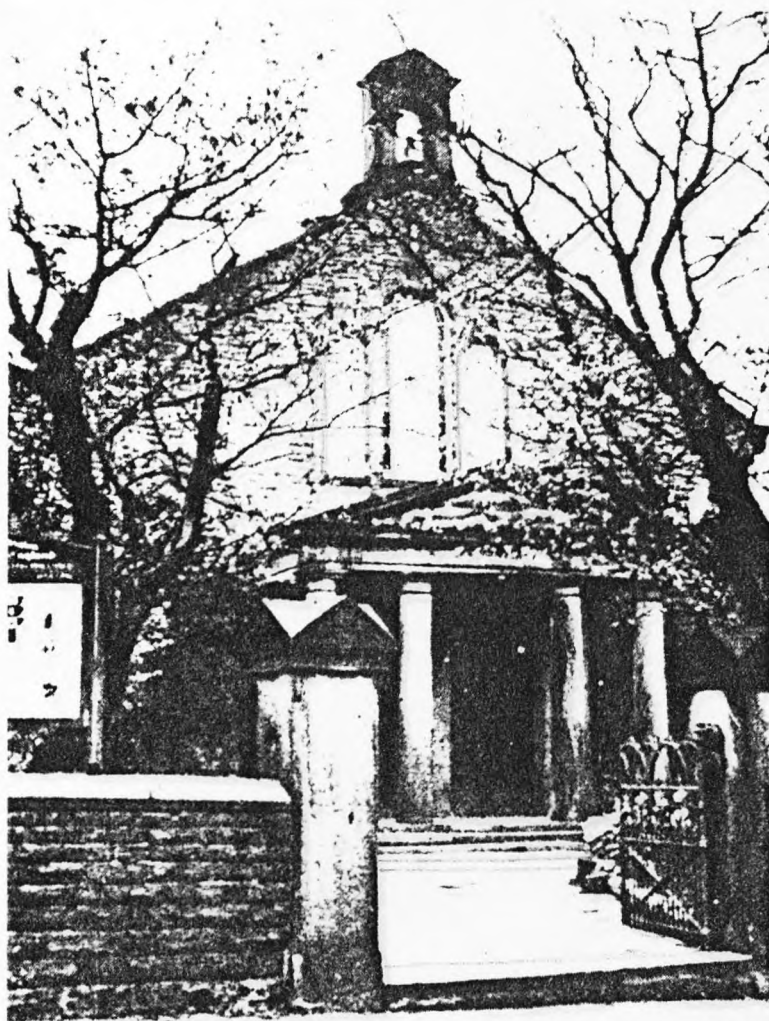




Above: Trinity Church (REC/RCE), Southend c. 1905
Below: Christ Church FCE, Teddington (as today)



From 60 YEARS OF UNITED WITNESS (1987)



St. John's, Tottington



Emmanuel, Morecambe



Christ Church, Wallasey



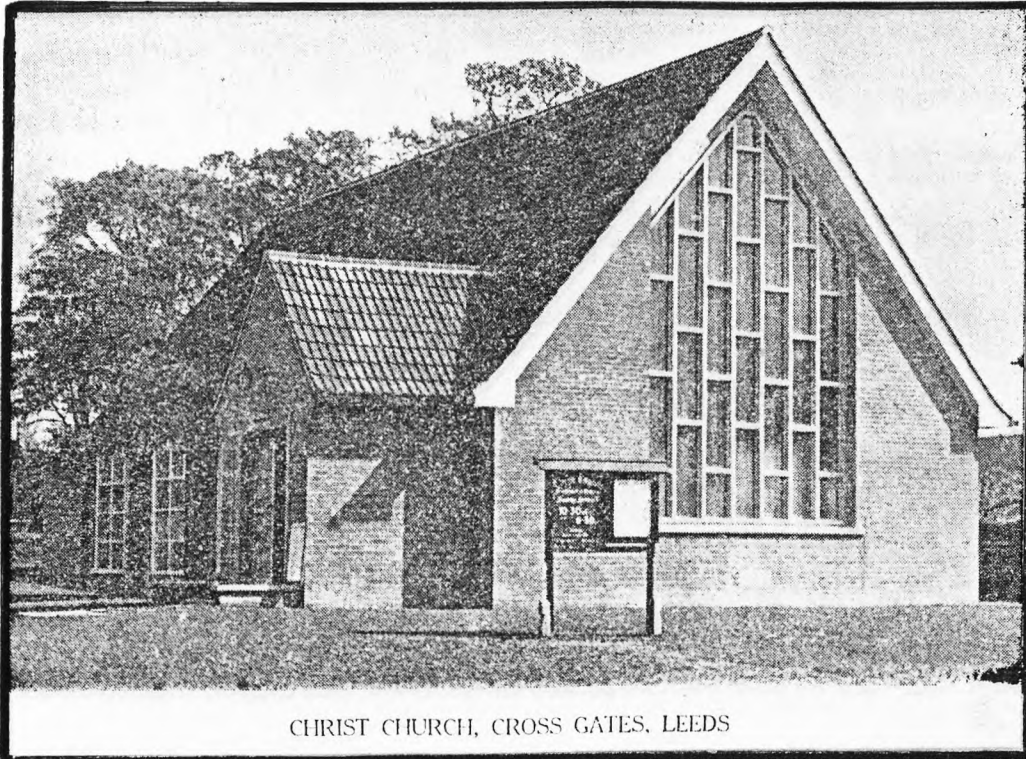
Christ Church, Exeter



Christ Church, Willesborough

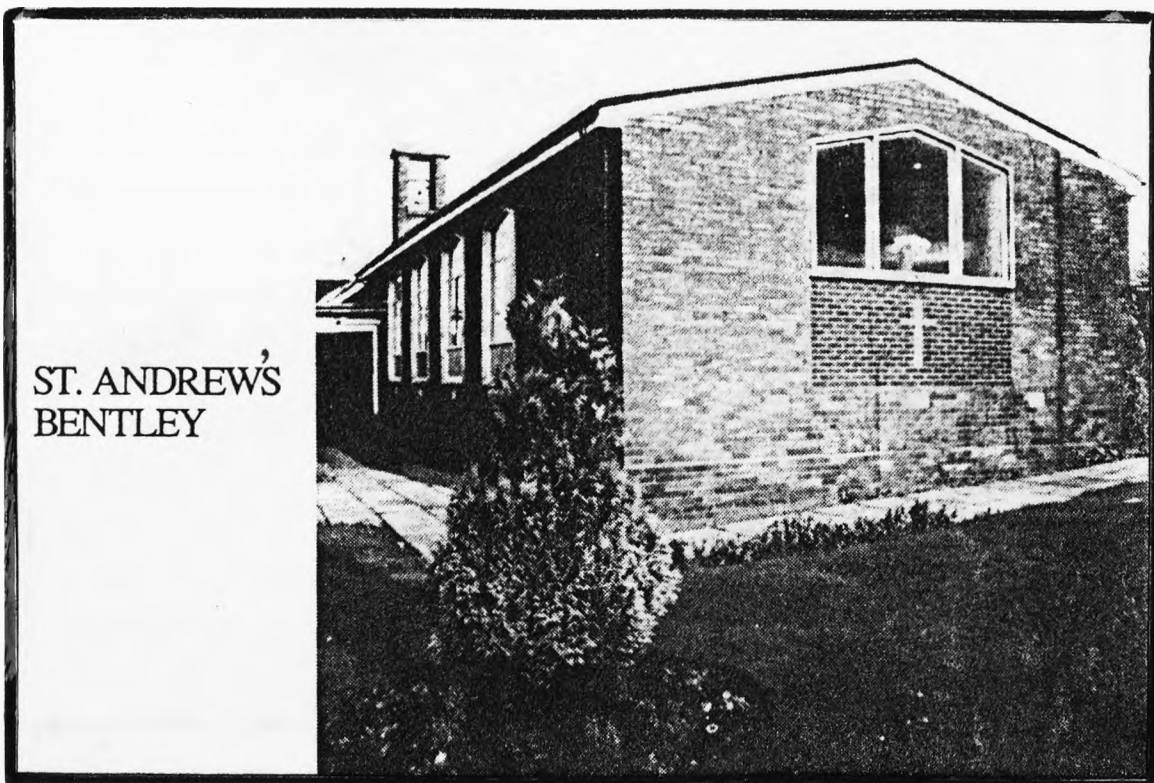


Christ Church, Teddington



CHRIST CHURCH, CROSS GATES, LEEDS

Top: Year Book 1963-3 Below: Vaughan's History (1994 ed.)



ST. ANDREW'S
BENTLEY

INTRODUCTION

An overview - the problem stated

This study deals with a bright hope unfulfilled. It examines a new Protestant denomination which was born out of the impassioned anti-ritualist controversies of the 1840s and 1850s in Britain. Yet, despite its early strength and great promise, the Free Church of England ultimately failed to change the face of the Established Church in the way that many had hoped - and that many of the Anglican Bishops themselves had feared.

The demand for an avowedly protestant and "low-church" supply of clergy and churches was not always met by the Church of England. Indeed, during the latter half of the 19th century, the colourful new ritualist movement seemed to be tolerated, or at worst winked-at by an increasingly ineffectual and, as many thought, culpable Anglican leadership. But despite the almost hysterical fear of the "Puseyites", which had brought both popular support and aristocratic patronage to the Free Church of England in its early years, by the third decade of the 20th century, the denomination had settled into being what it remains - a very small, though honourable and decorous, Protestant Episcopal Church on the Anglican model. Yet it was both independent from it and also isolated from the larger non-conformist Churches, with which it had little in common.

The new theological and political patterns of life in the latter part of the 20th century have brought changes and new opportunities for the FCE. A stronger leadership has brought some expansion. Yet the only long-term future is almost certainly in a reconciliation which is being forged with the "mother" Church of England, from which the movement was largely carved in the first place.

The main point of the study, however, is not merely a critical reconstruction of the history of the FCE movement, even though this has never yet been attempted. Rather is it to examine the dynamics of the movement itself - the impetus and circumstances which caused its genesis, and the subsequent problems and weaknesses which have meant that it has not realised the potential for which many hoped in the early years.

A more detailed examination of the study, its aims and dynamics

"Henry never gave in, was never weary of the battle. The ring was the only element in which he seemed to enjoy himself; and while other boys were happy in

the number of their friends, he rejoiced most in the multitude of his foes". (Anthony Trollope, The Warden, Chapter 8)

Broadly speaking the Free Church of England movement originated in the Diocese of Exeter during the 1840s. Trollope's description of Henry Grantley, son of the Archdeacon of Barchester, is done swiftly with a few deft brush strokes. But there is a bitter truth in his thinly disguised portrait of Henry Phillpotts, Bishop of Exeter (1830-1869), for Phillpotts seems to have been never so at home as when heavily involved in legal conflict, often with several cases at one time.

One of the casualties of his rigid and Erastian authoritarianism was the Curate of Bridgetown Chapel-of-Ease, at Totnes, in his diocese. Indeed, a number of his clergy had suffered censure as the result of their over-strong evangelical views, or liberal theology regarding the traditional theory of the regenerative action of the sacrament of Baptism. But the Reverend James Shore of Totnes was different. As manipulative as Phillpotts himself, he not only resigned from the jurisdiction of the Established Church (as he thought) in order to remain at Bridgetown under the patronage of the Duke of Somerset, but later became the focal point of a sharp conflict over the "Puseyite" tendencies in the diocese which the bishop was perceived as supporting.

Shore was imprisoned for illegally preaching in the "dissenting" Spa Fields Chapel in London; for Phillpotts maintained that the indelibility of Shore's Orders made it impossible to renounce his "priesthood". Yet the celebrated "Shore Case" not only showed Phillpotts in the worst possible light, but it welded firmly the relationship which had already been made between Shore and the small 18th century off-shoot from the Church of England, the "Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion". Whilst Calvinist in inspiration and presbyterially ordered, the Connexion used much of the Book of Common Prayer, and its services were liturgical in form - though strictly evangelical and "low-church", in the manner of Selina, Countess of Huntingdon herself, so many years before. This study begins, therefore, with an analysis of the factors involved in the relationship between Shore and his Bishop. It also looks at the actual genesis of the new movement from the troubles of the diocese under the "iron fist" of Phillpotts. Again, it seeks to examine the Shore case more dispassionately than has been done by the few FCE historians in the past.

The result of the dispute in Devon was the growth of an idea; and under the CHC, a series of new "Free Liturgical" churches spread, not only through the diocese of Exeter, but also through other parts of England. The fact was that the increasing prevalence of ritualistic worship in the Church of England was matched by increasingly sharp opposition from a nervous population. Very many saw the new ritualism, together with "Catholic Emancipation" in 1828, the departure of several senior Anglican churchmen for Rome after 1845, and the "Papal Agression" in 1850 as part of a strong move for the re-conversion of England by the Roman Catholic Church. Again, there was a powerful political element in this public nervousness, especially amongst the middle and upper classes. For the unrest reflected in England after the revolutions in France in both 1830 and 1848 created many fears for the safety of the British throne.

The new "Free" churches were formally registered as the "Free Church of England" in the High Court of Chancery in August 1863. But, the whole "Free Liturgical" movement itself had become something of a cause-célèbre; for its vigorously protestant yet liturgical style and stand had attracted the support of a number of influential people after the Duke of Somerset, including the distinguished evangelicals, Sir Culling Eardley, Lord Ebury, Lord Sidney, and the Hon. and Reverend E.V. Bligh (Lord Darnley's second son).

The problems of moulding an increasingly large collection of independent churches into a coherent ecclesial unit are studied. Again, the hope that these might be the basis of a revitalised Connexion proved to be impossible, and the best that could be achieved was a new and separate Church. The irony was that as this grew increasingly close to the model of the Anglican Church, then by way of reaction, the Connexion, which had actually nurtured it in the first place, grew steadily apart. The intricacies of these events and trends are again the subject of a critical examination - never before done.

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However, the main thrust of this study is in its analysis of the great complexities in the subsequent life of the denomination, especially after 1876. In the August of this year, through the forging of a relationship with the new Reformed Episcopal Church in the USA, the FCE received mainstream Anglican Orders through the Consecration of its bishops by Bishop Edward Cridge. The REC was itself an evangelical breakaway from the Episcopal Church of the United States of America, when David Cummins, Assistant Bishop of the Anglican Diocese

of Kentucky, conscientiously resigned to take his work "to another sphere of labour". Resultingly, the fact that the new FCE had "valid" orders and an ecclesial polity very similar to that of the Established Church caused increasing problems in Britain.

However, the intensely fissiparous and mercurial nature of the new church communities in Britain meant that the stability and financial security needed for such a new denomination was just not present. By the early 1880s, major schisms within the FCE had resulted in two further denominations being created, the "Reformed Episcopal Church" (being a branch of that denomination in the USA), and the "Reformed Church of England". Nevertheless, there were a number of fine and dedicated men involved, and the study examines their aims and work. Bishop Benjamin Price of the FCE, Bishop John Sugden of the REC, and Bishop Gregg of the RCE all had considerable gifts which were poured, not only into their denominations, but into their local communities. Gregg in particular, as a tireless social reformer and a qualified physician and surgeon had much to offer.

The study attempts to chart the progress of the denominations through the many severe problems experienced, including division, ambition, severe personality clashes, bankruptcy and, in the case of Dr. T.H Gregg, the sad relapse of a genuinely distinguished mind into insanity. It examines the political dynamics involved in the different leaderships, and the way in which pressure of episcopal duty together with the personal inability of the bishops of the REC and RCE to delegate their growing responsibilities eventually made their positions unworkable. Again, it makes a close examination of the way in which the undoubted abilities of both these men were overshadowed by their ambition - and in the case of the Presiding Bishop of the REC (UK), A.S. Richardson, by defective personal judgement and bad business sense.

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Even though matters improved after the union of the British branch of the REC with the RCE in 1894, yet by 1900, it was quite clear that the still divided "Free" movement had little future as a major national force. Certainly, with the changing values of the times, the movement was no longer a centre of any major popular concern or interest.

The challenges of the earlier part of the 20th century, together with the cataclysmic social effects of the Great War, and then the following Depression, placed great demands upon the religious institutions of the Country. But the FCE and the REC with their tiny size, their chronic and abiding poverty, and their continuing internal division (particularly the REC) were simply unable to meet meet the needs of the population in any organised manner. The most that could be done was for all available forces to be put towards the uniting of the two estranged denominations in 1927.

In its survey of the events leading up to the Union, the thesis examines the dynamics of the changing demands in leadership, the problems of inherent "congregationalism" within the denominations, the difficulties over Trusts and Trustees, finance, manpower, and the continual problem of finding and training men for ordination. It also notes the way in which two very like-minded and powerful leaders (Frank Vaughan and William Young) were able to "arrange" the leadership of the newly united denomination tactfully, for the best possible strength, and to maximum "political" advantage - an absolute necessity of the time.

Perhaps more significantly, the analysis of the "political" developments leading up to the Union, and the examination of the way in which internal relationships amongst the leadership were "arranged" may act as a paradigm for other similar unity processes amongst the denominations - especially the smaller denominations such as the various Methodist groups which were eventually united in the Conference of 1932. The issues and administrative pitfalls to be addressed will have been no different, whatever the size. Certainly, the problematic task of organising existing leaders into new positions of authority will have been common to all Unions.

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The last chapter in the main part of the thesis consists of a critical survey of the years 1927 to 1993, and the principal fact noted is the potential strength resulting from the Union itself. Thereafter, the continuing and serious decline of the denomination is observed, from its high-point of strength just after 1940 when it had congregations in Britain, Canada, and even the remnants of a small community in Poland.

After the war, the "religious" demands of a badly damaged and emotionally scarred country were very considerable. Again, an increasing population meant that, as at the end of the last century, there were large new areas of housing and industry which the far more versatile Established Church, and the larger non-conformist denominations, were able to serve - and in which they were to find considerable growth. But the FCE, with its continuing problems of finance, congregational "independency" and lack of trained clergy was largely unable to address any project other than the maintenance of its work within existing church communities. Again, the study notes the lack of a focus of academic theological authority within the denomination. This meant that the secularism and serious questioning, which was so much a part of the 1960s, were unanswered by the FCE. Furthermore, when, for instance, Anglican theologians answered with such works as Soundings or Honest to God the reaction of the FCE was the strong blast of a conservative and "drawbridge" theology which actually addressed none of the issues.

These problems were accentuated by an increasing weakness in leadership; and the study looks at the position and authority held by the powerful but ailing Bishop Vaughan. It again notes the lack of any strong successor to him at his death in 1962. The result was a continuing serious decline of the denomination up to the mid 1970s, when just 29 churches remained. However, a determined effort to address the demands of leadership saw the Consecration of Bishops Milner and Ward - younger men, and men having very considerable management skills. Yet although the decline was halted, the situation had gone too far to be reversed without any strong external stimulus, such as that experienced during the height of the anti-ritualist troubles.

In fact, the liberal theological changes of the 1980s have resulted in the creation of several new congregations in New Zealand; and the political changes in the Soviet Union have resulted in the establishment of a church in St. Petersburg (Leningrad). Nevertheless, the traditional problems of finance, manpower and an essentially "congregationally" biased organisation remain, so that the long-term prospects of the FCE as a totally independent denomination are poor.

Finally, this chapter examines the recent reconciling moves made between the FCE and the C of E. For the first time in 140 years, representatives of both Churches have made a serious examination of the possibilities of some sort of "Federative Union" which would ensure the separate existence of the FCE, but at

the same time would strengthen it by enlarging the manpower available to its churches, and also by opening possibilities of lay and clerical training to its members. The study ends therefore with the situation as it stands in August 1993 - the FCE being on the brink of a new and vitally important stage in its history.

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The larger part of the Appendix consists of a chapter of case studies, and for these, the "Free Liturgical" churches that were founded in and around Cardiff are examined. In fact the circumstances under which the congregations took root and spread are typical of those throughout most of the Country. Detailed examination of these communities therefore sheds much light on the weaknesses, pressures and internal dynamics of many others, particularly in England and Scotland. However, examination of these short-lived communities both in Cardiff, and in other places throughout Wales, shows quite clearly that there were other issues involved in the Principality, besides the fear of ritualistic excess.

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At this stage, whilst seeing the way in which the three denominations extended their work through the mainland in the UK, it is worth noting briefly that at no time was any congregation ever set up by them in Ireland. As was made clear in the early 1870s, after the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland in 1869, and with its firmly Protestant and anti-Roman Catholic sympathies, the Irish Church was regarded by both the FCE and Anglican Evangelicals alike as being an ally in the fight against "Romanising" and ritual excess. Certainly, the the firm proscription in Ireland of such things as eucharistic vestments, or even the placing of a cross on the Holy Table, was in perfect accord with the ideals of the FCE, REC and RCE.

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Overall, the study is a complex one, for the history of the whole movement is littered with the problems resulting from political ideals and hopes, ambitions, personality difficulties, and an abiding poverty. Again, part of the complexity arises from the fact that there has never been any critical

examination of this subject as a whole; thus there are no standard or accepted conclusions which might have been drawn upon.

Yet the central fact is that of the continued existence of a very small but most honourable Protestant Episcopal denomination - even though it is usually a source of some considerable surprise to most who meet it for the first time. For, with the strong doctrinaire restrictions that have tended to curb the development of both its theology and liturgy, to the modern eye, it appears as Anglicanism, yet from a past age.

Practical problems in the study

Perhaps the main problem in any study of these three denominations is the fact that there has never been any professionally organised central administration - unlike even the dioceses of the Established Church. The result has been that internal communication has frequently been deficient, and that archives have been, where not fragmental anyway, dispersed and subsequently lost.

Various well-meaning attempts have been made throughout the years to collect the documentation of both the REC and the FCE into central locations. But time and again, these have either been lost through lack of attention, or they have been destroyed in accidents.

In fact the lack of proper documentation in the REC was the subject of comment by Bishop Vaughan in 1948. According to Vaughan's Memories and Reflections, after Bishop Eldridge's death in 1921, such records as existed were sent to him as the next Presiding Bishop. But Eldridge had not even kept a proper account of the ordinations that he had done. Subsequently, during his years Vaughan collected as many records together as he could in his church at Morecambe. However, after his death in 1962, these were dispersed around the diocese by Bishop Burrell who was then incumbent at Morecambe. Much has been lost.

Certain important central records, probably including Synod and Convocation Minute Books were sent South to Bishop Watkins at Broadstairs in the early 1960s. However, according to information given, these were left unprotected on the back of a lorry, and the result of a bad storm during the long journey meant that much of the material was destroyed. Moreover, after Bishop Watkins' death in 1978, according to reports given, most of the documentation which had been in his possession at the time of his death was subsequently burned.

During the latter part of the 1960s, an attempt was made to centralise documentation in the vestry of Christ Church, Harlesden, London. However, the condition of the church deteriorated so seriously that much of the material was destroyed by damp and running water. That which remained was once again dispersed to other parts of the diocese in the 1970s - and frequently lost, as before at Morecambe.

Finally, many of the legal documents, including property matters and deeds, were kept in the offices of the denominational Solicitors, Messrs Spain Bros., in the City of London. These were destroyed when the offices were burned out by a fire bomb in the London blitz.

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The lack of much hand-written documentation obviously poses problems for any major study of the denominations. Moreover, this is compounded by the fact that it has proved impossible for much of the time to publish a regular denominational magazine, both in the REC (UK) and in the FCE. This has meant that valuable information on the running of the denominations has simply never been recorded. In fact, the problems of documentation and the methods of finding alternative sources of information are discussed further during the thesis.

Nevertheless, a great deal of documentation, both hand written and printed, has appeared as the result of a major search, and through the kindness of many clergy and lay members of the FCE. Much valuable information is available in the individual Vestry Books of churches in the denomination. Again, valuable books and documentation have been obtained from sources in America and Germany.

Despite the lack of the earlier Synod and Convocation Minute Books, the proceedings of meetings have usually been very fully noted in the "official records of the minutes" that were printed in the Year Books of both the FCE and the REC. Comparison of these records with the hand written originals which do exist make it clear that the printed records are usually accurate representations. In any case, it is quite clear that when there were confidential matters discussed, the records normally avoided anything but the most veiled references. Once more, the Year Books and the earlier Synod Reports of the REC usually contained the official financial accounts of the denominations. Such accounts also yield much useful general information.

Although there is no complete collection anywhere, with a very few exceptions such Year Books and Synod Reports as were published have been collected from a number of different sources. These have included libraries, antiquarian book specialists and private collections in this, and in other countries.

Press reports provide much information. Certainly, in the case of Bishop Gregg who was such a very public figure in Southend, there is a great deal of primary source material provided in the local press reports of events at his church, particularly at the time when his health and mind were failing. Yet again, this study has used much information given verbally by senior members of both the clergy and the laity of the FCE.

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Finally, although facts about the administrative and "political" life of the denominations have been gathered, it has proved virtually impossible to get precise details of the actual church membership of the individual communities through the years. From time to time, Communicant figures were published, as were the numbers of those being baptised and confirmed. But in a tradition where the Holy Communion was not regarded as being of central importance anyway, these figures give no real indication of the membership.

In fact, one of the features of the constantly "congregational" bias of the individual churches meant that there was actually a very considerable resistance to sending in membership figures to the Diocesan Bishops. A request for figures was frequently made by Bishop Eldridge as Presiding Bishop of the REC from 1893 to 1921. Yet in the General Synod Reports, and in the REC magazine Work and Worship, he complained several times that church officers were actually unwilling to send figures in to him. Almost certainly it was felt that this would in some way have compromised their independence. Certainly with the mercurial nature and insecure circumstances of so many of the churches through the years, the figures of membership and general attendance might well have made a poor showing for both clergy and officers alike.

Indeed, Eldridge's repeated complaint about not receiving the figures requested makes it clear that non-compliance in this was a matter of policy for many, if not most of the churches - therefore of increased difficulty for the historian!

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CHAPTER 1

THE ORIGINS OF THE FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

"Tractarianism itself became more and more anti-Protestant and... as the Movement advanced there grew up an aggressive and intolerant spirit in those who held its doctrines and it was due to the prosecution of this attitude that the idea of a "Free Church of England" was first formulated. It began in Devonshire in 1844 when the Rev. James Shore...withdrew from the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Exeter."

Bishop Vaughan rightly roots the Free Church of England into the turmoil of the English religious life of the 1840s,¹ but like other leading writers on the movement, F.S. Merryweather² and Bishop Benjamin Price,³ he does not give any accurate or detailed account of the actual genesis of the FCE as the independent ecclesial unit, which was later registered in Chancery in 1863.

Background

It is difficult today to understand fully the depth of bitterness that many felt for the Roman Catholic Church in the 19th century. Benjamin Price was an educated and a cultured leader of men, but only about one hundred years ago he was able to write in his little known autobiography:⁴

"The modern aggression of Rome Papal on the religion and liberty of England for the last fifty years or more, may be said to have commenced with the agitation for Catholic EmancipationAt this day England is riddled with Jesuits - all hard at work to overturn her Protestant Constitution..."

Lord Roden bitterly regretted the passing of the Act in 1829, and in a letter to Price in December 1866,⁵ he lamented: "I have indeed seen with the greatest sorrow...the advancement of the "Mother of Harlots" in our once Protestant England."⁵ These words seem crude to those of a different age. But to deny the validity of feelings to those then involved is to be blinded by the nature of hindsight, which takes away many fears, and heals wounds only too raw a hundred or so years ago.

Firstly, considerable complications soon arose with such problems as that of finding a suitable oath for new Roman Catholic Members of Parliament which did not include the traditional Protestant clauses. As Owen Chadwick points out, not only was this matter the subject of painful dispute, but in April and May 1829, when the first Catholics took their oaths and their seats in the Lords and the Commons, doubts were expressed by a number of Roman priests as to

whether or not such members were right in the eyes of their church. Secondly, there were more sweeping considerations, and as Alec Vidler wrote in 1961: "The combined effect of the repeal of the Test Act and of Catholic Emancipation was to deal its death-blow to the old ideal... that church and state in England were one society." He continues by pointing out how "In July 1830 the downfall of the Restoration monarchy in France sent a shudder of alarm through conservative circles everywhere. By this new revolution which seemed to be directed against the altar as well as against the throne, all established institutions felt themselves to be threatened." ⁶

Insecurity seems to have been a key feeling for many in both the middle and governing classes in England. Peel's short Tory government of 1835 tried somehow to strengthen the institution of the church through the Ecclesiastical Commission, and through the legislation over the following several years many abuses were corrected - those concerning non-residence, pluralism and the streamlining of cathedral chapters receiving considerable public approval. Again the permanent establishment of the Commissions ensured a continuing and adequate administration and machinery. But the main need for the Established Church was more than mechanical.

Following the death of Charles Simeon in 1836, the Evangelical movement lacked a leader of equal stature.⁷ Lord Shaftsbury seems to have been unable to keep the cutting edge of its thought and leadership, and as Vidler says, the movement became fanatically anti-Catholic as well as anti-liberal. It was into this vacuum that the Oxford Movement slipped easily with its powerful historical claims of catholicism for the national church and the imaginative strength of its leaders, Keble, Newman, and Froude.

It would be out of place to deal with such an enormous matter as the Oxford Movement in any detail here. But as far as many traditionally minded evangelical churchmen were concerned, it was its strengths which spelled out future trouble.

Keble's assize sermon on 14 July 1833 on "National Apostasy" struck out at the reforming and liberal movements determined on the suppression of ten Irish Bishopricks. It offended the traditional erastianism that was so widely present in political circles: but even so the movement was still very much a clerical one, and an academic one at that. ⁸

It was the hostile response of so many, including the Bishops, to Tract XC which marked a new phase in the reaction of the country to what was going on in Oxford.⁹ Furthermore it was the curiously awesome "presence" of Newman which made him at once remote and yet so attractive to the numbers who followed him out to Littlemore to hear him preach in the early 1840s.¹⁰

His sermon on "the parting of friends" may have been in a small country church, but Newman was in many respects a national figure. His resignation from the incumbency of St. Mary's, Oxford on 18 September 1843, just a few days before the final sermon out at Littlemore, was widely published news. The church was crowded out "till chairs were obliged to be set in the churchyard".¹¹ The scene was an extraordinary one and, according to Gregory, "the sound of...weeping resounded through the church".¹²

After the sermon, Newman walked slowly out towards the east end, and, taking off his hood, he hung it over the altar rails and left it there.¹³ It was not only his resignation that was being proclaimed, but in a way it is possible to see this as the start of a division between the "mind" of the new movement and very many ordinary English people, despite those it would serve with such dedication in the later work of the slum parishes in a growing industrial and commercial society. It was seen as a move from within the heart of the establishment at Oxford, Romewards.

In his autobiography, Price commented¹⁴:

"...the Oxford Movement - a movement intended to work a revolution in the Church of England; and Popery proposed to produce in politics a revolution in the civil liberties of England".

However over-suspicious he may have been, Price, as an educated man expressed the feelings of very many.

The real, popular disquiet over what was seen as open Romanism in the Established Church came, of course, after the more intellectual unrest of the 1840's. There is a picture of a celebration of the Eucharist in Pusey House, situated just outside the chapel. Three of the "fathers" of the movement kneel before the altar - and each is in surplice, scarf and hood. The ritualism and colour that came more and more into worship followed the move of the Cambridge Camden Society to London in 1846.¹⁵ There is no doubt that whatever the differences, the newly entitled Ecclesiological Society and the "Puseyites" were lumped together in the popular mind, so that the late 40s and 50s saw a

tidal wave of protests against the ritualists. The Rock was a constant source of shrill protest, and demonstrated in almost every issue the nervousness felt by very many at what they saw as open heresy and even treason.

In his History, Merryweather quotes the stance of both Pusey in Eirenicon, and Orby Shipley in his Tracts for the Day, and claims "the whole Ritualistic movement was a plot to unprotestantize the National church..." He continues "As a climax to this tissue of error and apostasy, and to thoroughly convert the whole Christian economy into a vile system of priest-craft, the Tractarian revivalists deny the authority of the Bible as the sole rule of faith".¹⁶ Feelings, and educated middle-class feelings at that, ran very high. The colour and richness of worship brought to the slums seemed to mean nothing when confronted with the vivid collective memories of the Spanish Armada, the Gunpowder Plot and the Revolution of 1688.

Little wonder is it that when, in 1850, Pius IX set out a Roman Catholic hierarchy with a system of dioceses covering England, there was public outcry at the so-called "Papal Aggression". The Prime Minister's open letter to the Bishop of Durham appeared on the eve of Guy Fawkes' day. In it he castigated the papal action as "insolent and insidious", and he continued by attacking the Ritualists "leading their flocks to the very verge of the precipice." But he felt however that the majority of the nation would scorn these latest attempts "to confine the intellect and enslave the soul".¹⁷ Nevertheless the effects upon the ritualists were considerable, with many enquiries and legal proceedings, ending with the Public Worship Regulation Act in 1874. Subject to extreme public suspicion, a number of Ritualist priests were imprisoned, and the venerated Bishop King of Lincoln was tried in the Archbishop's court for worship irregularities.¹⁸

Legal strife and anti-ritualist demonstrations were perpetual, and the stories of Maconochie, Purchas, Tooth and S.F. Green of Miles Platting are only four of very many documented by Owen Chadwick, Moorman and others in major works on the period. The extreme feelings of even mildly ritualistic clergy are well demonstrated by a letter written back in 1843 by R.W. Church (later Dean of St. Paul's) to his mother:¹⁹

"There is no way of stopping the popular outcry just now without abandoning what seems true. We must be content to live and perhaps die, suspected".

When, in 1863, Dean Stanley had a private audience with Pius IX, he was given a message for Pusey: "I compare him to a bell, which always sounds to invite the faithful to church, and itself always remains outside." There is no doubt that however shrill the protestant protests, their suspicion was hardly unfounded.²⁰

Origins of the Free Church of England.

This then is the background against which the growth of the Free Church of England must be seen. If the reactions of Merryweather and Bishop Price seem hysterical it is because they reflect the attitudes of many in that day. A deep public suspicion of Rome and a violent hostility to "Puseyism" were utterly real. Indeed the European revolutions of 1848 only served to create further feelings of political insecurity in a situation where a goodly portion of the national church seemed to be growing ever closer to a foreign leader whose ancestor had branded Elizabeth I as illegitimate, and had openly encouraged revolt against her. But the actual origin of the movement needed more of a focus of strife and discontent than just this background. Such a focus was found in the person of Henry Phillpotts, and his diocese of Exeter.

Queen Victoria, with uncharacteristic frankness, once referred to Phillpotts as "that fiend, the Bishop of Exeter".²¹ Greville wrote of him as "that fawning old sinner, the B. of Exeter".²² His unpopularity was countrywide and legendary. A former Pluralist Rector, and an astringent political pamphleteer, Phillpotts' total opposition to Roman Catholic emancipation changed in 1829 during the Tory ministry of the Duke of Wellington. He was already the holder of the living of Stanhope-on-the Wear in the Diocese of Durham (through the influence of his relative Lord Eldon²³)- one of the richest in England. He was also, through his personality and his pamphleteering, no stranger to either unpopularity or the effect of political influence,²⁴ and when the government made its decision on the emancipation issue, Phillpotts suddenly threw all his weight behind the government. His pamphlets A Letter to the Right Honourable George Canning, on the Bill of 1825 for removing the disqualifications of His Majesty's Roman Catholic subjects and its successor A Short Letter to the Right Honourable George Canning etc.,²⁵ were followed by his own personal support at the vital Oxford by-election for Sir Robert Peel, the government candidate.

Phillpotts' convenient conversion and his breathtaking political "trimming" brought its reward in the shape of firstly the offer of an Irish Bishopric

(refused), and then the see of Exeter, following the translation of Dr. Christopher Bethell to Bangor.²⁶ This was in the autumn of 1830 just before the Tory government fell to Earl Grey; but his regular contacts with both the Duke of Wellington and Lord Eldon had born fruit.²⁷

Phillpotts was extraordinarily unpopular both nationally and in his diocese. C.K. Francis Brown writes that he was "an old fashioned high churchman before the Tractarians", utterly dedicated to the authority of the church of the land.²⁸ Lambert says of him that he was a romantic who saw himself in the mould of Beckett or Stephen Gardiner, and he looked for the sweeping away of all dissent to the national church. "Dissent" to him meant Roman Catholics as well as Protestant non-conformity.²⁹

Anthony Trollope satirized him as Archdeacon Grantley's second son Henry "...sent on a tour into Devonshire..." The reasons why he and his diocese were so much the place of problems leading to the formation of the FCE are complex, and have never been properly addressed by the historians of the FCE, but it is Trollope's continuing words which give a fair introduction:³⁰

"...other boys would fight while they had a leg to stand on, but he would fight with no leg at all...His relations could not but admire his pluck, but they sometimes were forced to regret that he was inclined to be a bully." He continues..."though he could fawn to the masters...he was imperious and masterful to the servants and the poor."

"Focal Points" of trouble.

Although none of the principal FCE historians really uses the main resources of information properly, all trace the movement to the dispute over the licence and ministry of the Reverend James Shore, who officiated in the 1840s at the Chapel-of-Ease in Bridgetown in Devonshire [illustrations p. ix]. But it is the background to this event, and its whole "socio-religious" context which enables a proper insight into the growth of what was widely seen in the middle decades of the last century as a serious threat to the Established Church.

Given the context of Phillpotts and his diocese, ecclesiastical dissent was virtually a certainty in some way or another, and a number of pre-disposing factors were involved. Firstly, at that time, the diocese was very large indeed, and actually consisted of both Devon and Cornwall. In addition, the countrywide liturgical and theological instability from the Oxford Movement was reflected sharply in a diocese so large and with widely differing traditions.

But a very significant factor in the matter was the vigorously abrasive personality of the bishop himself, for his militant convictions engendered a personal unpopularity and bad feeling from the earliest days of his episcopate. This worked fatally against any sort of relationship that should have built up gradually between bishop and diocese during his ministry.

Phillpotts' attitude towards the Reform Bill preparations in the spring of 1832 put him very unfavourably in the popular public eye. He bitterly opposed the Bill in the Lords: "...my Lords...some of the chief supporters of the bill glory in it because it is a revolutionary measure".

During the second reading of the Bill, Phillpotts again attacked "...a grand speech against the Bill, full of fire and venom..."³¹ For his pains he was thoroughly and publicly rebuked by Lord Grey, but the local damage was done.³² In Durham Phillpotts' effigy was publicly burnt. Following the burning down of the Bishop's Palace at Bristol the palace at Exeter had to be defended by coastguards,³³ and at a large reform meeting at Exeter at which the Mayor presided, three hearty groans were given for the bishop.³⁴ Little wonder is it that in January of 1832 a pamphleteer had written "At this moment there are new churches waiting till the bishop of the diocese can gain courage to consecrate them." ³⁵

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More fatal damage was done to any sort of pastoral bonding process in his early days during a terrible epidemic of cholera in Exeter. This lasted from 19 July 1832 until the middle of October. Over 400 people died, and the local population was incensed by the haste of burials, the problems of finding convenient burial ground, and the practice of "carrying under hand" by bearers. Ugly scenes grew, and at Southernhay burial ground the justice officers were assaulted by the crowd.³⁶ The horrors of the situation were graphically described by Dr. Thomas Shapter. "I well remember the scene...The general silence of the city, save when broken by the tolling of the funeral bell...was most remarkable; the streets were deserted..."

Yet during the emergency the bishop was absent from the city on a confirmation tour, and he returned only once for a few hours to the cathedral to attend a day for special prayer and humiliation.³⁷ On 26 August 1832, Archdeacon Barnes wrote to his brother Ralph (the bishop's secretary and Chapter Clerk):

"... you would be doing great good if you could come and show yourself...let people see that you are at hand on their account...urge also upon the Bishop the great necessity of coming occasionally to Exeter."³⁸ But he did not come, and not only was this seen as an act of disloyalty to the people he was sent to serve, but by the same token it loosened the bonds of loyalty of many in the diocese to him. In following years Thomas Latimer, editor of the Western Times continued to remind readers that, unlike the Mayor, Phillpotts had "run away", and avoided his duty of being at the centre of his diocese during a time of such great need.³⁹

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Much as the people disliked their bishop, a lot of his clergy also both feared and disliked him. For many who contributed towards the stability of "the Establishment", loyalty was strained to breaking point.

"An iron hand undisguised by any sort of glove" was the way that C.K. Francis Brown described Phillpotts' rule of his diocese. This was certainly apparent in his attitude when publicly and brutally correcting a curate in divine service at Torquay who disliked using the Athanasian Creed with its damnatory clauses. Again, "flirting" with non-conformity was a punishable offence. In 1836 he discovered that the curate of St. Ives, the Rev. J. Malkin, occasionally attended the Methodist church with his wife and family. In fact the Minister there had been a former colleague in the mission field. But when Malkin pleaded with the Bishop that he could not dictate to his wife, Phillpotts pronounced him to be "unfit to be a member of the Establishment". Malkin subsequently resigned from his post, but was pursued through the Ecclesiastical Court by the bishop.⁴⁰

Certainly frustration must have been the feeling of many of his clergy as they saw the flagrant advancement of Phillpotts' family and friends. As bishop he automatically held the patronage to 47 livings as well as the four "greater persons" in the cathedral chapter, 24 Prebends and the four Archdeaonries. But a frequent habit of his was to bargain with patrons and arrange exchanges; or again, to find technical fault with presentations until the appointment fell to him by virtue of the "lapse" limitation. In 1839, in opposing the Crown's appointment to the vacant Deanery his "arrangements" caused open and national scandal. Out of this complicated issue he managed to get the living of Thorverton for his son-in-law, and planned, under a complex lapse procedure, to

get the Deanery for his son. But the plan was realised, and the Canonry Bill hastened through parliament so that with just two days before a lapse could be declared, Precentor Lowe was elected Dean. Phillpotts' son had to be content with the vacant Precentorship. Latimer in the Western Times made hay of the situation.⁴¹

The Surplice Riots, 1844 - 1845.

One of the most powerful of all the "pre-disposing factors" to dissent was the combination of Phillpotts' old fashioned high churchmanship,⁴² and his draconian methods of keeping order and discipline in the diocese. J.R.H. Moorman and Norman Sykes call him "a Tractarian".⁴³ Perhaps with greater realism Brown says that he was "an old-fashioned high churchman", but continues: "He belonged to no party but his own".⁴⁴ With equal insight, Owen Chadwick characterises him as "a Tory of the extreme right, a genuinely religious man with his religion concealed behind porcupine quills".⁴⁵ In a part of England so intensely conservative in religion, there was a deep dislike of "Puseyism" in Devonshire. Here in the west was one of the last areas to accept the Reformation with English Bible and Book of Common Prayer, and now, aided by the acidic pen of the thoroughly protestant-minded Latimer, there was great resistance to the trappings of Tractarianism.⁴⁶

It would be wrong to see Phillpotts himself as a "Romaniser",⁴⁷ for he regarded the Roman Church as dissent. Nevertheless his sympathies with the Tractarians are clearly seen in his warm agreement to Pusey preaching in the diocese in the summer of 1844, and in the evident pleasure with which Phillpotts received the dedication in a published volume of sermons by Pusey.⁴⁸

Certainly amongst many tractarian features, Phillpotts felt that the wearing of the surplice had proper ecclesiastical authority; above all his intensely fastidious mind demanded uniformity. Yet the serious controversy centring on the wearing of the surplice caused irreparable damage to the unity of the diocese. Indeed, during the so-called "surplice riots" of 1844 there were actually calls to secession from the Established church within Phillpotts' jurisdiction.

The main source of information on the controversy is an account written by Thomas Shapter in his own hand and lodged in the Cathedral Library. Dr. Shapter on the Surplice Riots in Exeter is a difficult manuscript to read,⁴⁹ not only

because Shapter's hand is not always clear, but because the binding process has occasionally obscured marginal notes. The matter was a complex one, but in outline, the problems were thus:

In his 1842 Charge, Phillpotts had insisted upon faithful observance of the rubrics. Clergy were urged to "revive what we may; but certainly not permit any others to fall into disuse".⁵⁰ Evidently a number of clergy interpreted this as referring to the use of the surplice, and there were a number of cases of open conflict which followed. In particular, the Vicar of Helston was arraigned on eight charges of various kinds; and after hearing the case on 4 October 1844, Phillpotts delivered judgement on 23rd.. Concerning the surplice, the bishop gave clear indication that he actually regarded it as "a triumph against Popery",⁵¹ and that he wished all to use it if other more costly vestments were not available. Thus, on 19 November, Phillpotts issued a letter to his clergy "on the observance of the rubric in the Book of Common Prayer. He urged clergy to "look to the law...so as to ensure uniformity".⁵²

Far from calming the situation his letter resulted in a public outburst, especially when it was seen that the Bishop had no intention of backing-down, but that it actually gave instruction "whenever the sermon is part of the ministration of the Parochial Clergy that the surplice be always used".⁵³ Immediately, the columns of the Western Times (as might be expected) were filled with announcements of parish meetings and protests - just one week saw eighteen of them.

Matters were made more complicated still, for on 16 November, the Dean and Chapter had sent a memorial to the Archbishop of Canterbury for his judgement in the matter. Following this, on 11 December, Phillpotts wrote to Dean Lowe accusing the inner Chapter of a breach of confidence in publishing their memorial. He further disputed the legal ability of the chapter to memorialise the Archbishop, which, he maintained, could be done only by himself as bishop. He ended by calling for canonical obedience from all concerned to himself.⁵⁴

In his summing-up, Shapter blamed both the local press and Phillpotts himself for the public suspicion and open hostility⁵⁵ which was:

"...fanned into anger and action by a local press violently opposed and consistently abusive of the Bishop - but more on political (underlining in the text) than religious ground...the ill judged letter...to the Dean not only added burning coals to a fire already raging but seriously damaged the position and influence of the Bishop by the gross charges therein made and that too in unbecoming language...."

The "fire...raging" in Exeter centred on the parish of St. Sidwell's where there was a strong tractarian sympathy. Yet in general, the tide was turning very publicly against the Bishop. Shapter noted that already, "by the 12 December nearly all the city parishes had met in vestry & had their say..."⁵⁶ Thus on 23 December, Phillpotts issued a letter to the clergy withdrawing his order where the surplice had not customarily been used. Yet this not only served to create confusion, but it placed a number of clergy in a position of difficulty.⁵⁷

The new year saw an escalation of the troubles. On 3 January 1845 a large public meeting was presided over by the Mayor, and resolutions were passed to maintain "the Protestant Church against the Romanising uses and changes..."⁵⁸ Phillpotts issued a letter on 8 January stating that he had just received a letter from the Archbishop to the clergy and laity of the province of Canterbury. He commended the advice contained in it - to continue services in their present form.⁵⁹ Consequently, Courtenay of St. Sidwell's, Carlyon of St. James' and Armstrong and Toye from two other parishes continued to use the surplice. A joint parochial meeting of St. Sidwell's and St. James' requested their clergy to desist; Carlyon did so, but Courtenay refused, pointing to the Bishop's letter of 23 December, and explaining that he had used the surplice for three years past.⁶⁰

The following day (Sunday 12 January 1845), having preached in the surplice, Courtenay was mobbed by a crowd of some 600, and there were threats of personal violence. The incumbent of St. Paul's suffered similarly, and on 18 January both incumbents wrote to the mayor warning him that there was a danger of other mobbings the next day. The mayor granted protection, but this time a violent crowd of some 2000 people followed Courtenay through the streets, and in the evening, a Dr. Coleridge who also preached in his surplice was given similar treatment. On 21 January the mayor wrote to the bishop saying that the whole of his police force had been involved in keeping the peace, and should the crowds become larger, he would not be responsible for the consequences. There was also a petition sent to Phillpotts signed by some 150 citizens.

The Bishop was forced into retreat, and the following day, he replied to the Mayor repudiating his own responsibility, and enclosing a letter to the Incumbent for the mayor "to deliver or withhold as he sees fit". The enclosed letter absolved the incumbent from any of the restrictions implied in the order regarding the surplice. On 23 January a large and acrimonious parish meeting

was held, and Courtenay duly gave assurance that the surplice would no longer be worn in the pulpit. For the time, the controversy was ended.⁶¹

The incidents from 1843 to 1845 caused serious damage to the unity of the diocese, and also gave great impetus to the move towards dissent. But it was not just in Exeter that there was outrage at Phillpotts's manipulation, and copies of The Times show strong national concern. Indeed there were several leading articles and many letters in edition after edition on the subject. Comment continued from December 1844 onwards, and in the edition of 4 February 1845 a writer demanded the resignations of the bishops of Exeter and London.⁶²

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It would be wrong to blame Phillpotts without seeing that the surplice controversy was his fault not so much because he felt the surplice itself to be an essential in worship, but that he insisted on uniformity - and moreover, upon his own authority in achieving it. In his Letter to a Rural Dean of 3 December 1844, Phillpotts claimed that he had "no special liking for a thing so purely indifferent in itself..." but that he had made the Order for the sake of uniformity. He continued by insisting that use must be made of "either surplice or gown; and surplice has the authority of the church..."⁶³

In fact Thomas Shapter notes that the surplice had already been used for three years at St. Sidwell's and St. James' without any trouble.⁶⁴ Thus the changes had actually been introduced in 1841. Phillpotts's great fault was that he simply had to legislate - he could not let sleeping dogs lie. As Owen Chadwick points out, when it came to the matter of the surplice, the principal conflict "was neither political nor constitutional". But because of the controversy engendered by his ruling, the laity learned from the press to identify the wearing of the surplice in the pulpit as "the badge of a party which declared war on the Protestant Reformation."⁶⁵

The fact is that 5 or more dissenting causes in the diocese of Exeter alone are directly attributable to the wholehearted dissatisfaction felt by many clergy and laity alike. One of those who chafed at the bit during all the troubles was the thoroughly protestant-minded curate of Bridgetown in the parish of Berry Pomeroy, the Reverend James Shore. If the Surplice Riots provided the main environmental origins of the FCE, then it was James Shore who was the main originator.

Shore and the Totnes Controversy.

Shore did not set out consciously to find a new movement. The movement began out of a number of centres of vigorous opposition to Phillpotts in the West Country. These fed on the white-heat of the Surplice Controversy, and might have simply faded with time, but for the personal stand of Shore against the Bishop. Phillpotts' treatment of Shore was characteristically thorough and ruthless in pursuit of what he considered to be the enforcement of discipline and episcopal authority. But ultimately the protracted and difficult legal case and the imprisonment that Shore was forced to endure made him a natural focus for the various dissenting groups - and it has to be said that Shore was not slow to seize the advantages of martyrdom!

Phillpotts and Litigation.

Bishop Phillpotts took naturally to litigation. Throughout his episcopate he was involved with controversy both within and outside the diocese. Whether it was his opposition in 1847 and 1848 to Dr. Hampden's appointment to the see of Hereford, or the equally public refusal to accept the Reverend G.C. Gorham as Vicar of Bramford Speke, Phillpotts was intractable and utterly determined. If this meant opposing the wishes of the Archbishop of Canterbury, or (as in the Gorham case) the Crown, then so be it.

He was also continually involved in smaller litigation within the diocese - The Rev. J. Malkin of St. Ives; presentation to the parishes of Stockland and Combe Pyne; the prosecution of the editor of the Western Times for libel; any account of these few examples would be out of place here.⁶⁶ But it is undoubtedly this instinctive and compulsive feel for legal action which was not only one of Phillpotts' least pleasant features but also provided the final and most deciding "focal-point" in the inevitable process towards dissent in the diocese.

Even the scrupulously clinical examination of the man by G.C.B. Davies says:

"Phillpotts so often appears as delighting in vindictive pursuit of small fry, with unnecessary ferocity and ruthlessness...the resultant impression of a juggernaut crushing all opposition, however slight, with bitter determination, still persists in dominating all other aspects of his character and episcopate".

Nor did the amount of litigation all at once seem to matter, for while Shore was being prosecuted, so was a mine owner whose mine had flooded part of a

neighbouring pit in which Phillpotts had a financial interest (Phillpotts v. Evers). Astonishingly these were both at the same time as the protracted Gorham controversy was proceeding! It is with wry insight that Owen Chadwick refers to the law courts as Phillpotts' "happiest home"!⁶⁷

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In fact, outwardly the Shore Case had nothing to do with the Surplice Controversy. But its roots, the energy which surrounded this complex business, and the people who fanned the flames (like Latimer of the Western Times), did. It was a complex case which, because of wide public interest, has left a great deal of primary resource material. Both Phillpotts and Shore made collections of correspondence and evidence to support their cases, other pamphleteers took the side of Shore during the proceedings, and Latimer in the columns of the Western Times took a detailed and a very partisan interest.⁶⁸

Shore and the Bishop, 1832 - August 1844.

There is little doubt that there was bad blood between Shore and Phillpotts long before the case which brought Shore to the Court of Arches.

The Duke of Somerset was Lord of the Manor of Bridgetown, and patron of the living of Berry Pomeroy in which Bridgetown was a hamlet. Around the year 1832, he built a number of houses there for some of his tenants and for labourers on the estates. At the same time he built a chapel for them, at a cost of £7,000, to provide them with a place for regular worship.⁶⁹ Somerset suggested James Shore to the Vicar of Berry Pomeroy as a suitable curate-in-charge.

Meanwhile Phillpotts saw the need to ensure a proper endowment for the building before agreeing to consecrate it. Negotiation proceeded between Maberly (the Duke's lawyer) and Ralph Barnes (the Bishop's secretary), and eventually it was decided that in order for both the Duke and the Bishop to see how viable the project was, the building should be temporarily licensed for worship. On the basis of this agreement, the vicar, Mr. Edwards, appointed Shore to take charge.

The Duke finally presented his petition on 28 October 1832, and the licence was issued on the 9 November.⁷⁰ But it seems clear that this was on the condition

that the officiant should be "a priest or minister in holy orders to be for that purpose licensed by us..." - and, moreover, for the services of the Established Church.⁷¹

All went well until the close of the year of 1840 when the appointment was to be made to the vacant living of Chudleigh in the diocese of Exeter. Following a 17th century trust deed, the right of patronage was vested in a number of local trustees; and according to ancient custom, the nominated candidates were then presented to the parishioners for election. The four candidates were: Cumming, a master of Chudleigh Grammar School and curate to the late vicar; the Rev. Wilmot Palk, brother to a local landowner; James Shore; and another curate, Templar. There was, as might be expected, a good deal of canvassing and local politics involved.⁷² Moreover, Cumming was a Tractarian and Shore a convinced evangelical, so there were also sharp churchmanship issues at stake as well. Even more significantly, it was to transpire that Cumming was Phillpotts' own man.⁷³

Before the actual election, the two curates realised that they were unlikely to get votes as outsiders and withdrew. But Shore had taken against the Tractarian Cumming, and he had a handbill printed and circulated advising people to vote for Palk - who was elected. Greatly displeased, Cumming sent a copy of the handbill to Phillpotts, who refused to institute Palk, alleging the deed of trusteeship to be faulty and the election irregular. Clearly he hoped, as was his custom to secure presentation himself by delaying matters until the right to present lapsed to himself as bishop. The trustees, however, took the matter to court, and not only did Phillpotts lose, but he was ordered to pay the whole of the costs involved.

Meanwhile Shore was summoned to the presence of the bishop. The contents of the interview were substantially revealed by Phillpotts when he was being cross-examined under oath in the Court of Exeter in his own case against Latimer - the editor of the Western Times. The barrister defending Latimer, Mr. Cockburn, showed the court a copy of the handbill distributed by Shore (dated 19 January 1841). Phillpotts admitted that he had summoned Shore to his presence to reprove him for what he considered an improper act: "...his disingenuousness on that occasion, had almost induced me to withdraw his licence". Shore claimed that his behaviour was not improper, and in a letter to Phillpotts on 11 February he wrote "As Mr. Cumming's name was not mentioned in my circular I do not see he has any right to complain of me."⁷⁴

Clearly a reprimand was not enough for Phillpotts: "The Bishop, with much warmth of temper, forbade him ever to preach in Chudleigh more. He kept his eye on Mr. Shore..."⁷⁵ Now Shore was a marked man, not only because he had opposed the wishes and churchmanship of Phillpotts personally, but because of the bishop's "...bitter opposition toward the evangelicals. For these he took little trouble to disguise his contempt..."⁷⁶

Shore and the Bishop, the background to the Case

In 1834, after the opening of Bridgetown Chapel, the Vicar of Berry Pomeroy, Edwards, died. He was replaced by the Rev. Mr. E. Brown, and Shore continued to work under him also. But just a short time after the clash between Shore and Phillpotts over the Chudleigh affair in 1841, Brown was appointed to another living: in fact he exchanged livings with W.B. Cosens, "a creature of the bishop"⁷⁷, and the trouble began.⁷⁸

Shore had not actually been correctly nominated for the curacy when Brown had replaced Edwards in 1834, and following the news of Brown's exchange, the Bishop's secretary wrote to Shore on 15 August 1843: "I am desired by the Bishop to remind you that on the change of Incumbency you require a new nomination".⁷⁹ There was some delay, because as Shore wrote to Barnes on 31 August, Cosens was not in residence, and in any case "the Duke of Somerset considered that I received my nomination from his Grace..."⁸⁰ Shore continued: "if his Lordship wishes, I will, cease to officiate in the Chapel till the nomination can be procured."⁸¹

According to Richard Lambert (p. 134), soon after Cosens was appointed, he was summoned to the Bishop and told "you ought to take especial care whom you appoint as your assistant curate at Bridgetown..." As Lambert continues, "It was enough. The Rev Cousens (sic) knew well which side his bread was buttered".

In an account of these complexities to the magazine Patriot, Shore writes of the subsequent results of the bishop's "hint".⁸² "...Mr. Cosens frankly told me, "that the matter was out of his hands, and that he had engaged with the Bishop not to give me the nomination." Shore's own personal account in his reply to the Bishop's address to the Archbishop shows clearly the complexity, and the duplicity of the negotiations at the time:⁸³

"The day after this interview, I received a letter from the Bishop, prohibiting me from preaching, on the ground that he had "in vain waited in

expectation of hearing from Mr. Cosens that he had determined to give me a nomination". This was so contrary to what Mr. Cosens told me the day before...that he would give the nomination if the Bishop sanctioned it".

The detail of this difficult and unpleasant business is not for here. But the widespread indignation caused is seen in the account given of the negotiations in the Eclectic Review for May 1849. Clearly Phillpotts and Cosens had decided the matter, and as to the claims and counter-claims over letters, as Eclectic Review (p. 618) commented "Heigho! for the logic".

Shore was not without blame in the affair, nor was he without anywhere to go. Indeed, Merryweather says that during October 1843, Shore was actually offered preferment elsewhere, but refused (p. 67). Both he and Cosens were standing on points of principle - and Cosens duly passed on his version of what must have been an acrimonious subsequent meeting to the Bishop.⁸⁴

Cosens says that Shore gave clear indication of his intention to officiate at Bridgetown without the Bishop's license. This was on 16 October 1843, and in a letter to Phillpotts dated 11 November, Shore carried the process further. He claimed he could find no "reason or cause for this persecution", and continued "I have no other alternative but the painful one of freeing myself...from the obligation of...legal jurisdiction."⁸⁵ Possibly Shore regretted his haste, for a letter of 23 November insists that he did not intend any breach of the law in officiating without licence;⁸⁶ but in an earlier letter (published in his own collection) he had pointed out that he was "placed in such circumstance of necessity" that he might well have no alternative but to "withdraw myself from the Establishment".⁸⁷ Carefully, Phillpotts never fully denied the possibility of continuing at Bridgetown with Cosens' nomination.⁸⁸ This, Cosens bluntly refused to do,⁸⁹ and continued to refuse, despite Shore's protestations.

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Matters were made more complex still when Cosens wrote to the Duke of Somerset on 19 December 1843 asking him to produce some other suitable priest, acceptable to them both, that he could, as vicar, nominate for Bridgetown. This courteous letter was met with an equally courteous refusal on 31 December; clearly Shore had a firm ally in the Duke. Cosens returned to the attack on 8 January 1844 with accusations that many of the Bridgetown congregation were dissenters, that, Shore had "repeatedly omitted" the communion service⁹⁰ (Shore claimed this to be once only - through severe illness)⁹¹, and that he had

omitted wording to suit dissenters in reference to the Queen as supreme Governor of the Established Church.

This "paper-chase", as Richard Lambert described it,⁹² was clearly leading nowhere. Shore had the Duke's ear, and Cosens the Bishop's, and both parties were in deadlock. Local feelings at Bridgetown were running high. Merryweather says that the chapel had actually been closed down on 16 October 1843 and this provoked a petition to the Duke signed by 800 of the congregation "determined to open it without the Bishop's license".⁹³

The result was drastic, for on 16 February 1844, the Duke's agent, Mr. T. Micheltore certified the building under the provisions of 52 Geo. III., c. 155 "as a place...for religious worship of Protestants".⁹⁴ This he was entitled to do, for it was a private chapel built by the Duke, and licensed for worship but never consecrated. However Cosens had already written on 6 February reminding Shore of his ordination vows, and Shore received a legal prohibition from officiating at Bridgetown signed by Phillpotts.⁹⁵

As Shore pointed out to the Bishop's secretary, he had actually written, withdrawing from the Bishop's jurisdiction.⁹⁶ He later recalled, "I wrote to his secretary to ask if I could do anything more effectually to secede. I...was a Nonconformist Minister."⁹⁷ Just five months later he was called to a Commission of Enquiry set up by Phillpotts, for officiating at Bridgetown Chapel, using the Book of Common Prayer within a registered Dissenter's meeting house - and this despite the fact (as The Western Times showed clearly) Shore had taken every care to make his position secure within the law.⁹⁸

Yet Phillpotts had by no means finished with the matter, especially as the Commission decided against Shore, so that the case proceeded to the Court of Arches (see later). Nevertheless the first "free" church using the full liturgy of the Church of England was established, and a portion of the letter from Shore to Barnes on 22 March 1844 showed that there were other moves towards freedom in the diocese as well.⁹⁹

This was at the time when the Surplice Controversy was very close to the climax of the winter of 1844-45. Clearly Phillpotts was already "reaping a whirlwind" from more than one direction.

The establishment of other "Free Churches" in the diocese at this time

Exeter, 1844.

In the case of Shore at Bridgetown, the secession of both church and priest from the Establishment was more of an issue of personalities than doctrine. Evidently both Shore and the Duke of Somerset shared a mistrust of the rigorist "high church" views of Phillpotts - and Shore had already made his doctrinal position clear in the publication of the notice during the Chudleigh elections. But although churchmanship was involved, it was by no means the leading issue. The secession was complete before the climax of the Surplice Controversy had been reached.¹⁰⁰ Rather was it a matter of authority, for in the Commission of August 1844, Shore was trying to get recognition of his personal independence from the Bishop as his *ἐπίσκοπος*. By contrast, other "Free" movements were direct responses to the theology of the Bishop and the practices of the "Puseyites", usually at their local churches.

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An anonymous Brief History of the FCE in Exeter traces the roots of the "Free" movement to the year 1822 when an Independent Calvinist congregation met in the "High Street Chapel" in Musgrove Alley in the city centre. This was started by the Rev. R.H. Carne. In 1835 the congregation moved to a new purpose built chapel, the "Grosvenor Place Chapel" in Grosvenor Place itself, and it was at this time that the movement became identified with the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion. This chapel later merged with the FCE in 1860.¹⁰¹

The actual "Free" church itself dates from the year of the first Surplice Riots, 1844. The Exeter Flying Post took a trenchant view of the prevailing practices of what it called "Oxonian Theology". Editorial comment proclaimed "our aim has been and will be to preserve the EFFICIENCY and PROTESTANTISM of the Church of England".¹⁰²

In the summer of 1844 Pusey was given permission to preach in the diocese by Phillpotts - despite his much published prohibition by the University of Oxford. This was at Ilfracombe. At the same time at Helston there were complaints of Romanizing tendencies resulting in a case against the incumbent which was heard on 4 October 1844 - when Phillpotts supported the incumbent. In

Exeter itself, the surplice had been used for some time already at St. Sidwell's.

The celebrated surplice "order" which was the source of the riots was not issued until 20 November, but already, at the end of September, the Commercial Hall in Fore Street was opened "as a 'Free Church'". It was the last Thursday of the month, and "There were services morning and evening...Indeed, at the latter, numbers could not gain admittance." ¹⁰³

Shore's example at Totnes was evidently bearing fruit here, and in the same sort of spirit of traditional liturgical worship. "The services were those of the Book of Common Prayer, with some slight alterations..."¹⁰⁴ Perhaps unwisely, in view of his summons to the Bishop's Commission just some six or seven weeks before, Shore took these opening services and preached at both the services the next Sunday.

The surplice riots largely ceased after the troubles of January 1845 centring on St. Sidwell's. But the Post was unimpressed and spoke of "the necessity for a Free Episcopal Church...to provide for those who have been driven from their parochial edifices by the semi-popish teaching of the clergy..."¹⁰⁵

East Southernhay was on the border of St. Sidwell's and Trinity parishes, and the permanent Free church, Christ Church, was opened there at the beginning of April, 1846. It was a large building with seating for 1500, and as the Post for 9 April 1846 commented "it was crowded at the several services, but more especially so in the evening."¹⁰⁶ Shore was again involved, and in the evening he was the preacher. The cause obviously met a deeply felt local need, and press support was not lacking. The Post for 20 March 1845, in announcing the progress of the new work appealed for public support for the building which, it was expected, was to exceed £4,000.

For a while the Free Church continued to flourish, aided by a further short outbreak of the surplice riots in 1848. The "Papal Aggression" of 1850, when the Roman Church organised itself into diocese in Britain, only "added fuel to the flames".¹⁰⁷ But the real popular agitation had gone by 1860, and Phillpotts himself was becoming less and less of a public figure. Christ Church was simply too large to support a dwindling congregation. During the years 1849 to 1853 there was a total of 112 baptisms - something more than 22 per year. This would seem to indicate a good following (though probably not the several

hundreds that Brockett maintains). By the 1860s these figures had dropped significantly.¹⁰⁸ The first minister, Rev. E.R. Cowie actually owned the building. It was sold to a member of the congregation, "the property of a gentleman"¹⁰⁹, but when he died in 1860, other members could not afford to purchase.

The building was sold, firstly becoming a Presbyterian church; and then in 1864 it was purchased by the Wesleyan Methodists.¹¹⁰ But the Free Church congregation united with that of the Grosvenor Place Chapel,¹¹¹ and the newly named "St. James' Free Church" in Grosvenor Place was opened in May 1861.

The Post announced that the worship would be "in accordance with the principles of the late Right Honourable Lady Huntingdon's Connexion". It continued "...the Liturgical service will be used, and the doctrines preached will be in harmony with the Articles of the Church of England."¹¹²

The Rev. R.S. Short became the minister in 1861. The identification of the Free Church with the Connexion became fairly complete, and the Connexional hymn book was introduced. But the building itself seems to have remained as a local trust,¹¹³ and this was a significant point in its subsequent history.

When the FCE was legally constituted as a denomination in 1863, the church at Exeter identified with it. In fact, the church soon reverted to its original name of Christ Church, and as the building itself was not in the Central Connexional Trust its direction changed to the FCE with little trouble. In summer 1873 the building was enlarged and improved, and the Post announced: "The Free Church of England, situated in Grosvenor Place, St. Sidwell, was re-opened on Sunday". The report continued: "The service...is exactly the same as in the Church of England..."¹¹⁴ An article in December 1875 told how the building "is now entirely re-modelled, re-seated and tastily decorated."¹¹⁵

The church continues to flourish in 1993, although the building was destroyed in 1942 in the blitz. The new church was opened in Grosvenor Place in 1957.

Ilfracombe, 1844.

The establishment of the Free Church at Ilfracombe was, like that at Exeter, a direct reaction to the increase in ritualism in the 1840s, and in particular to the policy and sympathies of Phillpotts.

The Vicar of Ilfracombe was sympathetic to the new "Puseyite" customs.

"Vagaries in dress, and rites and ceremonies, strange to Protestant usage, were introduced, and not with stern and wrathful remonstrance."¹¹⁶ Then on Good Friday 1844, the people entering the church found the interior draped with black hangings¹¹⁷ - an effect as dramatic as it was inflammatory to local feeling. Matters deteriorated still further when, during Pusey's visit to Devon during the summer of that year, he was invited to preach in the church by the Vicar of Ilfracombe. In fact, there was so much local bad feeling that Pusey himself sought the Bishop's permission. This was readily given, and in a private interview Phillpotts told Pusey that he was glad to see him in the diocese at any time.¹¹⁸

Soon after Pusey's appearance, a writer to the North Devon Journal for 29 August 1844 remarked:¹¹⁹

"...the doctrines of the reformation are not taught in the Reformed Church; and the cry is not for a new place of worship...but for a man of God...Were he an evangelical clergyman, or one of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion, there can be no doubt of his success. An immediate secession from the Established Church would take place..."

In fact, a local gentleman, as Benjamin Price says 'having left the church from other causes, had commenced building what he called "a church of his own",¹²⁰ The gentleman was Walter Thorn of Montpelier House, Ilfracombe, and the building was constructed at his sole expense: indeed this must have been very considerable, for the seating capacity was 400. "Portland Chapel", as it was known, was officially opened on Sunday 1 September 1844 by the Connexional Minister Benjamin Woodyard who preached in both morning and evening to overflowing congregations".¹²¹ From the first the influence of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion was present.

But there were many initial problems for the cause at Ilfracombe. In July 1845, the Executive Committee of the Connexion reported that they had had to withdraw from this new work because of "the exorbitant demand of the proprietor of the chapel, even if they had the necessary funds at their disposal".¹²² In fact there is no further mention of Ilfracombe for the next several years in The Circular However, both Price and Merryweather give more information.

As soon as the building was complete, "a lady" resident in Ilfracombe "engaged it for a year".¹²³ For a while, the services were actually conducted by the Rev. James Sherman of the Surrey Chapel, but because the Prayer Book services

were being used, a bitter controversy broke out with a "Tract war" between Sherman and the Vicar of Ilfracombe who accused the Free Church of "stealing the church prayers".¹²⁴ Feelings ran high, and he had also dramatically branded those who ran the Free Church as "thieves, liars, schismatics...filled with the spirit of Satan". Local tradesmen were threatened with loss of custom and servants with their employment.¹²⁵ Increasing attendances only inflamed the situation, and in summer 1846 the controversy was still raging - the North Devon Journal having been used for much of the war of words.¹²⁶

Meanwhile, sometime during Autumn 1844 Sherman left Ilfracombe, and Connexional support ceased. According to Price, the church was re-opened in December 1844 as a Free Church by Shore of Totnes.¹²⁷ The Rev. E. R. Cowie of Exeter supplied the church until Christmas, and in the next year a number of men took the services until, in June 1845, Benjamin Price became the incumbent [illustration p. ix].¹²⁸ But in the interval the church had suffered an irregular supply so that it was often closed for weeks at a time. Price tells how he preached "his first sermon to some four and twenty persons".¹²⁹

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Price's ability and diligence met with a good deal of response, and he tells how the increasing attendance of people from the Parish Church excited the wrath of the Tractarians. In the summer of 1846 bad feeling was at its highest between the two sides - "the town was wrapped in a flame, and the poor minister nearly torn to pieces by the contending parties".¹³⁰

But the positive side of the controversy was that many distinguished people turned to the Free Church. During that year the church was enlarged - the seatings doubled, and a day school added to the Sunday school.¹³¹ It was also during this year the the title "Free Church of England" seems to have been used for the first time. When the church was registered for the solemnization of marriage, the certificate bore the name "Free Church of England". According to an article in the FCE Magazine for February 1869, the choice was due to the churchwarden who was involved in the transaction with the registrar.¹³²

Yet once again, intense controversy suddenly produced a reversal of the advances of 1846. As Price says "The year 1847 tried the Free Church severely; and the year 1848 nearly completed its ruin". He looked at the problem in his historical survey realistically. There were several factors involved, in his

eyes. One was strong opposition which made many fight shy of attending through fear; another reason was that the novelty of the movement now had worn off. Again, there had been a house to house campaign when the Free Church people had been denounced as "schismatics and deceivers", and part of the campaign seems to have been the spreading of false rumours that the church was actually failing. There was indeed apprehension, for in 1847, summer, autumn and winter problems were compounded by "paucity of visitors, occasioned by the want of railway communications, and the famine in Ireland."¹³³ The result was that in the spring of 1848, monies promised to the end of the lease were withdrawn, and Price himself was given notice.¹³⁴ But at this point, reading into Price's own words, it would seem that the lady proprietor had a change of heart over the matter. The day school however was closed. Briefly, debt continued to be a problem, and with continual troubles the church struggled through until 1849 when a good summer brought a fine season with a crowded church once more.¹³⁵

At this stage, there was concern that the lease had only 2 years more to run, and with it would cease the assured annual sum of £100. Aided by a group of distinguished visitors, a conference was held which agreed to purchase the building. Almost at once, Price tells with some pride, gifts of money were made by numbers of people, including one of £600. Significantly this was to be for the "divine service of the Church of England". Very soon the subscription list had reached £1000.

Even so, by the close of 1850 the situation once more became personally difficult for Price.¹³⁶ There was dissension inside the church as well as outside. Old loyalties seemed blurred, and the success of the appeal apparently led the owner of the building, Walter Thorn, to demand an exorbitant sum for the purchase.¹³⁷ Again, a man who had promised £200 withdraw because of an objection to the Trust Deed. At a vital meeting of the seat-holders to decide upon whether or not the purchase was to be made, there were petty personal attacks on the minister, and he gave notice to leave the following midsummer. However the following day a group of half a dozen ladies formed themselves into a committee and made the decisions that the seat-holders had failed to do!¹³⁸ The proprietor, seeing the possibility of considerable loss, brought the price down, "the way was cleared of all obstacles, and the church secured and entered upon as our own, the 26th of June, 1851".¹³⁹

There were still many problems to be overcome - an account not for here. Yet from mid summer 1853 onwards, the church "settled down into a regular ecclesiastical organisation".¹⁴⁰

Although never one of the largest congregations, Christ Church continued its work until the late 1950s. But by this time severe problems with the fabric coupled with those of a small, troubled and ageing congregation, made it impossible for the work to continue. The church closed on 31 December 1963.¹⁴¹

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Two other causes were founded in the diocese of Exeter as the result of a protest against the ritualism of those times. Both were later than the three which were set up in 1844, but they are worth examining at this stage because they are part of the same anti-tractarian reaction, and also because, in contrast, their long-term development was in a different direction.

Babbacombe - Furrough Cross, 1852

Babbacombe is no more than about 9 miles from where Shore conducted his very public dispute with Phillpotts, and evidently his example had been carefully noticed by the members of the ancient parish of St. Mary-Church. Here there was deep division over the ritualism introduced by their incumbent in the late 1840s and early 1850s. In addition, the distinguished Protestant layman Sir Culling Eardley, who had written a vigorous pamphlet supporting Shore and condemning Phillpotts, lived nearby at "Frognel", Erith Road, Torquay.¹⁴²

On 21 March 1850 a meeting at St. Mary-Church resolved:¹⁴³

"That...the teaching in the parish church of St. Mary-Church for some time past has been contrary to...the Word of God, and not in accordance with the Protestant views of the Church of England".

Eardley's support was evident, for the resolution continued:

"...Considering it un-Christian to go to law in matters of religious belief, (they) resolve that they shall build a place of worship... (and) that a plan for that purpose be submitted by Sir Culling Eardley..."

Eardley's local power and patronage was evidently considerable, for according to some notes left in the 1920s by William Henry Grant, the church was largely financed by Eardley himself.¹⁴⁴ A temporary chapel was opened on Whit-Monday 1850, and the Rev. Hugh Kelly, "Presbyter of the Protestant Episcopal Church in

the diocese of Michigan, Canada (sic.), was appointed pastor".¹⁴⁵ On 9 December 1851 the foundation stone of the new church was laid at Furrough Cross, and within a year, the compact four-aisled building, in English decorated style was complete.

One of the early clergy at the Free Church was the Rev. J.E. Gladstone who had resigned from the Established Church. He gathered a large congregation around him and was an active opponent of the church rate at many public meetings. But it was not only through Eardley and Gladstone that the church kept a high profile, for here, as at the other Free Churches in the diocese of Exeter, James Shore was also active.¹⁴⁶

In its early years, with Kelly and Gladstone, the Free church kept to an episcopally ordained ministry. But in the late 1850s, the Connexion played an important part in the life of the cause.¹⁴⁷ Although not in the Huntingdon Trust, it is almost certainly one of the independent Free Churches "identified" with the Connexion that J.B. Figgis notes in the 1891 centenary book.¹⁴⁸

However, towards the end of the century, the earlier interest and controversy died away. The Free Church was on the verge of failure when its membership became part of the Congregational Union in 1902. In 1993 Furrough Cross Church remains an active part of the United Reformed Church.¹⁴⁹

Bovey Tracey (Mary Street) Free Church, 1857.

Bovey Tracey is no more than 14 miles from Totnes, and was even closer to Sir Culling Eardley at Torquay. As in Babbacombe, disputes arose in the parish church because of the ritual introduced by the local vicar. In addition it was clear that with the prevailing sympathies of Bishop Phillpotts there would be no redress from the diocesan.

During 1853 meetings were held of discontented parishioners who felt that they could no longer continue to worship there. In December 1854, the "Scripture Readers' Society" began weekly meetings conducted by lay members of the establishment, notably Mr. John Legier; and he, together with several leading members of the town, such as Dr. and Mrs. Croker, worked for the establishment of a Free Church. Perhaps the prime mover locally was Miss Puddicombe, whose entire property was left to the church, and whose house became the Manse.¹⁵⁰ Contact was made with Sir Culling Eardley, and he brought their case to the

Torquay sub-division of the Evangelical Alliance in April 1857. In all, £5000 was raised, and on 21 September 1857 a new 200 seat chapel was opened.

Almost certainly during the lifetime of Miss Puddicombe the services were those of the Book of Common Prayer with strong evangelical bias. Indeed suspicion of "popery" even extended to the village school, and the Free Church together with other dissenting bodies started its own school.¹⁵¹

At first the Free Church must have been working through supply and lay leaders.¹⁵² Evidently the intention was to affiliate the church with the Connexion in the long term, for in the autumn of 1858, £2/5/0d was contributed to the Countess of Huntingdon's Missionary Society.¹⁵³ In summer 1859, a further £2/5/0d was given.¹⁵⁴

By 1862, the Free Church appears as an accepted Connexional cause. The Rev. Dr. Beckett was minister,¹⁵⁵ and the church contributed an item to the "Connexional News" column in the December of 1862. However, things were not working well, for by June 1863 Beckett had moved to Ross in Herefordshire, and there was no Approved Minister at Bovey Tracey. It is possible that James Shore had some sort of supervisory capacity, for contributions to the Connexion in January 1864 are noted as being "per Miss Croke and Miss Shore", and then just one month later contributions "per Rev. W. Lovejoy".¹⁵⁶ But again, evidently they have no minister of their own.

From here onwards, there is no further information in the denominational magazine.¹⁵⁷ Dr Pinnington indicates that the Free Church joined the Congregational Church somewhere around 1865.¹⁵⁸ However, in the late 1960s the new church in Fore Street then became part of the local Methodist circuit - where it remains in 1993.¹⁵⁹

Some considerations on the Devonshire "Free Churches".

There are several points to be drawn from the accounts of the establishment of the first Free churches in the Diocese of Exeter - particularly those at Totnes, Exeter and Ilfracombe.

1. It is useful to see the difference between the two proprietors at Bridgetown and Ilfracombe. Bridgetown was an aristocratic establishment built at the sole expense of the Duke of Somerset. Episcopal interference was because of the grey area of authority. In one way Shore could be seen as Somerset's chaplain (his right as a peer of the realm). But in another, as possible curate to Cōsens also there was a duality of responsibility. Thus, curacy or chaplaincy: who had the right to nominate? The building itself was secure; there was never any question about continuity of worship. The only question was eventually whether this was to be within the establishment, or outside. This is of course a complex matter, and one which would need major examination, inappropriate here.

Ilfracombe was also a proprietary chapel. But the matter was complicated by there being an owner (Walter Thorn) and a lessee ("a lady") - both of whom made the position of the minister precarious because of their financial interests and concerns at various times. There was no Trust until the purchase was completed in 1851.

Exeter had similar problems of insecurity until the joining of the two congregations in Grosvenor Place. The former church had a private owner (its first minister): it was therefore something of a financial speculation with considerable risk involved. Grosvenor Place Chapel (Christ Church) was organised under a private trust so was consequently not dependent upon the whims or dictates of an individual.

2. The establishment at Ilfracombe took place as a reaction to the prevailing ritualism of the times, and the Bishop's sympathies in particular - as indeed was Grosvenor Chapel, Exeter. There were no surplice riots at Ilfracombe, but nevertheless public controversy in abundance, as Price tells in his account.

3. The Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion became involved through its supplying of ministers to both Ilfracombe and Exeter. In each case, the movement steered towards the Free church rather than the Connexional system.

It is tempting to speculate that when the Executive Committee withdraw from any responsibility at Ilfracombe in 1844, there may have been some considerable bad feeling involved.

The proprietor was said to have made "exorbitant" demands - as possibly he did later in 1851. Significantly, there is no further mention of Price or his work in any of these vital early years in the Connexional Circular. The church itself was independent, and it was not until 1851 that Price appears as a "recognised Minister" in the Annual Account of the CHC Conference (Harbinger, August 1851, p. 180). In fact, the Connexion was later to play an important part in the history of Bridgetown Chapel also.

4. It is interesting to see the part played by James Shore in the establishment of all three churches at Bridgetown, Exeter and Ilfracombe, and the part played by him in the encouragement and, running of the churches founded later at Furrough Cross and Bovey Tracey. Somewhere, the figure of Shore is always present. The Bishop was clearly paying very close attention to him, following the difficult relationship built up between the two over the matter of the nomination to the Totnes curacy. He had been summoned to appear before the Commission in the August of 1844 and had made it quite clear (as he thought) that he was henceforward functioning as a non-conformist minister. But just some six weeks later he was the principal clerical guest at the opening of the new Free Church in East Southernhay, Exeter: again, on the first Sunday in December, Shore was re-opening Portland Chapel as a Free church in Ilfracombe.

To look honestly at James Shore in the light of these events is to see a man who, in some respects was not only unafraid of controversy, but actually courted it. His letters to both Cosens and Phillpotts over the nomination issue are both convoluted and relentless. He demanded to know the points upon which he was considered a person unfit to take the post at Bridgetown (The Case of The Rev. James Shore by Himself, op. cit., pp. 59 ff.). Legally, Cousens did not have to employ Shore - neither was he bound to give reasons. Yet Shore refused to take "no" for an answer, and even when it was clear that he could not work with either the vicar or the Bishop because of a total breakdown of pastoral relations, he still considered it his right to appeal for the nomination. There is an air of disingenuousness, both in his ambitions over Bridgetown and in his protestations of innocence in the matter of the handbill at the Chudleigh elections. Indeed, it has to be said that there is a way in

which Shore was actually provoking the system - and a Bishop who was well known to be compulsively litigious. But Phillpotts had not yet finished with Shore!

5. The two South Devon Free Churches make an interesting contrast to the other three in the Exeter diocese. They were founded later than the others (Furrough Cross in 1852 and Bovey Tracey in 1857), so they are removed from the white heat of the times surrounding the surplice controversy. Nevertheless, as with Exeter and Ilfracombe, it was a local focus of ritualism together with the lack of any possibility of redress through the bishop that spurred on the process of secession.

As with all three of the older foundations, the presence of powerful feelings, sometimes together with local patronage, was an important factor. In Totnes it was the Duke of Somerset; in Ilfracombe it was "a lady" of considerable means; in Exeter it was the independently wealthy first minister E.R. Cowie who owned the building together with the surplice controversy all around them; in the cases of Furrough Cross and Bovey Tracey it was Sir Culling Eardley supporting local lay leaders.

However, in the case of both the South Devon congregations, the long-term possibilities in the Free Church of England movement were simply not possible - lack of popular support and financial stability being among the main reasons. As in all three other churches, there was at first a connexional input, but when this proved unsatisfactory, both turned to the Congregational Union - although Furrough Cross did not do so until 1902.

6. Finally in looking at the long term "direction" taken by all five churches, it was Bridgetown alone which returned to the Established Church. Out of them all it had been built for the Establishment anyway; and after the retirement of Shore to Buxton at the close of 1861 - and the death of the Duke of Somerset who had supported him at the time of the law suit, (see later) there was no great "Puseyite" controversy or focus of disaffection to keep it as a dissenting chapel. In any case, in view of the other secessions, the diocese had a vested interest in its return.

The Connexion and the early history of the "Free" liturgical churches.

At this stage it is important to understand the part played in the early development of the "Free" church movement by the Countess of Huntingdon's

Connexion. A point made very strongly by both F.S. Merryweather and Frank Vaughan is that the FCE was no new "adventure" into dissent from the Establishment. In her time, the Countess had led a movement for spiritual renewal from within a Church of England that seemed to be moribund. Thus although the history of the movement is a long and complex one, a brief outline of its development is essential in order to be able to place the early history of the FCE in context.

Selina Hastings was born in 1707. She joined the society of Wesley's Methodists in 1739, and when her husband died in 1746 she took up religious and social work full-time. In order to establish clergy in key places and stations, the Countess used her legal right as a peeress to appoint private chaplains - and to train her clergy she established the theological college at Trevecca House, Talgarth, in Breconshire. This was opened on 24 August 1768 by George Whitefield, with the talented Fletcher, Vicar of Madeley, as its first President. When the dispute between John Wesley and Whitefield took place, Selina took the side of Whitefield, and so the formal link with Wesley's Methodists was broken.

The worship in her chapels was liturgical. By and large it was based on the Book of Common Prayer; and it is perhaps because of this that the inevitable legal problems began over worship and ministry. In 1777 she opened her famous "Northampton Chapel" at Spa Fields, just above Clerkenwell in London, and here the disputes centred.

Firstly, she had to protect the clergy who were cited to appear in the ecclesiastical courts for preaching in a church not episcopally consecrated. As the result of a consistory court in London in 1779 she was disallowed the employment of as many clergy as she wished as her private chaplains; and then, in order to protect those she was employing from the charges involved in the use of an unconsecrated building, she registered her chapels under the Toleration Act as Dissenting meeting houses. The Northampton Chapel was forced to close briefly, but was re-opened as "Spa Fields Chapel" - a large building frequently filled to overflowing.¹⁶⁰

There were problems with the clergy officiating in the Countess's Chapels, because, as members of the Established Church, they were liable to its rules and discipline. Many were forced to secede from the Church of England in order to officiate. Indeed, as it became virtually impossible for the Countess'

students to obtain episcopal ordination, so it was inevitable that in order to continue supplying clergy, they resorted to a form of presbyterial ordination (as had Wesley's Methodists). In 1783 at Spa Fields, the first 6 Trevecca students were ordained to the ministry "in the secession" as Selina termed it.

The Countess died on 17 June 1791. But she had already formed her chapels into an Association in 1790; moreover the Articles of Faith had been drawn up and forms of worship prescribed. But it was not until after her death that her followers formed themselves into a distinct ecclesial community with the title, the "Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion". In fact the move towards being a denomination outside the Established Church was made an inevitability in 1783 by the ordination at Spa Fields.

There were many changes after the death of the Countess. One was the removal of the college from Trevecca (the lease was given up on Lady Day 1792) to Cheshunt in Hertfordshire. Another was that to avoid the statutes of mortmain, Selina had willed the land and property of the Connexion to persons rather than having them put in a trust.¹⁶¹ The problems of the Trustees and their relationship with the other ministers and members of the Connexion was to play a vital part in the development of the FCE in the 1850s, the 1860s and thereafter: this is something to which no historian of the denomination has ever given due thought when considering the actual genesis of the FCE as a new and independent unit in 1863.

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In looking for ministers to supply such a place as the new Free Church at Exeter, or the new Free Church at Ilfracombe, it was inevitable that the trustees or members of the churches should look towards the Connexion to be supplied. Certainly in both cases the worship was liturgical and according to the Book of Common Prayer. There was therefore an identification between the older denomination and the new independent foundations.

Looking at the new cause in Ilfracombe in October 1844 the Editor of The Circular for the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion wrote:¹⁶²

"Ilfracombe - The cause here, although not without difficulties, is interesting...as a probable indication of the line of usefulness open to the Connexion in these stirring times. Puseyism will draw many friends of the church to seek truth out of its pale. We ought to be ready to assist all who desire our help in such circumstances".

The editor evidently saw the new causes as a possible way of advancing the work of the Connexion. Others, however, did not feel the same, for the new causes were in many respects radically different from the older sister that now supplied ministers.

Firstly, the origins and driving forces were different. The Connexion had been an attempt to inject life into what was seen as a church, if not already dead, then dying to real spiritual values (a gross over-simplification, but one often repeated). The new Free Churches were essentially a retreat from a highly organised and vigorous apostolic authority. Now the body from which secession was being made was not dead: rather was it very much alive - but in its new life it had taken a doctrinal direction unacceptable to many in the country.

Secondly, although the Countess's original intention may well have been to form a new "free and powerful Evangelical church in England",¹⁶³ this was not the result.

Merryweather lays some of the blame on the name of the older denomination which seemed to take it out of the mainstream of evangelical Anglican thought - especially in an age when succeeding generations had forgotten the prestige that the name of the Countess had held. Even in the 1870s when Merryweather was writing, the Connexion was continuing in a long pattern of decline. There was a lack of central authority,¹⁶⁴ and as he says of the denomination: 'it had, from various causes, "gravitated down very far towards congregationalism, and lost some of its original characteristics"'.¹⁶⁵ This was a message which was to be repeated again and again in later years, and it meant that there was no really strong "umbrella" under which new and essentially disaffected Anglican causes could shelter.

Nevertheless, ministers were supplied, buildings shared, and as at Exeter, for a time the two bodies were indistinguishable. But, as yet there was no FCE as such, simply a growing collection of independent liturgical churches. Benjamin Price (the first Bishop Primus of the FCE) was originally a Connexional minister. In his very rare autobiographical booklet,¹⁶⁶ he puts the situation thus:

"The first body of Christians to hold out a hand of fellowship...was the...Connexion. They invited us to unite with the Connexion, as being not only in sympathy with them, but the most suitable body of Christians with whom they could be identified..."

At the close of the 1840s, the new Free Churches were observed with even more interest by leading members of the Connexion than they had been earlier in October 1844 when the editor of the Circular had written of the opportunities "open to the Connexion in these stirring times". His comment then concerned the opening of the new church at Ilfracombe. Now in the September edition of the Circular in 1849 "Japheth" looked at a growing number of new non-denominational "Free" liturgical churches outside the diocese of Exeter.¹⁶⁷ Once again the similarity with the Connexion is noted, and the logic of some form of unity is suggested.

"So far as I am aware, they are but little identified with each other; and, although at present their numbers are few, yet...they must increase. It would undoubtedly be desirable that these newly formed churches should be identified with some existing denomination."

"Japheth" comments on the similarity of their "doctrine and government" with the Connexion, and obviously sees an opportunity for a renewal of the strength of the denomination, he continues:

"Should we not (be) ...inviting them to unite with us, and thus extend our borders...by the amalgamation of the...Connexion and Free Church of England?"

"Japheth" was later identified as being the Rev. Thomas Dodd, for many years the distinguished minister of the Connexional chapel at Worcester. His letter is an important document in the history of both denominations. Not only does he indicate the strength of the new movement and the "liturgical direction" of its churches, but, significantly, in his final sentence he gives it a distinct and unified identity. Unlike in his first sentence, now it is the Free Church (singular) of England - thus the possibly accidental title of the cause at Ilfracombe is given a new and significantly wider meaning.

But the ambition of the Connexion to have the new movement as a revival within the old was not to be. Just how distinct were the two movements is something which becomes clearer as the next 20 years proceeded. Indeed, the deep divisions within the Connexion were a weakening factor which meant that the growing number of Free Churches were bound to seek a separate identity. In the vast majority of cases their aim was to continue as disciplined liturgical ecclesiastical communities with a strong overall and central authority like the Established Church from which they had seceded, YET purified from the excesses of the "Puseyites", and an increasingly sympathetic and ritualistic bench.

1844 to 1849: Shore - the judgement of the Court of Arches and his arrest at Spa Fields Chapel

Neither Merryweather nor Vaughan gives many details of these years, and for a while, the relationship between Shore and Phillpotts appeared to lie fallow. But any peace was apparent rather than real.

On 26 February 1844, the chapel at Bridgetown had been licensed as a dissenting place of worship. On 16 March Shore himself took oaths and made a declaration, as he thought, enabling him to function as a non-conformist minister. To that end, he received a certificate from the magistrate putting him under the Act from the first year of William and Mary - the "Act for exempting their majesties' Protestant subjects dissenting from the Church of England, from the penalties of certain laws".¹⁶⁸ Yet Phillpotts simply refused to accept this. As far as he was concerned, the concept of the indelibility of Holy Orders meant that Shore could not divest himself of his canonical oath of obedience.

In order to prepare a case, one Sunday two of Ralph Barnes' clerks were sent down to Bridgetown Chapel to collect evidence at the service, and it was on the basis of their evidence that the Commission of Enquiry had been called at which Shore had been found guilty.¹⁶⁹ As Sir Culling Eardley says: "On the grounds that, do what he would, he must ever continue a clergyman" (C of E).¹⁷⁰

After failing on appeal, the case was brought before the Court of Arches, but the Toleration Act, and the certificate he had been given by the magistrate could not shield him from having officiated as a Priest of the Established Church in a dissenting meeting house with the rites and ceremonies of the Book of Common Prayer. On 20 June 1846 Sir Herbert Jenner Fust pronounced:¹⁷¹

"Though this gentleman is at the moment a minister of the established church of this land, from which office he cannot of his own authority relieve himself, still I do not think I am entitled to depose him from the ministry.

Once more Shore appealed, but the judgement was upheld on 14 February 1848.¹⁷² Even so, Shore was determined to continue with his ministry both at Bridgetown and elsewhere. The judgement had been upheld on 14 February 1848, and in April 1848 Shore stated in a letter to Patriot:

"I have a congregation of many hundreds of hearers, who are in the habit of

attending my ministry. My honest conviction before God is, that it is my duty to preach to them. I claim religious liberty to do so as a Nonconformist minister."

Later words in his letter show a full awareness of his position: "I have therefore preached and am liable to imprisonment".¹⁷³ Once again, there is more than a hint of disingenuousness in Shore's protestations, for he knew full well that he was in danger of the force of law on two counts. Firstly, two attachments were issued, the first for costs in the Court of Arches, and the second, also for costs, because of the Appeal against the decision of the Court of Arches.¹⁷⁴ Secondly, he was forbidden to officiate anywhere in the province of Canterbury, unlicensed.

Certainly Shore had powerful friends upon whom he could surely have called for assistance. Richard Lambert says that in any case he was supported by many non-conformist and several Anglican clergy who "went about the country speaking on his behalf". Lambert also tells how "meetings were held in London and a fund raised to help him".¹⁷⁵ But matters had polarised too far for Shore to accept help to pay the costs, or to accept the patronage of some distinguished supporter as Parish Priest in another diocese. Indeed, part of his letter to Patriot show a self-willed determination to be a martyr:¹⁷⁶

"If I do not preach I shall...bring guilt upon my soul, and offend my blessed Lord and Saviour...and woe be unto me if I preach not the gospel".

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The result of Shore's decision was inevitable - it was also extremely dramatic. On Friday 9 March 1849, Shore was officiating in the Countess' Chapel at Spa Fields in London. At the close of the sermon he descended from the pulpit, was arrested, and taken in custody down to the gaol at St. Thomas', Exeter. The officers were acting on behalf of the Ecclesiastical court, and although Phillpotts later denied personal involvement at that time, the arrest was bound to be with his cognizance, acting through his lawyer-secretary, Ralph Barnes.

Before they left for Exeter, Shore was able to write a letter to the distinguished minister of Spa Fields, Thomas Elisha Thoresby:¹⁷⁷

"My Dear Sir, I am just apprehended in your chapel after preaching...I am at last to be incarcerated for contempt of court - they say for the non

payment of the Bishop's costs, but really and virtually, for preaching the gospel out of the establishment."

Thoresby instantly used the letter as part of an appeal which he drew up that evening. The story is a tense one as Merryweather tells it, for it was nearly midnight when Thoresby reached the Times in Printing-House Square. Because the presses were actually rolling, the clerks refused to accept his text.

Eventually he persuaded them to accept it as an advertisement - for which he was charged £8 - and the appeal "To the Ministers and Friends of the Gospel in London of all Denominations" appeared early the next morning.¹⁷⁸ The latter part of Shore's emotional letter was aimed very much at the sort of authority exercised by the episcopal bench: "I am sure that it is quite time that the civil sword should be entirely wrested from the grasp of all ecclesiastics..."

Following the appeal, Thoresby called for a meeting at Exeter Hall, Strand at 11 a.m. on Monday 11 March 1849 "to confer as to the best means of altering the law...",¹⁷⁹ and that next Monday morning, the hall was packed with some 5000 people present. Feelings ran high,¹⁸⁰ and even the Times seemed unusually partisan in its choice of words:¹⁸¹

"Yesterday morning a large meeting of the friends of religious liberty was held at Exeter-Hall...The Rev. Thomas Binney moved a resolution denunciatory of the Bishop's proceedings, expressive of sympathy with Mr. Shore, and pledging the non-conformists of England to use their best exertions to obtain an alteration in the ecclesiastical law."

There were messages from a number of distinguished people together with contributions for a fund to fight Shore's case; indeed Sir Culling Eardley sent £20.

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The arrest and imprisonment of Shore put Phillpotts in a very bad, and a very public light. The Eclectic Review for both May and June gave detailed coverage to the case and was uncompromisingly critical of Phillpotts. There were pamphlets from Anglican clergy such as Edward Craig of St. James' Chapel, Pentonville.¹⁸² Again, Culling Eardley wrote a pamphlet supporting Shore which ran into an updated edition within 6 weeks - his logic as coldly controlled as

Latimer's was extravagant: "There is no more odious way of infringing on liberty than by seeking out and applying forgotten penalties"...¹⁸³

Bearing in mind the coverage given by the Times, Phillpotts' action caused national interest. On Monday 12 March 1849, a letter to the editor appeared by way of an advertisement in the Times. In it, Ralph Barnes tries to calm the evidently rough waters. He emphasizes the fact that Shore's arrest was for non-payment of costs; and he seems to dispute the fact that if the costs were paid then Shore would still be under contempt of court for preaching - manifestly untrue. But he is vague, and his somewhat ambiguous retreat from the clear facts of Shore's position was relentlessly disputed in Eardley's pamphlet, which was first published just 10 days later.¹⁸⁴

Finally Barnes tried to take some of the sting out of the situation by diverting personal responsibility from Phillpotts to himself: "since the case was finally decided by the Court of Appeal, I have never asked of or received from the Bishop of Exeter any directions or instructions in regard to any proceedings on the sentence whatever..."¹⁸⁵ Shore himself replied to Barnes' ambiguity over liability to arrest because of contempt by continuing to preach. Again his letter appears as an advertisement on Wednesday 14 March.¹⁸⁶ The argument was far better handled by Eardley in his work just 8 days later: nevertheless Shore gained much more support by the publication of his address at the end of the letter as "The Gaol, St. Thomas's, Exeter."

Obviously Phillpotts felt the sense of public outrage keenly. He wrote a pamphlet on the case in the form of an address to the Archbishop of Canterbury, dated 28 March 1849, and he included correspondence (edited) which lead up to the court decision. Significantly, at one point he speaks of "obloquy heaped upon me in almost every part of Great Britain..."¹⁸⁷

Shore remained in prison for three months. But there are many questions that were never properly answered, and which at the time were argued over whilst he was actually in the gaol at Exeter.

The main question was whether or not he would still have remained in prison for contempt (by breaking the ban on preaching that was laid down by Sir Herbert

Jenner Fust on 20 June 1846) had the costs for both the case and the appeal been paid. It was in Phillpotts' interest to say "no", for that would lift away the charge made by Shore that he was "imprisoned for preaching the Gospel". Barnes' letter to the Times on 12 March 1849 was a bungled attempt to do just that - but the ambiguity was plain, as Shore (letter on 14 March) and Eardley (pamphlet of 22 March) made clear.¹⁸⁸ Even Phillpotts' own letter to the Archbishop in quoting parts of the judgement makes the matter no clearer. In fact realising the enormous political possibilities of clarification, Eardley makes a veiled challenge to Phillpotts to proceed if costs were to be paid: "The Bishop...is...now in a situation to move the court...to punish Mr. Shore for contempt in continuing to preach". Wisely, Phillpotts preferred the matter to be ambiguous, and he remained deaf to the challenge.¹⁸⁹

In considering the costs for which the arrest was ostensibly made, although Shore claimed: "I have not the means of paying..."¹⁹⁰, this was patently untrue. The initial costs were not impossibly extensive. In fact the second Writ of Detainer of 31 March 1849 states them to be £115-3-5d.¹⁹¹ Indeed, as Phillpotts pointed out on 28 March to the Archbishop, funds had been "so liberally given at all those meetings to defray Mr. Shore's expenses".¹⁹²

The truth of the matter is less attractive than many of Shore's supporters through the years would have liked to admit; for clearly, Shore's continued imprisonment was his own choice, and the attendant publicity was abundant reward. At no time during most of the 3 month's was he away from the public eye. Legal advice was constantly available, and Eardley himself journeyed up from Torquay to visit him "several times in his prison at Exeter".¹⁹³ Again, on Wednesday 28 March "a very numerous meeting" was conducted by Eardley at the Subscription Room in Exeter at which there were deputations from Exeter Hall (London), and Bridgetown Chapel. Not only did the Times give the meeting extensive coverage,¹⁹⁴ but it also reported discussion on the need for the Clergy Relief Bill to contain a retrospective clause "to secure clergymen who have become Protestant Dissenters".¹⁹⁵ Although there was the ambiguity of the penalty for contempt, nobody, least of all Phillpotts, was likely to proceed, for politically it was too contentious - especially while the "Clergy Relief Bill" was in course of preparation.

In the meanwhile, Shore continued to be able to claim that he was imprisoned for preaching the Gospel, and that when he was released three months later, it was only because his friends had had to raise the money to pay costs. Shore was claiming a martyr's crown and his success is seen in the failure of later writers to understand at least some part of the real motivation in his continuing stay at Exeter Gaol.

The arrest and imprisonment of Shore - the three months put in context.

As has already been stated, it is clear that Shore did not actually set out to found a new movement. Indeed, had it not been for the evident clash of personalities between Shore and Phillpotts over the Chudleigh elections, it is likely that the dispute over Shore's continued appointment to the church at Bridgetown might not have arisen. Consequently, it is possible to see that the whole protracted affair which began with the spectacular arrest at Spa Fields Chapel might never have occurred at all.

Again, the true "psychological" nature of Shore's arrest and imprisonment was somewhat different than the popular mythology of the FCE has always tended to make it. It was not a case of the naked persecution of a defenceless curate by his bishop - nor was that curate "imprisoned for preaching the Gospel" as he claimed so often. Shore had many to defend him, and was in any case fully able to use the situation in which he found himself to every advantage. He was a most able man, and one with a shrewd political mind that was capable of coming to grips with Phillpotts far more effectively than many others who opposed the Bishop of Exeter.

Correctly, Merryweather (and consequently Vaughan who relied on Merryweather a great deal) identify this as one "step" towards the formation of the FCE. In point of fact, the groundwork had already been there - in general by the deliberate flouting of ritualism against local feeling throughout the country - in particular by the focussing of anti-ritualist controversy within a diocese with the bishop totally unprepared to compromise. In other words, the ingredients were countrywide, but in Exeter diocese the "ideal" circumstances were provided, largely through Phillpotts and the surplice controversy.

Within a ten or twelve year period, the concept of a free liturgical church community was turned into reality. Even before Shore was arrested, Bridgetown, Ilfracombe and Exeter were organised and working "Free" liturgical communities. Not long after this time, Babbacombe and Bovey Tracey were also added to the list - although these had more to do with the long established standpoint of Sir Culling Eardley rather than the arrest or imprisonment of James Shore.

But although just a "step" in the process, the arrest and imprisonment of Shore was an intensely dramatic incident which caused interest and great concern all over the country - including Scotland. Thus it focussed the attention of the country on the actual reactions down in Devon to what, to the great concern of many, was also happening all over England and Wales. It served to turn the concept of a Free Liturgical church into a reality in people's minds - for their area. In addition to this, the focal point of the affair, the arrest, took place in the centre of London where instant press reaction was available. Indeed, the Times showed far more than just a passing interest in the incident; and in two of the reports, the term "the friends of religious liberty" when used has neither quotations marks nor capitals! ¹⁹⁶

Significantly, the incident took place in the principal chapel of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion - and to a guest of the denomination. It thereby revived feelings that had lain dormant within the denomination since 1783 when, in desperation, the first six Trevecca students had been ordained outside the Establishment. It instantly became, in a way, a Connexional cause, albeit by association. And the editorial comment on the opportunities offered by the foundation of Ilfracombe,¹⁹⁷ and the letter by Thomas Dodds over the possibilities of uniting the Free Churches and the Connexion into one,¹⁹⁸ only served to cement this idea in the consciousness of the denomination.

But perhaps above all, the incident forced one of the most able ministers who had ever served the Connexion into public action. Thomas Elisha Thoresby held a central position in the denomination from his position at Spa Fields. Unlike Shore, he was not a man who would have relished the central role in such a dispute. He did not even appear by name in the reports of the great meetings at either Exeter Hall on 12 March 1849 or the Subscription Room in the city of Exeter itself on 28 March 1849. Nevertheless, it was he who was able to get

the first dramatic appeal into the Times on the day of the arrest. As Vaughan says, he was "...a preacher of celebrity, a lecturer of power and a writer of ability..." whose work at Spa Fields was such that "it was not unusual for the aisles and the doorways to be crowded with persons unable to obtain seats".¹⁹⁹

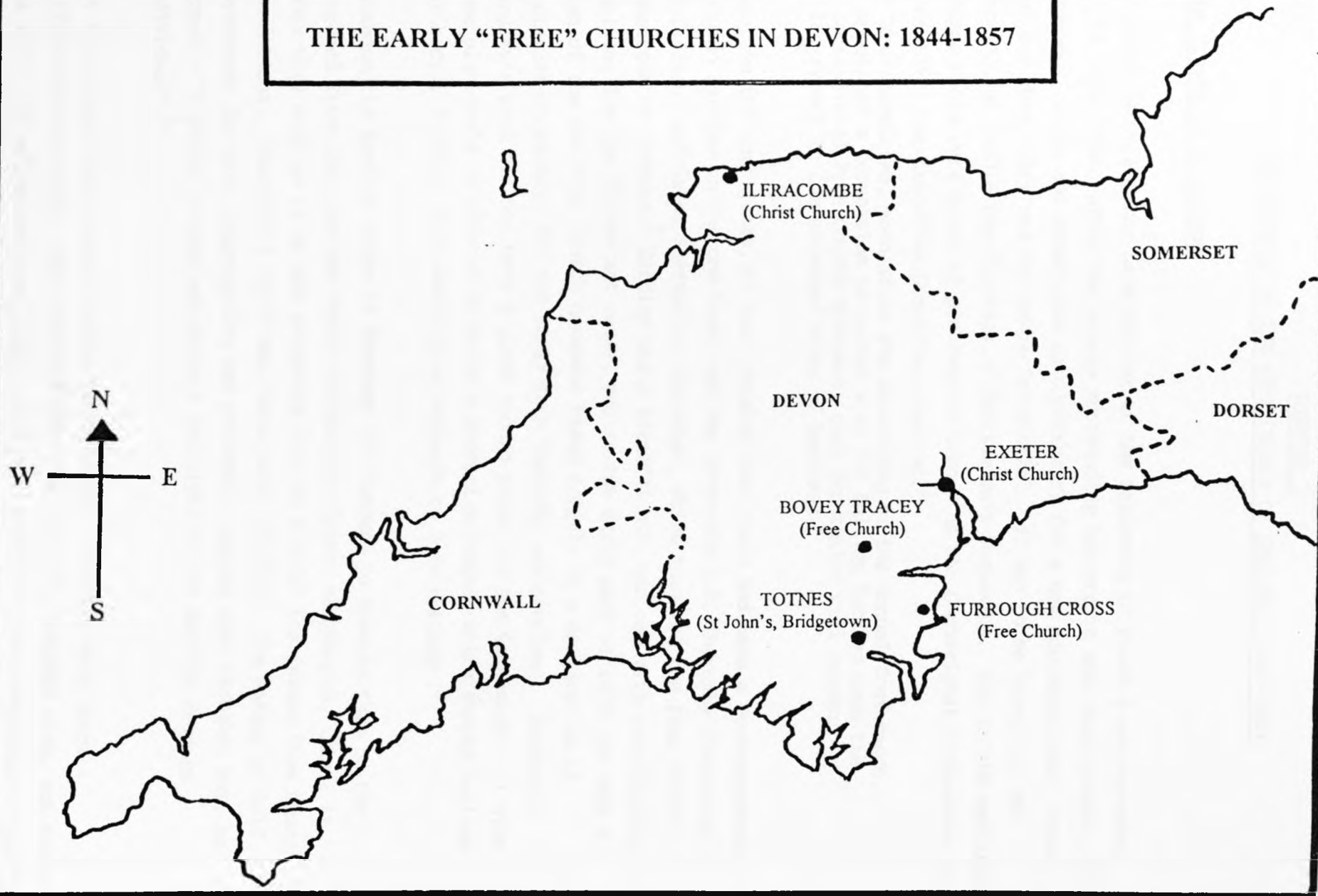
When this incident in his chapel actually forced him into action on behalf of the Free Church cause, he took it on as his own personal challenge, and all those very considerable abilities, in the following years were put towards the formal and legal organisation of what "Japheth" had proposed in the Circular in September of the previous year - "The Free Church of England". The precise reasons why it became a personal crusade are not clear. But as Merryweather, Price and Vaughan say, he was to spend the next 14 years of painstaking work drawing up the legal documentation that was ultimately to result in the registration of the new denomination in Chancery in 1863. In later years his jealous concern for the denomination was to cause acute embarrassment as in his public criticisms over denominational troubles at Littlehampton. Undoubtedly he had a vision of the Connexion that Merryweather says was in the mind of the Countess when she established her Free Churches;²⁰⁰ and Vaughan actually says that Thoresby discovered "...in his researches...among the documents...of the Countess of Huntingdon a draft plan, which she did not live to execute".²⁰¹

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The truth of the matter was that, although it is possible to assert that without the involvement of Shore, the FCE might not ultimately have been created in the exact form it was, nevertheless it was at that precise time that all the vital ingredients to the situation presented themselves. Anti-ritualist controversy, the re-active and inter-active personalities of Shore, Phillpotts, Somerset, Eardley and Thoresby - each factor mixed ideally with the other like a recipe. It was then that the dramatic arrest on 9 March 1849 "quickened" the process, and the intense media interest provided a national impetus that was to carry the Free Church Movement and the Connexion together through the next 14 years to 1863.

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THE EARLY "FREE" CHURCHES IN DEVON: 1844-1857



CHAPTER 2

THE GENESIS OF THE FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND: 1848-1863

The Growth of a concept

Although Shore may not have set out at the beginning to found a new movement, it is clear that, after the events surrounding his arrest and imprisonment, he, Thoresby, Dodd, and others saw an opportunity for a new denominational "cause". But for them, this was not to be "ex-nihilo". It was to be based-on, and formed from within the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion. Yet in the earliest stages there were hints of problems to come. At the Connexional Conference in June 1850, the Executive Committee reported:¹

"Your committee, soon after the assembling of the Annual Conference, appointed a deputation to confer with Sir Culling Eardley upon the contemplated Free Church Movement; that deputation will present its report in the arranged order of business."

Later in the Conference, it was revealed that there had been a correspondence between Eardley on the one hand, and the Reverends T.E. Thoresby (Secretary of Conference) and James Sherman on the other, which involved the Free Church Committee at Torquay.² Eardley was a forceful man, and one with considerable ambition for the Protestant cause, and in the early part of 1850, he sent a plan of the new Free Church movement based largely on a declaration of Christian doctrine. But the reply from Thoresby was cautious. Evidently Eardley's work did not have a clear enough place for the Connexion: "I wish some plan could be adopted to serve a general movement, which should include our body...I think union would give strength to both parties".³

Subsequently Eardley wrote to Thoresby and Sherman to consult them on the proposed Trust for the new church at Furrough Cross, Marychurch. Also, it looks very much as if he was proposing this as a model for future Free Church foundations. Thoresby's reply was, once more, careful. The matter of self government for each congregation was evidently causing some thought; but, he agreed - "I prefer a name embodying a principle to one derived from an individual".⁴

Yet it is clear that even in these early stages, not only were there differences of opinion over the doctrinal basis of the original plan, but there was also a polarization over legal thinking. Eardley's plan included the Nine Articles of the Evangelical Alliance in which he was heavily involved, and

Thoresby wrote frankly: "I have very great difficulty as to the doctrinal basis of the proposed trust".⁵

The result was interesting; for just four weeks later, at its meeting in June 1850, the Conference passed a resolution regarding "...with satisfaction the prospect of so liberal a movement in favour of evangelical truth, and will cheerfully enter into communication with the brethren engaged in this movement, with a view to a union with them, if such a union should be found practicable".⁶ But although this seemed to endorse the Eardley incentive, in fact it is evident that at the outset, the movement was perceived as being essentially outside the official boundary of Connexional business.

Certainly, during the years which followed, the hopes of Thoresby and the others for a united Connexional change or development simply did not happen. The concept of a new denomination continued to grow slowly as new Free Churches were founded which were not part of any of the Connexional Trusts. But there is no doubt that the slowness of development was in large measure due to the deep internal flaws and pressures within the Connexional system itself, making any positive and united action impossible. Thus the actual "birth" of the "Free Church of England" is a highly complex matter, and one which has never been seriously studied.

The impetus provided by the Baptismal-Regeneration controversy.

A letter to the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion Executive Committee (via Rev. James Sherman) dated 8 February 1851 spoke of the concern of a number of people in a town (unspecified) where, by direction of "our Bishop" (a Puseyite), baptismal regeneration was being preached. The letter is significant in that the signatories asked for help in building up a Free Church, and looked to the Connexion to provide a ministry.⁷ It is also significant that the theory of baptismal regeneration appeared to be a serious issue as a part of Puseyite doctrine. There was always an unease about the quasi-magical interpretation of the effect of the sacrament - as many dissenters and evangelicals saw it. But it was at this time in the early 1850s that the Bishop of Exeter (Phillpotts) brought the dispute to a head by refusing to institute G.C. Goreham to the living of Brampford Speke. This was actually in the gift of the Lord Chancellor, but Goreham rejected the doctrine of baptismal regeneration - and was consequently pronounced "unsound" by Phillpotts.

Controversy raged from 1847, when the Lord Chancellor offered the living, until July 1850, when the Dean of Arches (acting for the Archbishop of Canterbury) instituted Gorham to the living. Stephen Neil says that the violence of Phillpotts' legal dealings in the matter "nearly split the Church of England."⁸

Both the Court of Arches and Privy Council were involved in this most complex affair; and perhaps what confirmed it in the public mind as a "Puseyite" issue was not only that it was one of the most public fracas in which Phillpotts was ever involved, but that a number of distinguished churchmen including H.E. Manning left the Church of England for Rome over the case.⁹ Henceforward, a denial of the doctrine of automatic baptismal regeneration became a standard requirement for the ministry of the Free Churches, and later the FCE.

The impetus provided for the Free Churches was considerable. Indeed, the Connexion had been quick to realise the possibilities raised by so public a controversy. In August 1851, the Secretaries of the Connexion wrote:¹⁰

"N.B. Information respecting theatres and assembly rooms, where the gospel is needed, or where a "Free Church" is desired "because of the dearth", will be thankfully received."

Many ordinary clergy were touched by the high feeling of the time. One such was the Reverend Tenison Cuffe, Minister of the Carlisle Episcopal Chapel (proprietary) in Kennington. On 28 December 1851, he announced his secession from the Established Church, and the report in Harbinger stated: "The well known case of Gorham... awoke him from the state he was in".¹¹

During the following years, reactions to the Gorham Case, the doctrinal stance of the Bishop of Exeter, and the ever growing "Puseyism" within the Established Church were to work again and again for the extension of the "Free" churches.

The ambiguity of identity of the new church communities: "Connexion" or "Free"?

During the years from 1844 to 1863 a number of the new Free liturgical churches were founded; but it is often very difficult to distinguish between those which were truly Connexional and those which were the "Free" independent units.

The usual popular requirements were for liturgical services just as in the Establishment - but freed from its limitations and increasing ritualism. As there were so few Anglican clergy who had seceded, clearly the Connexion was the obvious choice for the supplying of ministers. But some of the new churches

were definitely not Connexional even though Connexional ministers staffed them. Others had free liturgical worship yet were firmly tied into the Connexion by trusts and by the supplying of a recognised ministry. Thus, in examining those early days, it is often very difficult to discern which churches were which. At best the borders were blurred, and some churches appeared to be both. This became especially true after 1863 when the FCE was officially registered as an independent denomination, for a number of Connexional ministers held closely to the principles of the new movement, so that although the churches they served were CHC, they appeared in the FCE lists. Perhaps the most distinguished examples were Dodd's church at Worcester and Figgis' church in Brighton.

Although the problem of dual identity became clearer in the 1860s, the seeds of it had also appeared a decade earlier, for this was the time when so many were looking for the Connexion not only to absorb the new Free Churches, but to become itself the new "Free Church of England". The work of T.E. Thoresby towards this goal continued, and very often the denominational magazine reflected this. On 18 December 1856 the Rev. John Reynolds wrote a letter from Clare in Suffolk lamenting "the fearful progress of Tractarianism in England". He identified the two movements as being one: "Our Connexion is especially adapted to provide an antidote for this growing evil, and would....furnish ministers and raise funds for the support of Free Churches..." ¹²

But the Harbinger for January 1857 also reported the opening of St. Thomas' Church at Montreal in Canada. The ministry was supplied by the Rev. Alfred Stone who was sent out by the Connexion.¹³ The report illustrates well the problems and confusion in identifying new causes, for the heading in the magazine is "Extension of Lady Huntingdon's Connexion in Canada". Indeed, in his letter on the subject, Thoresby hoped that the move would "extend our influence as a religious confederation in that part of the world". Yet in fact the church was a private venture - a proprietary chapel built by "Thomas Molson Esq., a most worthy man....at his sole expense".

Once again however, the importance of St. Thomas' lies in that it established the principle of the FCE; and later the FCE was to be established in several places in the Eastern provinces of Canada - although for a short time only.

The developing identity of the new denomination, 1849-1863.

Between the years 1851 and 1863, some 14 new "Free" liturgical churches came into existence, two being in Australia and one in Canada:

Carlisle Episcopal Chapel, Kennington, Surrey (1851); Avebury, Wilts. (1853); "somewhere in Sussex" - possibly Brighton (1856); St. Thomas, Montreal, Canada (1856); Sandown, I.O.W. (1857); Ruthun (1857; Mold (1857); Geelong, Australia (1858); Hackney (1859); Christ Church, Purbrook, Hants. (1860); Beaumaris (Summer visitors only, 1860); Ross, Herefs. (1861); Llandudno (Summer visitors only, 1861); Sydney, Australia (1863). For further details, see Appendix, pp. 568 f.

It is worth repeating the fact that, in the minds of Thoresby, Dodd, Shore and others, their ultimate ambition for the new Free churches was that they might be the "flowering" of a new denomination. This was to encompass the older Connexion which was to be its foundation and basis. Nevertheless, there must have been many questions in the minds of those who saw new and vigorous congregations arising, like those at Purbrook and Ross. Here they saw the Connexion supplying clergy, and the new churches were frequent contributors to the C.H.'s Missionary and General Funds. They also presented their reports to the Harbinger. Yet it is quite clear that these were not simply new CHC communities; for not only would the services often be indistinguishable from those of low-church Anglicanism, but in both these places, Anglican clergy were from time to time involved - as is clear from the denominational magazine.

In his dissertation on the Connexion, I.M. Mallard sees a change taking place within the whole ministry spectrum of the CHC: "There was a tendency for the Free Church of England element to assume a superiority over the Connexion".¹⁴ In other words there were two "camps" within the Connexion; and as he points out, it is possible to see the outworking of this in the changes that took place in the title of the denominational magazine.

The Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion Circular of 1849 became The Countess of Huntingdon's New Magazine in 1850. In 1852 this became The Harbinger of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion (the emphasis being on the first two words), and by January 1863 this had become The Harbinger, a magazine of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion and the Free Church of England. In 1867, the title changes again to The Free Church of England Magazine and Harbinger (then small

print) of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion.¹⁵ Obviously this latter change was in recognition of the independent status of the new denomination since 1863; but the changes, though trivial, demonstrate the development of new ideas on the NATURE of the Connexion as a single and united denomination. After 1863 it was possible to buy the magazine with the Connexional title on the cover. But, as Mallard says with insight, "the contents clearly favoured the more authoritarian denomination".¹⁶

Indeed, through the years, it is possible to see how, in news sent to the "Connexional Intelligence" column, letters, editorial comments and conference reports, the denominational magazine actually charts the development of a new, different, and sometimes self-consciously different unit within the Connexion.

At the Conference in July 1851, proceedings included the "Recognition" of the Reverend Tennison Cuffe (Carlisle Episcopal Chapel, Kennington - above). Cuffe was an Anglican priest who was unable to accept the result of the Gorham judgement and its implications for the Church of England on the matter of baptismal regeneration. He had resigned the incumbency of Colney Heath on 20 November 1850, and at the conference in 1851 gave his reasons for joining the Connexion: "when I resolved to secede I first turned my attention to the Free Church movement in the West of England, but found it was not in such a state of forwardness as would warrant my joining them...."¹⁷

With the obvious exception of Totnes, the Connexion was supplying the ministry for most of the Free Church in the West of England. And yet Cuffe, even in 1850/51 sees them as having an identity distinct and separate from the Connexion. He later continues: "I saw that the Lord was with the Connexion, and that it would be a privilege to be joined with them".¹⁸

But many in the CHC would not have agreed with him. For they saw the Connexion as a unity with the Free churches. In a way they were as correct in their observation as was Cuffe, for with the ritualistic controversies of the 1850s, the raison d'etre of the Connexion itself seemed to be changing. No longer was it the aim to found places of live worship to counterbalance the frequently moribund parishes of the 18th century church. Now it was not an apathy that was being fought, but a very lively ritualism which was stirring popular feeling all over the country. In March 1854, editorial comment shows just how much the Connexion saw itself as part of a new crusade: "All which takes place in the Established Church shows how desirable it is that our circle

of action should offer a suitable retreat for devoted clergymen, who wish to separate from Tractarian Popery..."¹⁹ Later, in July 1854, in regretting the new wave of ritualism, the editor says: "We seem called to enlarge our sphere of action...God forbid that we should be insensible to our mission".²⁰ In December 1856, a letter from the Rev. John Reynolds says: "Our Connexion is especially adapted to provide an antidote for this growing evil."²¹

So, there were those, like the Rev. Tennison Cuffe who saw the Free churches as a separate and distinct movement, and there were also those who saw a new challenge and a change for the Connexion in "taking the cloak" of the Free churches. Meanwhile, as Merryweather says, men like Thoresby, Dodd and Shore laboured to enable both "types" of churches to go forward, whilst at the same time framing a new constitution so that Connexional and Free churches together could become the new FCE denomination they were convinced the Countess had had in mind. "...a few earnest men in the Connexion persevered. Committees were formed, frequent meetings held, and the organisation and objects of the Free Church of England debated again and again."²²

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Nevertheless, with the founding of new Free churches both inside and outside the aegis of the CHC, the growing awareness of a separate identity continued. The middle years of the 1850s saw the new churches being nearly always named in the new way of "Free Church": Avebury from August 1854, and Ruthin from its opening in 1857. Evidently Ruthin was not to be just another Connexional opening, for the announcement of its inception was: "Opening of the English Chapel at Ruthin, North Wales, under the auspices of Lady Huntingdon's Connexion".²³

The ambiguity must have been very confusing to many. The differentiation was not dependent upon the nature of the worship, for the new Free churches were liturgical in their worship and frequently used the Prayer Book. But then so were a number of the traditional Connexional chapels which were securely tied into C.H. trusts, and the pages of the denominational magazine show that there was a real concern over the confusion which was resulting.

An attempt was made by the Conference of June 1860 to cut through the ambiguities, and members were well aware of a different "identity" to the new churches. Under the section entitled "Home Operations" aid was promised for

the fitting-up of the Grosvenor Chapel in Exeter - one of the original Free churches. The conference account continues: "Two other places were strongly recommended as needing Free Churches". A little later the Rev. J. Davis reported that "he was about to establish a Free Church in Belgravia, on the plan of the Connexion, which was cordially approved...."²⁴

Later again in the proceedings, the Conference turned again to what was evidently a vexed question; and this time the problem of ambiguity is spelled out: "The position in which the several Free Churches in the country stood in relation to the Connexion, formed a subject of considerable discussion".

In fact, their decision solved nothing, it merely gave recognition to the problems of ambiguity: "it was resolved that those congregations who may deem it desirable be at liberty to use the words "Free Church" by way of explanation, in addition to the name of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion."²⁵

But the matter of title was not only a congregational prerogative. By 1861 it was evident that the sympathies of the minister were also instrumental. The C.H. Church at Worcester was in a local trust ²⁶ and had a long history within the denomination. Nevertheless, Thomas Dodd its minister was one of the main supporters of the new FCE movement, and in April 1861, it was announced that: "a new Sunday school has been opened in connection with Lady Huntingdon's Free Church".²⁷ This new title was to continue.²⁸

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The Deed Poll of 1863 and events leading up to it.

There is no adequate survey of the events leading up to the registration of the new denomination in the High Court of Chancery in 1863. In their works, both Price and Vaughan draw on the account written by F.S. Merryweather in 1873. Even Merryweather compresses the whole process of the years from 1849 to 1863 into 4 pages of octavo print, for his concerns were with other theological and constitutional matters. Thus, as with the founding of the new Free Churches, information has to be gleaned largely from other sources, including contributions to the denominational magazine. As with so much of the work of the FCE and the Connexion of the period, virtually no hand written documentation survives. Perhaps this is the more understandable when one sees that the hopes of Thoresby and others in 1849 for a great flowering of the Connexion into a new denomination to rival the Established Church simply did not happen. Even so, Merryweather, Vaughan and Price all tell of Thoresby's labours to produce the new denomination. Merryweather says: "Fourteen years were spent in drawing up a legal embodiment of the doctrines, principles and organisation of the future church..."²⁹

But the fact was that there were problems far too complicated for Thoresby and his colleagues to solve. They arose from the nature of the Connexion itself, and from its legal constitution, which had been settled nearly a century before. As the important events leading to the actual registration in Chancery drew nearer, the Connexion was faced with great changes; and the challenge of these made it evident that there were vital flaws in the Connexional structure.

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Evidently considerable growth and change was anticipated for the Connexion. The Annual Conference for 1862 met at Spa Fields on Tuesday 17 and Wednesday 18 June; and following a short break on the Wednesday afternoon, the work of the division of the country into "districts or dioceses" was accepted by the Conference.³⁰ Each was to be under the oversight of a superintendent:

"whose duty it shall be to promote the formation of mission auxiliaries, to visit them....to supply statistics of chapels and schools, and give information of vacant pulpits, and assist in supplying the same, reporting on all matters of the district to the district and conference meetings".

This was very much a move to a sort of episcopal function and responsibility, and in fact later, the superintendents were referred to as "bishops".³¹ Above all, in preparation for the new denomination itself, it was resolved that "The

Poll Deed of the Connexion to be revised by the Executive Committee, and submitted to the next conference".³²

Later that year, on 29 and 30 September, at the Connexional Chapel at Great Malvern, the ministers of the Western District held their Autumn meeting. The account of the proceedings is very brief, but on Tuesday morning 30 September the meeting paid special attention to the developments of "the Free Church movement at Ross and Brixham". And then, immediately the enigmatic note is made "various other matters relating to the cause of God in the Connexion were considered, and suitable resolutions adopted".³³

Almost certainly this was to do with preparations for the new denomination; and again the extraordinary coyness in the matter of detail is indicative of a more than usual sensitivity in the discussions.

The London District held its spring meeting at Tunbridge Wells on Wednesday 25 March 1863. Evidently here, preparations were proceeding well, for "the meeting heard with pleasure and satisfaction of the labours of the sub-committee appointed by the executive to initiate a new effort to be called the 'Free Church of England', as expressive of the original design of the Connexion."³⁴ There is no more detail than this, and in fact it was a "powerful" meeting involving the President of the Conference, the Reverend W. Woodhouse who preached that evening. Even so, the wording is significant: "to initiate a new effort to be called the 'Free Church of England', as expressive of the original design..." This would seem to indicate a view that what was imminent was not a large scale metamorphosis of the old denomination so much as the addition of a new one. The words were certainly prophetic.

The Autumn meeting at Malvern had seemed to imply problems and disagreements. The Spring meeting at Tunbridge Wells then hinted at a change in direction from the original intention of Thoresby and his colleagues. But there are further clear indications of bad feeling and polarizing of ideas amongst Connexional members at the time.

"Spur" wrote to the editor of Harbinger at the close of 1862 about the use of Sion Chapel, Whitechapel by Roman Catholics.³⁵ He blamed the Trustees of the Connexion,³⁶ and said that if their places were to be filled "by gentlemen who, at any rate, profess and believe in the Connexion, it would be a good thing". He continues "...in other hands, who could consistently work the thing, it

might become what it was, the 'Free Church of England'"³⁷ Another strong hint of partisan feeling appears in a critical review of the Rev. Henry Allan's memoirs of the distinguished C.H. minister the Rev. J. Sherman. The writer criticises the college (Cheshunt) and the Connexion for not working together. He, or she, then continues "A Free Church of England movement is the proper mission of men who inherit such responsibilities, and is the want of the age. We want new fields of labour opened up..." This review appears in the July edition of Harbinger, and so was probably written in June around the time of the vitally important Annual Connexional Conference (see below). Evidently things were not going well at all, and the finger of blame is pointed very clearly in two directions: "Till such enterprises are entered upon, the Trustees of the Connexion and the College are unfaithful to their trust."³⁸

It is extraordinary that, in view of the importance of the events surrounding the Deed Poll, more attention was not paid to detail in the historical surveys of Merryweather, Price and Vaughan.³⁹ One explanation is that, whereas Price and Vaughan drew heavily on the earlier work, Merryweather himself was writing his own material and collating his own documentation at a time when the movement was still not yet 10 years old. If there was considerable bad feeling over the Deed Poll, and all the evidence points to the fact that there was, then it was far better for the problems to be glossed-over. To put the matter succinctly, the efforts of the original committee to change the nature of the Connexion itself were a failure. The actual result was the creation of a new denomination to run alongside and in conjunction with the old; and when the History was being completed by F.S. Merryweather in the first years of the 1870s, he and many others still had high hopes that unity between the two bodies might still come about. He had good reason to be careful.

The Annual Connexional Conference for 1863 was held at Spa Fields Chapel on 22 and 23 June, and the matter of the foundation of the Free Church of England was the main item of business. Merryweather says that "difficulties were not finally overcome or sufficiently modified until 1863"⁴⁰ - and as examination makes clear, there was considerable modification of the original plans of 1849.

The architect of the scheme from the beginning had been the Rev. T.E. Thoresby of Spa Fields, and at the opening session of Conference he read the paper "on the Connexion in relation to the Free Church of England." It was then proposed and accepted by the Conference that:⁴¹

"for the perpetuation and development of the principles on which the Connexion is founded...that any new churches, and congregations gathered in

them, shall be known as "The Free Church of England", holding the doctrines and government by the laws, regulations, and declarations set forth in the printed scheme now submitted to this conference, and that the whole subject be referred to the special committee...with full power to carry the whole into legal and practical effect."

This work the special committee did, and on 31 August 1863:⁴²

"the Laws, Regulations and Declaration forming the Free Church of England, were finally embodied in a Poll Deed, which was duly registered in Her Majesty's High Court of Chancery...giving to the body a legal basis, a legal status, and a legal security to all vested properties and trusts, securing a recognised standard around which its scattered forces might be gathered."

Effectively, the Connexion had split. Significantly, the Conference Resolution of 24 June had no more than 21 lines devoted to it in Harbinger, and on the eventual Poll Deed of 31 August there was nothing in the denominational magazine at all. The silence was most eloquent!

The full text of the June resolution was, in fact, published separately along with letters of congratulation and support from many of the distinguished FCE supporters within the Connexion. But this was in a new publication The Circular of the Free Church of England. Number one was published with this full text in October 1863; and there appears within the text ⁴³ a clear indication that the main problems with the proposed developing of the old denomination into the new were:

1. The legal title of the Connexion, which had itself been registered in Chancery.
2. The fact that the Trustees of the Connexion had total control of most of the properties anyway.⁴⁴

But in fact the reasons for the split were far deeper than this. The report of the resolution in the August edition of Harbinger indicates that many felt that the Connexion no longer represented the original intention of the Countess:

"For the perpetuation and development of the principles on which the Connexion is founded, that it is highly expedient from this time, that any new churches...shall be known as 'The Free Church of England'".

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As matters stood, the new denomination that was registered by the Poll Deed of 31 August 1863 consisted of some 21 or more churches. The actual number is unclear, because the precise number of Connexional ministers (together with

their churches) who identified themselves wholly with the new movement is not known. Nevertheless, judging from the accounts of the "Free" congregations in Harbinger and other sources, such as Merryweather's History (pp. 181 ff.), and Mallard's dissertation on the Connexion, the new FCE included:

BRITAIN: Avebury; Beaumaris; Bovey Tracey; Christ Church, Exeter; Furrough Cross; Christ Church, Ilfracombe; Llandudno (seasonal); Mold; Purbrook; Ross; Ruthin; and Sandown, IOW.

CANADA: St. Thomas, Montreal.

AUSTRALIA: Geelong; and Sydney.

The FCE also included the Connexional churches at: Brighton; Spa Fields, London; Worcester; Cheltenham; Tunbridge Wells

The weaknesses within the Connexion which led to the division of 1863.

The question that has at this point to be answered is why the attempts by many to achieve the aims of the Conference of 1850 failed so signally in 1863. The answer lies in the fact that the Connexion was both divided and deeply flawed from its earliest days, despite the eminence of its work, and indeed many of its clergy. Several, such as S.C. Orchard⁴⁵ and Edwin Welch⁴⁶, have traced problems to the Will of Selina herself, and to the consequent tendency towards independency: but none has examined this complex and detailed matter any further, especially with reference to the genesis of the Free Church of England. Yet, such an examination produces some significant results.

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In the first Circular of 1863 a number of strong messages of support for the new venture were published, and it is significant that these included letters from the most senior and important members of the Conference:

1. The Rev. George Jones was President of the Connexional Conference for 1863, and he had been present at the June Conference.⁴⁷
2. The Rev. H.R. Reynolds was the President of the Countess of Huntingdon's College at Cheshunt. He had also been present at the time of the vote, and he felt that the greater authoritarian order with "Presbyterian and Episcopal superintendence" and liturgical worship was a great advantage.⁴⁸

3. Significantly, the Rev. Dr. Charles Beckett regarded the FCE as, de facto, already in existence: "I know that where attempted, it has already largely succeeded..."⁴⁹ Beckett was also present at the June Conference.
4. J.B. Figgis, the celebrated CH minister in Brighton had not been present that June. Nevertheless he wrote a strong letter of support.⁵⁰
5. The Rev. Benjamin Price had voted at the Conference. Like Reynolds, he emphasized the advantages of the order and authority of the new system.⁵¹
6. The Rev. R.S. Short of the Free Church at Exeter had also been one of those present at the June Conference.⁵²
7. F.W. Willcocks, was a leading lay member both of Spa Fields Chapel and of the Conference - at which he had been present.⁵³

But in addition to these, other voters at the meeting in June included the retiring President of the Conference, the Rev. W. Woodhouse, the Rev. Thomas Dodd and T.E. Thoresby himself - all being known supporters of the FCE movement. In fact the attendance at the Conference in June had been slightly better than average, with 25 ministers (12 apologies) and 12 lay members (just 1 apology).⁵⁴ Thus, 8 out of the 25 voting clergy were obviously strong champions of the cause. So, bearing in mind that of these, one was no less than the President of Cheshunt College, and another two were actually Presidents of Conference (positions that were elective), although no figures are given, it is evident that the voting must have been very positively for the change. Where, then, lay the divisions in the Connexion?⁵⁵

The Trustee Controversy, 1790-c.1825.

The first and most important division within the denomination was a very long-standing and bitter one between the ministers (and therefore the Conference) and the Trustees of the Connexion who administered central funds and properties (not necessarily clergy - and very often not).

The roots of this problem went back to the time of the death of the Countess herself; and at times the feuding had not only been public, but had resulted in legal action being taken.

It was never the intention of Selina to found her own denomination. As with the Methodists, at first, until 1781, her chapels were societies within the Established Church. But once it was clear that the bishops would no longer ordain men from her own college, and once she was prevented by law from

employing a large number of her own chaplains as a peeress, then came the "primary ordination" at Spa Fields - and the break with the Establishment.

Before her death, Lady Huntingdon made plans to secure the continuation of her work, and in 1790 a number of clergy and laity formed an association to look to the future government of the denomination. Their work resulted in the "Plan of an Association for Uniting and Perpetrating the Connexion of the Right Honourable the Countess Dowager of Huntingdon". In the main, this plan divided the chapels into 23 districts, each with its own Committee, and each sending representatives to a yearly conference.⁵⁶ The plan failed, being opposed, amongst others by the distinguished Thomas Haweis, and Lady Anne Erskine. Accordingly, Selina abandoned this scheme, and consequently the matter of a proper and centralised authority was not addressed from the very first.⁵⁷

By her Will, the Countess only compounded the weakness; for on 11 January 1790 she bequeathed "all her chapels, houses and furniture therein, and all the residue of her estates and effects, to Thomas Haweis and Janetta Payne, his wife; Lady Anne Erskine and John Lloyd".⁵⁸ She further willed that on the death of any one of the Trustees, the survivors should appoint another, so that there should always be four. In fact, when Selina died in 1791, Lady Erskine superintended the chapels, and Haweis attended to their supply of ministers.⁵⁹

When Lady Anne Erskine herself died in 1804, her work was largely taken over by Mr. James Oldham who had for many years been advisor to both herself and to the Countess. He was in charge of the management of Spa Fields Chapel, the school, the college and the Connexion - an astonishing range of responsibility and power. And at his death in 1821, his work was taken over by another Trustee, a Mr. H.F. Stroud who had originally been associated with Dr. Haweis in the chapel at Bath. There is no doubt that Stroud was most able, as was Oldham.⁶⁰ But both were (through the will of the Countess) in extremely powerful positions in the business affairs of the denomination; neither was a clergyman, and as the years passed, the centre of authority moved out of the immediate influence of the Annual Conference of clergy and lay representatives.

Edwin Welch points out that the Trust Deed for the Connexion was not signed until 1807, by which time most of the chapels had executed their own trust deeds.⁶¹ Again, during his time, Mr. Oldham arranged that an estate close to Spa Fields and the chapel itself should be held in a private trust held within the congregation itself - the Oldham Trust.⁶² So within 30 years of the death

of the Countess, the ownership of her 200 or so churches became hopelessly fragmented. There began a long drift towards Congregationalism over the years, and very soon there were Trustees of the Connexion who were not even members of the denomination.⁶³

On 17 October 1787, the Apostolic Society was formed to carry on the work of the college after the Countess's death. The "Plan" was to transfer the college to Swansea, with 7 members of the Connexion to be Trustees and governors. Trustees were to appoint staff, with the approval of senior members of the Connexion: but from the first there was disagreement, and after the death of Selina the same pattern of fragmentation of authority happened as took place within the Connexion itself.

The house at Trevecca had been leased to Selina, so although the Trustees had possession of the furniture and books,⁶⁴ the college had to be legally founded again.⁶⁵ Largely through the insistence of James Oldham (according to "An Old Attendant") it was decided to move the college, not to Swansea as the Countess had intended, but to the London area. In fact Oldham brought the freehold of the large house at Cheshunt for £950.⁶⁶ But the break with Trevecca also brought a very considerable change in policy.

The Trust Deed of 1792 modified the original plan of 1787, and although the College was identified with the Connexion it was, as Orchard says, an Evangelical institution rather than a denominational one. The Trust Deed allowed for the admission of a student outside the denomination, and again for the consultation of clergy outside the Connexion about the appointment of a Tutor (Principal). Even the opening service of the college was hardly in liturgical form: so, from the first there was "feel" to the college of Independency. S.C. Orchard says with great insight "Once the Connexion was weakened by its own schisms and failed to supply the majority of support for the college, the catholic provisions of the Trust Deed allowed the college to change accordingly".⁶⁷

With the death of James Oldham, the direct link with the life and times of the Countess was cut. Also, at this time there were an increasing number of students from the London Missionary Society. In fact in 1837 there was a special arrangement made for the college to take more LMS students, and in return there was a financial support arrangement from the society for the college: all this at a time when the LMS itself was moving to Independency.⁶⁸

Inevitably this was reflected in the college itself, and in 1839, an Independent minister the Rev. John Harris was appointed as Resident Tutor. Later, under Harris the link was made with the University of London - he had vision and was a most able head of the college. Nevertheless he was not a Connexion minister, and Orchard points to increasing strain between him and the college Trustees, who were themselves moving away from the Connexional Conference.⁶⁹

The Connexion Trustee Dispute c. 1825-1842.

Meanwhile, the other group of Trustees, for Connexional property, was also moving away from the Connexion. Evidence points to a deterioration of relationships, especially in the latter part of the 1820s. A letter from the Trustees "to the Ministers of the...Connexion and to the Managers of the chapels in the Connexion Trust" was sent, dated 21 February 1842. It attempts to heal some of the wounds: but at the same time, it includes some surprising information:⁷⁰

"Christian Friends,
In a Circular which we addressed to the Ministers of the Connexion, under date of 2d February 1829, on occasion of transferring to them the management of the Home Mission, Fund, and of discontinuing the practice (commenced in the summer of 1821) [brackets in the original] of meeting them in Conference....."

Clearly, feelings had run high. The Trustees had hoped to avoid "all supposed clashing of interest, and opposition of feeling". But: "The hope which we then expressed unhappily was not realised". The Trustees made application to the Court of Chancery to enable them to alter the Constitution of the Connexion "so as to assimilate it to the views and wishes of a portion of its ministers".⁷¹

During the case, all financial accounts were submitted to the Court, but according to "An Old Attendant" the matter was not pressed to a legal conclusion because of the possible involvement once again of the Mortmain Act. This left the Trustees still in practical control.⁷²

At the close of the suit, the Ministers (69 of them) presented a Memorial which was eventually officially adopted by the Conference of July 1841. This urged co-operation in a new series of efforts towards "reviving and enlarging the Connexion". The Trustees refused to accept this; but instead announced the intention of printing in future an annual statement of accounts together with a

list of chapels in the Connexional Trust, "and also of the Ministers recognised by us as belonging to it".⁷³

This was actually a re-statement of an earlier provocative declaration by H.F. Stroud: "We shall in future consider as belonging to the Connexion only those chapels vested in our trust".⁷⁴

Many of the chapels had evolved their own independent Trusts outside the aegis of the Trustees because of the earlier delays. Some of these had a ministry provided by Connexional ministers, some not. Therefore, whereas the Conference had one List of Ministers which it recognised as Connexional, the Trustees had another, and the two lists did not tally! Again the Provident Fund for Ministers, their widows and dependants was administered by the Trustees for the benefit of those recognised by them, and only those. This was a long standing source of disagreement.⁷⁵

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By the middle of the 1840s, the Free Church movement had started in the West of England, and in the following years the Connexion was looked-to in the provision of ministers (although not to Totnes where Shore was at Bridgetown Chapel, or Furrrough Cross where there was also an episcopally ordained priest). Yet the Connexion itself was actually already divided into 3 parts - Conference, Connexional Trustees, and College. Each was claiming to represent the Connexion, but in fact each was pursuing its own cause of action and policy. The College was moving firmly towards congregationalism,⁷⁶ the Trustees were closely bound up in their own internal problems and were not prepared to support any clergy or cause outside their own Trust Chapels. So it was natural that when the links were forged between the Free churches and the CHC through the need for ministers, these links were made with the Conference. As the Free churches became more established, so the Conference proceeded to an official "recognition" of their clergy. Gradually, therefore, it is possible to see the Conference alone as spearheading the movement towards the Free Church of England - because this is where the Free Church of England men found their centres of authority, information and ministerial fellowship.

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Connexional disunity 1850-1863.

Problems continued between the three factions of the Connexion, and it is interesting to see the continuing polarisation of attitudes and positions through reports, letters and editorial comment in the denominational magazine. A few brief references will illustrate this.

An editorial address to the Ministers and Members of the Connexion in August 1851 sets the position of disunity frankly before the readers. The question is asked, "What can be done to revive the work of God among us?" The writer admits "The best of our friends have often wept over the division of Trustees, Tutors, and Ministers, and cannot hope for much success until all parties unite."⁷⁷ It continues: "The great desideratum...is the hearty and real co-operation of the Trustees...with...Ministers and friends."⁷⁸

Like many, the writer, the Reverend Jacob Kirkman Foster, regarded the progress of the college with great misgivings. In the latter part of his address he asks for "the recovery of the college to the purpose for which it was chiefly founded - the supplying of our pulpit with ministers..."⁷⁹

Indeed, through the moving of the college towards Congregationalism, many churches that would otherwise have been Connexional had become independent in loyalty because of the ministry supplied. The Trustees, also being unable on occasions to get Connexional or Connexionally trained ministers, were also moving towards Congregationalism. In September 1851, "B.P." writes an extended article "Why has the Connexion Declined?", and he shows this to be development which is obviously affecting the unity of the denomination: "In proportion as it (the CHC) has become Congregational it has ceased to be Connexional...it has declined and become enfeebled".⁸⁰

The next month, "J.C." wrote a supportive letter to the editor. He felt that the moves towards Congregationalism were often of necessity because of a lack of Connexional ministers. He suggested a re-organisation of Districts, and a "well connected scheme of itinerant labour" - something that not all would have agreed with, especially in view of the problems that had so often been caused by the Countess's own views on itinerancy. Many churches had been lost to independency: "Care is needed not to lose places we have once in possession. Alas! how great is their number!". The writer significantly instanced the old

and the new chapels at Chatteris (respectively now Calvinistic Baptist and Wesleyan), and Alfriston Chapel "with many more".⁸¹

In September 1852 the Trustees sent a detailed report of their work to the magazine.⁸² This included the financial statement of their accounts, a report of the previous year's work in each of the chapels vested in the central Trust, and a list of the clergy recognised by them as Connexional ministers. It is interesting to see that their list contains 56 names as opposed to the 75 recognised earlier by the Conference held on 29 June.⁸³

1853 was a year which provided an opportunity for the Conference and the Trustees to build a bridge, for in that year, one of the Trustees, the Rev. John Finley died. The report of the June Conference discussions shows just how delicate was the relationship, for the wording is "careful" in the extreme:

"This matter occupied the very earnest attention of the Brethren...and while they had not the least idea of dictating to the surviving Trustees any course they should pursue, on the other hand felt it to be their duty to inform them of their unanimous opinion..."

The apologetic but firm nature of the report continues in this vein, until eventually the name is presented - that of the Rev. J. Sherman, a well known and respected Connexion man.⁸⁴ The response of the Trustees was, however, not so "careful".

At first they approached the Rev. Joseph Sortain, but a considerable delay followed as they waited for his recovery from sickness. After a year, the place was still not filled,⁸⁵ and there was much bad feeling at the 1854 Conference which wanted very much to avoid "another collision, which cannot but prove injurious".⁸⁶ Eventually, after some 18 months, the Trustees accepted Sherman to fill the vacancy.⁸⁷ But the delay looked very much like a rebuff, and the cost of it was the great ill-feeling re-engendered.

In January 1855 there was an attempt to mend some of the damage the previous year, and with a very careful and eirenic article "Things deplored and Things Hopeful", Benjamin Price of Ilfracombe appeared as a skilful peacemaker. It is sad, he agreed, to see clergymen of other denominations in Connexional pulpits. But on the other hand, he pointed out, it is regrettable that congregations needing ministers should not actually contact the Executive Committee of the Conference or the Trustees; as he commented "What bickerings and animosities it would often save". Also, there is criticism of the college for so often sending its students to serve in other denominations.

On the other hand he rejoiced that Sherman had been appointed to the vacant Trusteeship; and he also mentioned "the increased good feeling which pervades all parties - the Trustees - the Conference - the College". He concluded with the rallying call "Let the things deplored be put away from among us - and let the things hopeful encourage us".⁸⁸

The importance of the article is not so much in its pious hopes so much as that it honestly recognised the problems and put them squarely before the denomination. The "increased good feeling" may have been more hope than fact, but it at least indicated an awareness amongst the three factions that the situation was in great need of attention. Finally, the article is significant in that it shows Price himself as a man of care and insight. The writing is both authoritative and eirenic - it is also factual and direct in stating what is wrong and what needs attention. There is a statesmanship about this early contribution to the denominational magazine which was vindicated by his later elevation to the position of Bishop Primus of the Free Church of England.⁸⁹

Despite Price's words, the situation did not continue with the improvement that he had commented upon. Moreover, by the time of the Conference on 25 June, there had evidently been a fairly major dispute, not only between the three "factions", but probably also within the Conference itself.

The Presidential Address at Conference lamented the fact that "the last census is our reprover". The census itself had remarked that although the name "Connexion" was still used, "the congregational polity is practically adopted". Indeed the figures provided (in the table showing the proportion of accommodation provided by fifteen religious bodies) indicate the Connexion as providing the smallest number of all "sittings" at 38,727. This represented 0.4% of the total number. Although Connexional attendances on Sunday 30 March 1851 were 21,103, this still represented a minuscule proportion of the total countrywide attendance reckoned at just under 11,000,000.⁹⁰ Hollis (the President) continued by recognising the differences between the Connexion and the new Free Churches. In particular he mentions Christ Church, Exeter; he also speaks of 4 clergy "Messrs. Shore and Gladstone...Mitchell and Price.... The fellowship would be natural; the separation is anomalous"⁹¹

But it is towards the end of his speech that he gave an indication of major divisions with the Trustees yet again; his appeal was dramatic:

"Trustees and ministers must be one. Not until this is accomplished ought any child of the Connexion to have peace. The separation is suicidal,

causing misery and death to both. Bury the past..." Hollis finished with the appeal: "Brethren...confer with the trustees of the Connexion and the College, and do it quickly."⁹²

The reason for this unusually impassioned appeal is complex. Firstly the Trustees were faced with their own internal 'crisis' when in 1856 Mr. Trueman retired on the grounds of ill health, and at the same time Sir J. Dean Paul was convicted (crime unspecified in the magazine), and sentenced. These vacancies were not filled until 1857.⁹³ But at the same time, there was apparently still opposition to the appointment of the Rev. J. Sherman.⁹⁴ Relationships had become very bad indeed over these matters. In a letter to the Editor, "Abel" had said that he was willing to join hand and heart and purse with those who think that another law-suit is necessary". He pleaded for a uniting of certain positions both within the Trustees and Conference.⁹⁵

Further letters appeared in the June edition of The Harbinger, and certainly financial matters together with the conviction of one of the trustees had bred deep suspicion generally. "Justitia" questions the finances following the sale of the Preston Chapel; again, both he and "An old subscriber" question very firmly the practice of the Trustees in auditing their own accounts.⁹⁶ The subsequent Trustees' Report, dated 1 May 1857 does not really provide any adequate answer to the suspicions and many questions raised. In any case the Trustees themselves were greatly depleted by circumstances. Some figures are provided with regard to the sale of Preston Chapel, and there is also the announcement of two new people to be "associated with us in the Trust". But at least, one of the problems had evidently been solved: for although there are just 2 signatories, one is James Sherman.⁹⁷

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At first sight, from the latter part of 1857 onwards, the open hostility between the Trustees and members of the Conference appears to die down. In 1858 there was no Circular and no set of accounts from the Trustees: the reason stated in The Harbinger was that because of the recent changes, the Treasurer did not have 12 months of accounts to present.⁹⁸ Thereafter, in subsequent years, when the accounts are published in the denominational magazine, there is no Circular with them, but the accounts themselves are externally audited. Moreover for the several following years the financial details of the Preston Chapel monies are clearly set out for readers.

But, sadly, the lack of open hostility was not because of any great or formal reconciliation within the Connexional factions - rather was it because of yet another intra-denominational rift. This time it was between the Trustees and the ministers and delegates of their own Central Trust chapels.

Problems first arose in 1842 when the lease for Spa Fields Chapel expired. The Trustees had decided to abandon the site, but a temporary extension was arranged through the good offices of a Mr. (later Alderman) Challis. The Conference made an early unsuccessful attempt to renew the lease, but eventually a further extension was secured for 11 years, the lessees being 6 individuals including Challis and Sherman. During these negotiations, according to "An Old Attendant" (F.W. Willcocks) the Trustees of the Connexion refused to assist or to become involved.

The renewed lease then expired on Lady Day 1855, and a committee applied to the Trustees for occupancy of the nearby freehold ground purchased originally by Mr. Oldham. The Trustees agreed, provided that the buildings were erected by the congregation - which prospect was deemed too costly. Consequently, representatives from the committee managed to negotiate a new lease on the old property with the Marquess of Northampton who owned it. This was to run for 31 years from midsummer 1855.⁹⁹ In 1857 the chapel was secured to the Connexion (and to the Conference) by the adoption of the Fifteen Articles of Faith, and through the terms of a new Trust Deed.¹⁰⁰

The next action of the Trustees was highly inflammatory, for annual payments made to Spa Fields from the estate of James Oldham were suddenly stopped. F.W. Willcocks claimed that this was because the chapel was no longer under their direct control. But the fact was that the Oldham Estate gift was always seen as a general Connexional benefit. The Committee of the Chapel School, feeling the new circumstances especially severely, proposed to go to Chancery with the Trustees in a friendly application for clarification. This was refused by the Trustees.¹⁰¹ Thus from some time at the end of 1858, suspicion over handling of Trustee funds (fed by the earlier scandal of Sir A. Dean Paul) grew to such an extent that a major wedge was being driven between the Trustees and ministers of their own central Trust Chapels.¹⁰²

At the June Conference in 1859, there was a premature hope that legal proceedings might be avoided.¹⁰³ But later, in the early 1860s, when the Trustees proposed to divert trust monies to college use, a long lasting and

very acrimonious legal action took place. In fact this was eventually to be won by the Conference in 1867/8, but the result of the great ill-feeling was the most serious isolation of the Trustees from other members of the Connexion ever yet engendered. From June 1859 until 1884 the Trustees no longer met with the Ministers and Managers of their own Central Trust chapels.¹⁰⁴ Thus one of the three factions that were already making any sort of Connexional unity an impossibility further sub-divided.¹⁰⁵

Connexional relations with both Calvinistic Methodism and Independent chapels.

It is easy to blame, as have many, the Trustees and the college for the state of grave disunity that made any sort of united action in the Connexion impossible. But even though it is clear that it was largely the members of the Conference alone that were spearheading the movement towards the new denomination, it is important to see that there were also differences within the Conference itself which militated against the acceptance of a new and authoritative denominational identity.

The Reverend George Whitefield was a confidant and an unofficial chaplain to the Countess until he died while on a visit to Georgia in 1770. From about 1743 onwards, his supporters and followers became identified with the "Calvinistic Methodists"; and just as both Whitefield and Wesley moved away from each other's doctrinal positions during the early 1740s, so did the churches they founded. Nevertheless, there was always a link between the CHC and the Calvinistic Methodists which even the removal of the College from Trevecca to Cheshunt did not break. Both were strongly Calvinist in doctrinal position, especially on the matter of pre-destination which had caused such a breach between Selina and John Wesley. Again, both were formed from the common bond of the partnership between the Countess and Whitefield. There were differences between the two denominations however. On the one hand, the Connexion was in principle committed to the quasi-episcopal authority of the Conference and most of its churches worshipped liturgically: on the other hand the Whitefield Churches were non-liturgical in worship and often tended towards Independency.¹⁰⁶

In 1851, an article on denominational strength comments on a report made by a Mr. E. Baines to the Church Rate Committee of the House of Commons. Baines gave the number of Connexional Chapels as 30, but he counted only those in the Central Trust. The actual number, said the article, "will be found to exceed

70". Later, the writer adds: "We say nothing of...our relationship to Calvinistic Methodists in general, both in England and in Wales; or of twenty students being educated in our college".¹⁰⁷

In terms of numerical strength, a working relationship with the Calvinistic Methodists must have seemed of importance to many in the Connexion. As the 1851 Parliamentary Religious Census showed, on 30 March 1851, the Calvinistic Methodists had 211,951 sittings available (as opposed to the C.H. Chapels' 38,727), and their attendances were 125,244 (as opposed to 21,103 in the Connexion). Moreover, in Wales it was a growing denomination.¹⁰⁸ Earlier in the year, in an article entitled "Arise! Shine!", the writer actually sees church growth possibilities through some form of liaison with both the Free Church Movement and the Calvinistic Methodists: "What might not now be done in connection with the Free Church Movement, and Calvinistic Methodism?"¹⁰⁹

There is clearly a link in the mind of members of the Connexion between themselves and the C.M. churches: but there is equally evidently the same idea in the minds of many of the Calvinistic Methodist communities themselves. On a number of occasions, lists of contributions both for the Connexion and for the work of the Countess of Huntingdon's Missionary Society include amounts given by C.M. Churches. In January 1860, the list includes both C.M. and Independent churches in South, South West, and South East Wales.¹¹⁰ Similar contributions appear in Harbinger in August 1860,¹¹¹ September 1860,¹¹² February 1861,¹¹³ September 1862,¹¹⁴ October 1862,¹¹⁵ (including collections from mid-Wales), April 1863¹¹⁶ and July 1863,¹¹⁷ (including collections from North Wales). Many other examples appear after this.

In fact the relationship appeared to develop particularly during the last part of the 1850s; and it almost looks as if, in response to the chaotic internal relationships of the Connexion, certain members of the Conference were looking outside to other communities to buttress what was an ever weakening structure within. In September 1859 (following the grave internal division between the Trustees and their Ministers), the Conference obtained permission to use the Independent Chapel at Llanelly for a fund raising event in aid of the Connexional work in Sierra Leone. Despite heavy rain through the day, it was reported that "the collection exceeded our expectations".¹¹⁸

Although the principle of Presbyterianial ordination was firmly kept to for officially recognised Connexional ministers, it appears that there was an

element of interchangeability with other ministries. The minister of the Llanelly Independent Chapel was the Rev. P. Perkins, and not only were there regular contributions to the work of the Connexion from Llanelly during this time, but in the early part of 1861, following the retirement of the minister of the Connexional Chapel at Great Malvern, Perkins actually moved to become minister at Malvern. In fact Perkins had long established family connections with the Connexion. His maternal grandfather was a Connexional minister, and he himself had taught in the Spa Fields Sunday School.¹¹⁹ Subsequently in the spring of 1862, he was officially recognised by the Conference as a minister of the Connexion, but there is no record of his "re-ordination" at the Conference session.¹²⁰

Again, despite the differences between the CHC and C.M. or Independent churches over liturgical worship, there was certain common ground in hymnody. It was reported at the 1861 Conference that "the Connexional Hymn Book was now used in forty-four Connexion, and in thirty-three Welsh Calvinistic Methodist and other congregations".¹²¹

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By 1863 therefore, Connexional ties and loyalties were as broad as they were impossibly fragmented. The element of independency was clearly not only within the college and Trustees, but from the late 1850s and early 1860s, there was an increasing amount of contact with other non-liturgical traditions within the life and work of the Conference itself. In order to be able to fulfil the original intentions of Thoresby, Dodd and others at the 1850 Conference, the new Free Church of England would have had to be able to absorb and to hold together ecclesiastical traditions as different as those of Shore and Gladstone (Furrough Cross) on the one hand (episcopally ordained priests using the Prayer Book liturgy), and a number of ministers like Perkins on the other hand who had been very much at home in Independency or Calvinistic Methodism. This sort of impossibly diverse breadth was also an established part of the college tradition at Cheshunt - which did not even properly serve the Connexion, let alone a new, strongly ordered "episcopal" and liturgical Free Church.

Legal problems over properties, many different Trust Deeds for chapels, Trust Deeds of the Central Trust, internal problems and crises within the body of the Trustees, continual financial problems and pressures with Trustees and others, the ever growing resentment within the Conference over the refusal of the

Trustees to apply the Provident Fund outside their own chapels, publicly acrimonious legal cases, the increasingly congregationalist stance of the college and its authorities and Trustees: each of these problems together with the basic division of the Connexion into at least three factions was all too obvious to the members of the Conference in 1863.

The Conference therefore made the only decision that was, at the time, even remotely possible: "for the perpetuation and development of the principles on which the Connexion is founded...it is highly expedient from this time, that any new churches, and congregations gathered in them, shall be known as "The Free Church of England".¹²² This was a resolution as pragmatic as it was riddled with compromise; and when compared with the hopes of some at the Conference of 1850, it appears as little more than an admission of defeat in what was, sadly, an impossible task.

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The paper which Thoresby actually presented at the time of the voting at the 1863 Conference was not made public until 1870, when it was printed in the June edition of the FCE Magazine.¹²³ In it, Thoresby confirmed the lack of actual substance to the title "Free Church of England" as a denominational genus name in the year before. He begins by defining the term:

"By the Free Church of England, we mean...that which is floating as an idea in the popular mind...and which the public believe will one day be realised in a distinct and legal ecclesiastical organisation..."

Naturally enough, Thoresby did not deal with the many divisions and strains within the Connexion, other than by the occasional slightest hint. But what is significant is his inclusion of the legal advice given by their solicitor, Mr. Lewis, as to the possibility of adopting the FCE scheme as a basis for the government of the Connexion. Lewis' answer was clearly, "no", and he gave four reasons:

"1. The proposal shuts out the rights of the Trustees of the chapels left in Lady Huntingdon's Will.

2. The doctrinal basis of the Connexion would be altered. (Almost certainly a reference to the preparations in the Poll Deed for the introduction of an episcopal authority, actually vested in a person, at the heart of each district administration).

3. By the change of name, and taking in other churches, it would be taken as evidence that you had seceded from them.

4. (And perhaps most powerfully). The proposed change is contrary to the Poll-Deed of the Connexion. Unless the members of the Connexion chose to give up, once and for all, any or all rights and privileges which they suppose they possess...."

Lewis' further advice obviously formed the actual proposal at the Conference, for he said that there was no legal reason to prevent "new buildings and societies" using the name of the FCE, especially if the polity involved "the general principles and practice of the Connexion".¹²⁴ Lewis further supposed that in future times the Charity Commissioners could vest "the old Trusts upon the new foundation, with the consent of the present Trustees of each particular chapel".

The advice was accurate as to the possibilities of uniting the ministries, polities and properties of the two systems at that time. But Lewis's hope for future action in uniting the two denominations (as they would be) was vain. It simply did not allow for the strength of "Congregationalism" that there was within the Connexion - as following decades were clearly to demonstrate.

Some concluding thoughts

The whole process of the genesis of the Free Church of England cannot be seen without a careful examination of the development and problems of the Connexion during the twenty or twenty five years leading up to the Conference of 1863 and the subsequent registration of the new Deed Poll in Chancery. Very few of the histories of the FCE have even remotely addressed the problem, for the story is both highly complicated and fraught with division and denominational politics.

The three main texts are those of F.S. Merryweather (1873), Benjamin Price (1908), Frank Vaughan (1936). Merryweather could not afford to be too specific in his writing. His work was completed only 10 years after the Deed Poll when there was still a "federative agreement" operative between the FCE and the CHC; although the denominations were distinct and separate there were still many working towards organic unity. In any case, Merryweather's main concerns were constitutional and theological. In 1873 the new denomination was still presbyterial in ministry, and he was at pains to provide an apologia for its polity and to defend it from the frequent accusation of being part of non-conformity.

Benjamin Price died on Monday 6 January 1896 (a more detailed examination of his life and influence is included later). His Organisation of the Free Church of England is composed of extracts from an unpublished autobiography. It is a slight work with little historical analysis and is both homiletic and polemic in style. Judging by textual references, the date of writing is probably some time in the mid 1880s, and memories within the Connexion will still have been very tender. Price owed the Connexion a great deal. He remained a member of the Conference, and in fact was President of the Connexional Conference for the years 1866 to 1868.¹²⁵ The problems that he will have seen within the Connexion at first hand only eventually ceased on 3 December 1884 when at a joint Conference of Connexion, Trustees and college Trustees, it was agreed at long last that the Trustees should be members of the Connexion. It had taken a century to sort out the difficulties engendered by the Countess's will - but this was not within the purview of Price who looked to the new denomination rather as a triumph in the "standing protest against Popery in the Church of England".¹²⁶ The compilation of the booklet was, in any case, made by his daughter Anne Elizabeth Price who would have seen the portrait of her father in the work as claiming prior importance. A set of notes made by her on the back of a foolscap manila envelope shows that Miss Price was using the denominational magazine in addition to what was evidently the hand-written autobiographical notes (now lost) - but again the concentration is heavily on the personality and ideas of her father.¹²⁷

Frank Vaughan attempted a much wider sweep in his work, which was first published in 1936. He was never afraid of controversy, and his privately duplicated memories published some years later have some hard things to say. But Vaughan's origins were not in the Connexion or the Free Church of England. He was a sergeant in the Guards until he became, in civilian life, a lay reader in the Anglican diocese of Liverpool. Then in the early years of the century he was ordained in the Reformed Episcopal Church. In 1936, he was already Presiding Bishop of the recently united Free Church of England and Reformed Episcopal Church, and would have had neither the time to devote to research nor the space available in what is essentially a superficial examination of the two denominations that had united in 1927. Thus he relies heavily on the work of Merryweather.

CHAPTER 3
THE FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, 1863 - 1876

INTRODUCTION

The thirteen years from 1863 to 1876 saw greater changes for the FCE than almost any other period in the history of the denomination. The Poll Deed was registered in the High Court of Chancery on 31 August 1863, and as Price in his unpublished autobiography says, the new body gained "a legal basis, a legal status, and a legal security to all vested properties and trusts, securing a recognised standard around which its scattered forces might be gathered".¹ Yet at the very first, other than for the guardian presence of the "Free Church of England Committee", the new movement seemed virtually indistinguishable from its parent denomination: the annual conferences were held at the same time and place, the officers, clergy and many of the lay members were frequently the same people, and the liturgical and prayer-book worship was often very much in the same mould. But now, the facility was there for a new and different denominational system to be built - which had been by the close of 1876.

Through these thirteen years the FCE quickly took on a definite and distinct ecclesial identity apart from that of the Connexion. What was at first a formal and federative unity between the denominations disappeared as the young body developed a liturgical style and tradition of its own. Its theology (although continuing in the light of its Calvinist background) also developed - as might be expected of those who were very often disaffected Anglicans. As the concept of an episcopal authority and function grew up at the centre of the FCE, so the more traditional numbers of the Connexion grew away by reaction - a process completed by the end of the 70s and ensured by their apparently irreversible progress towards congregationalism. Almost certainly for many in the Connexion there was a feeling of alienation at this time also, for the new, episcopally ordered, Reformed Episcopal Church in America developed very close ties with the FCE, so much so that a federative unity was formed in 1875. Thus the taking into the FCE of the traditional Apostolic Succession, through two consecrations in 1876 by a bishop of the Reformed Episcopal Church, was seen by many in the Connexion as a betrayal of basic Protestant principles.

During the years 1863 to 1876 there was a very considerable expansion of the new denomination with many new churches springing up all over England and Wales. The work of the FCE also spread to Bermuda, and extended itself within Australia. Resultingly, many in the Establishment saw the FCE as a threat. But the vigorous opposition of bishops, including Rochester, Manchester, and Winchester, only served to highlight for the public the value of the FCE as a viable alternative (as many felt) to what appeared to be a growing Romanism within the Church of England. Again and again, the pages of magazines like the Rock or Patriot shows the nervousness felt by many for the constitution as well as the religion of England.

So, by the end of 1876, what had been a group of scattered communities allied to the Connexion had become a conventional (if small) protestant episcopal church. But the route was difficult, the changes great, and the cost, for those loyal to the Connexion, impossibly high. (The actual figures involved are examined at the close of the present chapter).

The "Federative" relationship between the FCE and the CHC: 1863 - 1867

The resolution founding the FCE was passed by the Conference of the Connexion on 24 June 1863, and from the start, the opportunity was carefully left open for members of the older denomination to change, so that perhaps by another route it could yet "become" the new FCE - despite the obvious failure of the ambitions of so many years.

The opening resolution was that: "it is highly expedient from this time that any new churches, and congregations gathered in them, shall be known as "The Free Church of England" holding the Doctrines, and governed by the Laws, Regulations and Declarations hereinafter stated".² But, the resolution then continued by building in an opportunity for the functional uniting of the ministries of the two denominations:³

"those Ministers of the Connexion who have signed, or may hereafter sign, the Fifteen Articles...may thereby be admitted members of the Free Church of England, but shall not thereby...lose any of their legal rights, privileges, or authority whatsoever as Ministers of the Connexion".

It further continued by allowing for the inclusion of church officials of those churches served by such a minister: "also that all officers of the church shall likewise subscribe or sign the Articles, as the Ministers..."⁴

Thus, although churches in established C.H. trusts might well be unable to be identified with the new denomination, yet the facility was open for all existing C.H. clergy and laity who would serve as officers in the FCE to make the change.

From this point, the Resolution continued by stating briefly the Principles of Government of the new churches. They were to be Congregational in so far as they were responsible for their own internal local affairs. They were to be Presbyterian in so far as Elders, Deacons, Trustees, Managers, etc. were to gather "in District Meetings or Synods, and in Annual Conference or convocation."⁵ So far the differences between the denominations seemed negligible.

But then, the resolution took a new and far more traditionally authoritarian stance. It continued: "And Episcopal - in the sense of one or more of the Presbyters chosen by his fellow Presbyters, taking the oversight...in a given district or diocese. And further that one of these be chosen as Bishop Primus or President".⁶ It was this part of the Resolution more than any other which was later to be the focus of disunity and the source of trouble.

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It is hardly surprising that, although the two denominations ran in parallel for some years, there were evidently some leaders in the Connexion who were unhappy about the developments of what they felt should have remained within the Connexional framework. F.W. Willcocks was one of the main trustees of the Spa Fields chapel. In the anonymous history of Spa Fields which he wrote in 1884 ("An Old Attendant"), he had some bitter things to say about the Poll Deed of 1863. He voiced, in 1884, what many felt:⁷

"A large proportion of the...Connexion were hopeful the new organisation would have carried on similar work to...the Countess of Huntingdon... But...unscrupulous persistency on the part of many who were utterly ignorant of the real purpose of the promoter of the foundation deed, and assumptions and imitations of ecclesiastical dress, orders and styles of address, caused the withdrawal of nearly the whole of the Founders - from what was hoped would have been a valuable ally and source of strength."

Willcocks' background in the mainstream of old Connexional tradition made him biased and unable to see the changes that were taking place within the life of the new "Free Church" Communities. Yet to live and to grow, they had to

change; but the sad fact was that he and many others in the Connexion could not take the speed or direction of change. The consequent result for the older denomination was stagnation and decline - as his following words make clear: "At present, therefore...the Connexion must be taken for what it is worth - viz., a "brick and mortar" Connexion, managed by congregationalists".⁸

Willcock's trenchant attitude did not always meet the approval of his fellow Connexional members; and in the Report of Proceedings at a Conference of Ministers...together with the Trustees held on 3 December 1884, there was a strong reaction to some of his criticisms of "alien" Trustees.⁹ Even so, his words, published earlier that same year, show how in the 21 years since 1863, attitudes had polarised and bad feeling had very soon been engendered.

If Willcocks represented the influential laity of the Connexion who were unhappy with the direction and development of the FCE, then the clerical side was represented by the distinguished J.B. Figgis of Brighton. At first, Figgis counted himself a Minister within the new denomination (see below); but as the style changed and the central authority became more overtly episcopal, his support waned. In 1891, whilst writing on the Connexion, he seemed strangely detached from the movement he had so firmly supported twenty years before:¹⁰

This body had its origins in the Connexion...We cannot forbear the expression of the hope that it may never lose the simplicity of the system out of which it sprung..."

Clearly he felt it had, or he would not have mentioned it!

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For the first three years of its life, the FCE was governed by a committee from within the Connexion. Indeed, during the years 1864 to 1866 there was no separate Conference; and not only was the business of FCE churches carried on within the main annual Connexional Conferences, but the Free Church communities also figured in the business of the District Meetings. Nevertheless from the earliest days, even the technical existence of two denominations and two separate polities (however close at that time) led to tensions which emphasized the problems inherent within the relationship.

In March 1864 the "Connexion Intelligence" column of Harbinger dealt in some detail with the complicated dispute over the new Free Church of St. James', Kilburn. To start with, the FCE Committee were unhappy, for they believed that the "mode of conducting the worship...is not in accordance with the general idea of the Free Church of England." Certainly, although the worship was liturgical throughout, there was a surpliced choir in the church, and that they were not prepared to accept. Moreover, a number of sittings had already been let for the future on an understanding of the continuance of that particular style of worship. It was ironic that the only way in which the building could subsequently be opened for worship was by being, as it was advertised, "in the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion".¹¹

Again, on 20 February an article had appeared on the Free Church of England in the British Standard. It implied that there were internal problems within the two denominations and that the editor of Harbinger was about to retire from the Connexion.¹² The editor himself comments on the contribution in the British Standard: "We leave it to its own fate".¹³ Nevertheless the damage was done. Not only were there working difficulties between the denominations, but there was obviously a public impression of disunity, and that within a year of the registration of the new Deed Poll.

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But if relationships were difficult between the two denominations, there were also fairly evidently many problems within the Connexion itself. The Deed Poll of the Free Church of England did nothing to heal the many tensions and splits within the older denomination - and suspicion abounded.

There were still influential people within the CHC who wished to see the hoped-for transformation of the denomination, and continued to emphasize what they saw as the plan of the Countess herself - that the Connexion should become the Free Church of England. In the January edition of the Harbinger for 1865, there is an article by F.W. Willcocks on Spa Fields Chapel. Clearly Willcocks, at this stage, was a supporter. He was at pains to point out that at this latest period in the history of the chapel, the proposal was for newly opened churches to have the new denomination's title, and thus there was no danger to the "name or position" of Spa Fields. Nevertheless, he took care to point out that such a plan was part of the Countess' intention originally, and to this end he quoted Henry Venn, Selina herself, Haweis, and the celebrated

minister Joseph Sortain of Brighton.¹⁴ It seems that part of the purpose in Willcocks' article (apart from the obvious one of dealing with the current dispute with the Trustees) was to keep clearly in the mind of the members of the Connexion the objective of a Free Church of England - which was then in existence, even though the Spa Fields Chapel might not strictly be a part of it. It was also to allay fears within the minds of other strictly Connexional communities that "the movement is rather prospective than otherwise....."¹⁵

Quite evidently there was division within the denomination. There were worries of a take-over in doctrinal position; but also of property, probably through the "back-door" method of C.H. ministers and officers making the official subscription to the Principles of the FCE. Willcocks seemed to be trying to reassure readers.

Later on in 1865, much of the business of the Conference was clouded with the public and highly unpleasant dispute between the Trustees and the Officers of the Spa Fields Chapel. Even so, the theme of the Connexion as the FCE played an important part in the proceedings. The retiring President of Conference, the Reverend George Jones, made this a major theme of his address delivered at the opening of the Conference on Tuesday 27 June at Spa Fields. Knowing the high feelings about the Trustee dispute, Jones said: "I therefore most emphatically, and most sincerely pray that we may, throughout our Conference, keep "the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace".¹⁶ But it is interesting that the published title of the address is: "The present position of the Connexion of the late Countess of Huntingdon:- is it still needed, and can it be extended?"

Later in his address, Jones said: "The cry is for free churches...a cry that could be satisfactorily met, if our Connexion were in full working order, and all the members in sympathy with its characteristic spirit. Here would be found a centre with which stray elements could unite..."¹⁷

He referred briefly to the argument as to what constituted a minister "of the Connexion", but then returned to the idea of the intention of the Countess. If all united in this idea of "the work the Countess would have done, had she been now alive"....then...."the true Free Church of England would probably become a power, and valuable agency for good."¹⁸

The assurances of Willcocks and then the powerful plan for the Free Church movement by George Jones as President of Conference were clear evidence of deep worries within the Connexion - more especially because they appeared within 24 months of the new Poll Deed. Indeed the most obvious fear was that hinted at by I.M. Mallard in his dissertation - the fear of absorption of the Connexion by its more authoritative offspring.¹⁹

But there must also have been for many a sense of confusion about the identity of the Connexion itself. Again and again over the years, the same theme comes back - that of the original intention of the Countess to make her Connexion a Free Church of England. Many must have felt confusion at hearing or reading George Jones' words "the true Free Church of England would probably become a power..." Furthermore the preface to the denominational magazine of 1866 would have done nothing to help any of these fears, for it was announced that the title was to be changed: "It will therefore no longer be the Harbinger - for that which was announced has already come - THE FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, - which we hail with the most profound regard...."

It was announced that henceforward the new title was to be The Free Church of England Magazine and Record of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion. Even now, over 125 years later, there is a distinctly uncomfortable feel to the wording of the announcement which seems to claim almost a messianic significance for the new denomination!²⁰

In fact, there was no evidence of any specifically FCE business in the accounts of either the spring meeting of the Western District of the CHC²¹ or at the 1866 Conference held at Spa Fields on 26th and 27th June.²² But even so, in June 1866, editorial comment expressed the hope that at least one new Free Church might be erected every year;²³ and then at the Annual Conference, the Rev. Benjamin Price was "unanimously elected President for the ensuing year".

Price was a statesman - a most able man - strongly identified with the new movement, and it was his church which had been the first to use the title "Free Church of England".²⁴

Pressure from the Free Church lobby continued. In December 1866, F.W. Willcocks wrote a letter to the Harbinger asking for information from readers on the many new Free Churches that were springing up. This, he explained was

not for "any controversial purpose, but chiefly as a statistical record". Whatever the purpose, the appeal served to remind readers of the movement and also to advertise the liturgical basis of the worship in these places.²⁵

Just one month later, in January 1867, in the first number of the new Free Church of England Magazine, pages 1 to 3 contained an article on the new denomination. This aimed to set the movement in context as having "grown out of" the Connexion. It emphasized the ways in which it was actually "Free", and this concluded with the printed form of subscription for ministers and office bearers who wished to identify with the FCE.²⁶ An article by Benjamin Price, the President of Conference, followed this - "The Rise and Rapid Spread of Ritualism". Its final words give an indication as to its salutary message: "Romanism and Protestantism are fairly in the field. Every man to his post; and England expects every man to do his duty".²⁷

Price's article was in turn followed by another, written by "A London Clergyman". It had the title "Here, or elsewhere". The tone of this contribution was again one of urgency, but the writer did not have Price's restraint so that it succeeded in being only over-dramatic. In referring to "these perilous times", the writer warns, "the conspiracy to papalize the church goes on steadily". He warns of "dire consequences": but the burden of his tedious message, was, in fact, in the fifth line: "Union is Strength".²⁸

The final page of the January edition included a letter from "Fides" which lamented the drift of the Connexion "into pure denominationalism". The writer reminded the readers of some of the distinguished men in the past - "Whitfield, Berridge, Toplady, Romaine". He hammered his point home with the words "A Free Church of England...is needed, was always needed....and must sooner or later become a great fact."²⁹

There was clearly a concerted effort on the part of an influential group of people (including the editor of the magazine) to push forward at all costs the Free Church of England concept - both as being from within the Connexion and as being a sister denomination. But even to modern eyes the style of the writer is tiresome and too forceful. To the many old established Connexional members who saw their magazine so changed and, by implication, their own less militant style openly criticised, this must all have bordered on the offensive. In any case there was confusion: what was the Free Church of

England? Was it what the Connexion might become? Was it the new denomination of 1863? Was it perhaps both?

It is hardly surprising that at some time around the new year of 1867 there must have been a very considerable reaction from within the Connexion. The policy of the Free Church of England Committee seemed to have degenerated to one of "over-kill". The result was that, for the first time since the denomination was registered in Chancery, there was a separate conference for the FCE which was held that June.³⁰

There is evidence of bad feeling and possibly even stronger pressure, for the opening sentences of the published account contain a statement clarifying the position as to the relationship between the two denominations:³¹

"To prevent misunderstanding, it should be stated at the outset that, although the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion originated the Free Church movement, has the deepest sympathy with it and is prepared to co-operate in it, the "Connexion" is, legally and in its organisation, a perfectly distinct body from the Free Church of England."

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In the four years that the FCE had been in existence, there was no appreciable growing together with the Connexion. Despite the fact that there was a strong pro-FCE party within the Connexion, they seemed never to be able to bring others in the denomination to the point of contact that they themselves sought. The pressure from people like Willcocks and Thoresby at Spa Fields was relentless, and clearly, from the evidence of the account of the 1867 FCE Conference, this had succeeded only in polarising attitudes.

Indeed the Free Church lobby was powerful, for Price was appointed President of the Conferences of both denominations for a second turn.³² In his Presidential address he could not resist the temptation once more to set the new movement within the context of the old - to give it an historical perspective and a pedigree:³³

"We have been a Free Church from the beginning. The designation, it is true, was not used unfortunately; but we had the thing, always had it, always were a Free Church, and a Free Church of England, too."

It was indeed a matter of personal importance to him that he served within a long tradition.³⁴ But his words cannot have helped to heal what was clearly a growing breach with many members of the parent denomination.

The Oldham Trust dispute and its conclusion in Chancery: c. 1865-1868.

The picture of the Connexion that emerges in the mid to late 1860s is one of a denomination that was no more able to take any sort of concerted action than it had been at the beginning of the decade. Not only was it hopelessly split into at least three factions, but in 1866 and 1867 the time and energy that could have been put into finding a way forward together with the FCE was utterly sapped by the acrimony and public wrangling over the benefits of the Oldham Trust for the school associated with the Spa Fields Chapel.

Any detailed examination of the issues involved would be inappropriate in this present study, but the background to this protracted and ugly case issue has been discussed above. Not only had the Trustees stopped payments to Spa Fields from the Oldham Trust, but then in 1865, they proposed to divert monies from Connexional Trusts to the use of the college. The college was widely regarded as having been taken over by Independency, and an editorial comment in the August 1866 edition of Harbinger stated boldly that this was "an ill advised scheme for extinguishing the Connexion, and using the Connexional funds for supplying to congregational churches an Independent Ministry."³⁵

The matter was indeed long drawn out. The Trustees had first refused monies for Spa Fields from the Oldham Trust some time around 1857 or 1858. Even though the information for a case in Chancery was filed eventually in July 1866, it was only at the conference of the FCE in June 1867 that news was received that the suit had actually been commenced.³⁶

Beyond this time, the denominational magazine gives virtually no more information on progress (which is strange considering the triumphant stance taken by the editor). But, in fact, when faced with an actual case in the Court of Chancery rather than merely asking difficult questions through the Charity Commission, matters for the Trustees were settled quickly. According to an account given by F.W. Willcocks, the Counsel for Spa Fields was not even called upon to plead. The case was decided against the Trustees,³⁷ and the Vice Chancellor in fact stated that:

"there were indications of intention so plain (in the administration of the

Trusts) that it ought not to have been misunderstood, and no attempt should have been made to misinterpret it....."

Defeat for the Trustees was absolute. They were forced to pay costs; and following the sale of the Oldham estate under a compulsory order to the Middlesex magistrates for "a very large sum of money", an amount of £8,500 was put aside for the new Spa Fields Chapel together with school room and other buildings - the lease was once again running out.³⁸

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The importance of this protracted case was that for nearly ten years, from 1857/8 to 1867/8 it occupied a great deal of time and energy of people like F.W. Willcocks and T.E. Thoresby at Spa Fields. It also concerned other leading members of the Connexional Conference such as Price and Thomas Dodd of Worcester. These were all active in promoting the FCE; and so at the time when serious attempts were being made to push forward plans for the federative relationship between the two denominations, the leading members were busy with the complexities of the case in Chancery, or the preparations for it.

What had also become abundantly obvious in recent years was that "the Connexion" was not just the Conference, but also the Connexional Trustees and their chapels, chapels and their clergy which were in independent trusts, and the college (although increasingly marginally). In a legal case so public and so acrimonious, once again people in different "sections" of the Connexion would be bound to take sides, so that all the problems of polarisation that had plagued negotiations in the 1850s and early 1860s once more come to the fore in the years 1865 to 1868. As had happened so often before in the Connexion, administrative complexity and litigation continued to make any uniting endeavours an impossibility.

In fact, another serious attempt to promote a federative union was to be started in 1871.³⁹ But in the meanwhile, there were considerable changes taking place within the Free Church of England. The whole "style" of the denomination was beginning to develop. There were changes involving liturgy, administration and ministry - matters, in fact, basic to the polity of the FCE, and which, over the next decade were to take it even further from the tradition of the Connexion. Yet, whilst the new "style" became markedly different from that of the older sister denomination, it became more and more

like that of the Evangelical wing of the Established Church. This fact in itself opened new fields of opportunity for the denomination, firstly in terms of distinguished patronage, and secondly in terms of a new relationship with many Evangelicals within the Establishment.

The development of a distinctive denominational style in the FCE, and the continuing decline in the federal relationship between the FCE and the CHC.

1. Liturgy

a) The Movement for Prayer Book Reform:

The Oxford Movement, more particularly the publication of Tracts for the Times, acted as a spur to many Protestants who saw the Book of Common Prayer as one of the main sources of Catholic teaching in the Church of England.⁴⁰ In fact, during the 52 years between 1842 and 1894, it is estimated that there were at least 20 proposed revisions published.⁴¹ In practice, numbers of the churches of the Connexion and the new Free churches also used the Prayer Book. But certain portions were excised - these being they which included references to baptismal regeneration, priestly absolution, the apostolic succession, and any other "threads of scarlet" as the FCE Magazine referred to them.

Naturally enough, the appearance of a new denomination so similar in some respects to the low church tradition of the Establishment was of great interest to some within the Church of England who espoused the cause of Prayer Book Reform. Here was a reformed church which needed a reformed Prayer Book, and for many distinguished Protestant activists such as Lord Ebury, and the Hon. and Rev. E.V. Bligh (son of the 5th Earl of Darnley), it was an opportunity to realise an ambition not legally possible within the Establishment.

Ebury was a staunch Protestant whose distinguished position enabled him to provide formidable support at high level for his concerns. Evidently at his instigation, in July 1859 a petition from 463 clergy was presented to the House of Lords requesting that they address the Queen on the matter of Prayer Book reform. Immediately an angry paper was published by E.I. Everard, Rector of Didmarton entitled Beware of Dogs, beware of evil workers. He asked the question "Who, then, is Lord Ebury, and who are his 463 coadjutors, that they venture to disturb the peace of the land...?"⁴² "The Association for Promoting a Revision of the Book of Common Prayer" was formed just four months

later, and especially under the Presidency of Ebury, from 1860 to 1889, it continued vigorously to answer Everard's question for many years.⁴³

However passionate the efforts, as E.V. Bligh's grandson comments in his biography of Bligh himself, ultimately "though indefatigable, (they) were ...abortive."⁴⁴ Nevertheless, the FCE enabled Ebury, Bligh and others to achieve something of their ambition; and in future years, Ebury especially was to become a great supporter of the denomination. But this was not to be until the late 1860s, for, curiously the first and main work on Prayer Book reform in the FCE was not that of Lord Ebury at all. Rather did it come, as had so much, from the small but powerful group of personalities at Spa Fields.

The Free Church of England and its Revised Prayer Book

It is interesting to see that examination shows how the gradual production of the reformed FCE Prayer Book actually reflected the doctrinal changes that were taking place within the new denomination, and at the same time also stimulated further change.

The opening pages of the Harbinger in June 1865 published an appeal for "Ministers and members of Evangelical churches" to "meet from time to time in order to consider those passages in the Book of Common Prayer, to which Evangelical Nonconformists and many members of the Church of England entertain conscientious objections..."⁴⁵ In December the following year, 1866, F.W. Willcocks of Spa Fields appealed through the FCE Magazine for information on all new "Free" congregations and churches where "the liturgy of the Church of England, either in its entirety or with slight modifications is used." The purpose of his appeal was stated to be for "statistical record".⁴⁶

Presumably, Willcocks was researching forms of worship that were currently being used. Certainly it is clear that he had some practical hand in reform, for at the June 1867 Conference of the FCE at Spa Fields, Thoresby "presented the revised Prayer Book, which was carefully and accurately considered in detail and referred for final approval to an able Revision Committee".⁴⁷

How complete the work was is uncertain. But brief extracts follow of alterations made to the services of Morning and Evening Prayer and to the Litany.⁴⁸ It seems that the Ordination Service had already been revised, and that this had been used at the customary ordination during the Conference.⁴⁹

Some services, it was announced, would require very extensive alteration - especially that of Baptism. But the assurance was given, "the public may rely upon it they will be thoroughly purged of Popery."⁵⁰ In fact the Service of Baptism was completed for final approval early in 1868. This was then followed by the Confirmation Service in August 1868. It was promised that the Communion Service would be next.⁵¹

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In the revisions so far considered there was little to indicate any change in the basic theological nature of the new denomination - other than its independence of mind in determining to order its own worship. These were still within the tradition of the Connexion. But, earlier in the year, in April 1868, there had been a very profound indication of changes to come.

In the FCE Magazine for April 1868 a new form of service "...For the Dedicating or Consecrating of a Church and Churchyard" was printed.⁵² This had been used at the opening of the fine new FCE church of St. John's, Tottington, Bury, Lancashire, on Good Friday, 10 April. It was fairly evidently based on the format of such a service used by the Established Church with the Communion as the central act of worship. But the most significant feature is that the title given to the presiding minister is "Bishop"; and this title appears constantly throughout the format. Significantly again, it was not a service merely for this one occasion, for one of the rubrics reads "After the collect for the King (or Queen) he prays as follows...."⁵³ Evidently there were future years in mind when a different monarch might be on the throne.

Now, the "permanence" of the service together with its authoritarian style shows a clear departure from the custom and tradition of the Connexion. And as if to anticipate the criticism which indeed came as the result of this, the printed service was followed in the magazine by an article justifying the title of bishop: "The Free Church of England Ordination".⁵⁴

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The new Prayer Book would appear to have been substantially complete by the summer of 1869, for everything including the service of Holy Communion was discussed at a session lasting more than four hours,⁵⁵ and finally permission was given to proceed with publication.

It is interesting to see the extent to which T.E.Thoresby had been involved in this painstaking progress, for the account of the 1869 Convocation continues:

"As the Rev. T.E. Thoresby had personally made the Revision...it was agreed unanimously that he should be allowed a royalty of ONE PENNY per copy..."

In view of the part played by Thoresby in producing the completed Prayer Book, it is strange that Elliott Peaston has nothing to say about the new publication in his work, The Prayer Book Traditions in the Free Churches. What he does say, however, poses several questions over the use actually made of Thoresby's book. He tells how, just seven years later, under Lord Ebury, the Prayer Book Revision Society⁵⁶ produced a special edition of "The Book of Common Prayer Revised" for "the use of the Free Church of England".⁵⁷ This was in 1876.

Certainly Lord Ebury became a valued friend and champion of the FCE. As a distinguished evangelical he had a great sympathy with its aims and polity. Indeed it was he who laid the "memorial stone" of the new FCE, Christ Church, Teddington, on Wednesday 14 July 1869.⁵⁸ But why another Prayer Book should have been produced so soon is unclear. In fact Peaston says that the book was never in general use, "probably owing to cost of production."⁵⁹

Close examination, therefore, indicates that Ebury and the Prayer Book Reform movement had less to do with the formative liturgical changes in the new denomination than has often been supposed. Nevertheless, there was great interest in the FCE shown by members of the movement, for their work in the Established Church was inevitably dependent upon the approval of Parliament - which was simply not forthcoming.⁶⁰ But their support was important for the FCE, for not only did Lord Ebury and the Hon. and Rev. E.V. Bligh hold important positions in society, but directly or indirectly, they also had considerable political influence.

Certainly Ebury was "courted" by senior members of the FCE for the social impetus given to the work of the denomination. In his militant words at the laying of the foundation stone of Christ Church, Teddington on 14 July 1869, he spoke of the tendencies "Romewards" in the Established Church:⁶¹

"I say my firm conviction is, if that law continues as it is now, it will cause the breaking up of the Church of England altogether....Our only hope is in measures such as all you gentlemen here present have adopted."

The Hon. and Rev. E.V. Bligh was greatly concerned with the movement for Prayer Book Reform in the Church of England. But he did not assume his main supporting role for the work of the FCE until 1872, when the outcome of the "Bennett Case" caused protest from evangelicals all over the country. Indeed, the impetus given by this resulted not only in the open support of Bligh for the FCE but also that of a great number of (sometimes) distinguished clergy.

The 1872 Bennett Judgement: its influence on the work of the FCE

William James Early Bennett was a militant tractarian who had built St. Barnabas Pimlico, and following its opening in 1850 had introduced what was considered to be very advanced ceremonial. The great controversy and public rioting which resulted was such an embarrassment to the Bishop of London (C.J. Blomfield) that he persuaded Bennett to resign the living. Subsequently, he moved, in 1852 to the vicarage of Frome Selwood in Somerset. As Owen Chadwick points out, his beliefs that elaborate ceremonial actually attracted the poor were vindicated by the fact that there were 20 communicants each weekday, 500 who attended on Sunday mornings, and 1000 on Sunday evenings.⁶² But although far away from London, he was still a marked man.

He wrote several essays which caused vigorous protestant reaction, but the main trouble came from his public letter to Pusey in 1867, A Plea for Toleration in the Church of England. The result of this was a series of legal actions, and a hearing (at which he refused to appear) in the Court of Arches. The charges were that he taught the actual presence of Christ in the Holy Communion, that he taught the Communion to be a sacrifice, and that he supported the adoration of Christ in his presence within the sacramental elements.

The matter caused some embarrassment to Pusey, for in his own work On Eucharistic Adoration (1857) he had some fairly definite teaching:⁶³

"If we kneel, and bow the knees of our hearts, to receive a blessing from..(God's) ..earthly representatives....how should we do other than adore ...when the Son of Man gives his own appointed token...."

Yet Bennett had injudiciously used the word "visible" in referring to the real presence; and Pusey himself persuaded him to change this in future editions to "the real actual Presence" - a small point but important.⁶⁴ There is

considerable insight in Desmond Morse-Boycott's comment on Bennett, that he was "a faithful if indiscreet servant of the church...." ⁶⁵

Despite Bennett's refusal to attend the hearing, the Court of Arches criticised his language but acquitted him. The Church Association appealed to the Privy Council, but this, in 1872 confirmed the verdict and made the declaration "that this Court has no jurisdiction or authority to settle matters of faith". It was a momentous statement for the Catholic wing of the Church of England, and caused great alarm amongst Protestants, both within the Establishment and outside. As T.H. Gregg later pointed out with simple logic: the effect was that: "he (Bennett) was acquitted; and his teaching consequently LEGALIZED". ⁶⁶

The reaction of the Protestant press was strong. An underlying nervousness about the "safety" of the Established Church was once again displayed, for, in these ritualistic controversies even educated people like Benjamin Price saw a political threat to the constitution of the country. The reaction of the FCE through the editorial comment of the FCE Magazine was measured. Even so, in the July edition, the editor declared: "the very essential of Popery has been judicially sanctioned by its highest protecting power". ⁶⁷

The Impetus to FCE growth provided by the Bennett Judgement

As an urgent need, Protestants within the Establishment demanded further Prayer Book reform in the light of the Case. The Record quoted the Reverend Capel Molyneux of St. Paul's, Onslow Square preaching on the Sunday morning after the Judgement. He wanted "a downright radical revision of the Prayer Book". ⁶⁸

Yet, the work of reforming its Prayer Book was one of the features of the FCE which was causing a great deal of interest amongst many influential people at this same time. It was only just one year earlier that Thoresby had had his revisions of both the Thirty-nine Articles and the Catechism approved by Convocation. One of the main justifications given was that it was more able to combat the teaching of the doctrine of transubstantiation. ⁶⁹

Thoresby was not one to lose any opportunity presented, and the Bennett Judgement again gave him an opportunity for the denomination which he was swift to take up. The revision of the Catechism came absolutely at the right time - whilst controversy was causing public interest, and before the outcome of the Privy Council decision brought matters to a head. ⁷⁰

Now, on 20 November 1872, Thoresby wrote an open letter to the Hon. and Rev. E.V. Bligh,⁷¹ who was at the time Vicar of Birling in Kent.

In the final portion of his letter, he asked Bligh, as a powerful representative of the evangelical party: "can you not do something definite to help the Free Church of England...?" He continued by putting to Bligh what was an embarrassingly awkward request: "Even in the present state of the law, you could preach in our school-rooms ...and...in our regular churches, where the vicars of the parishes where they are situated did not object."⁷²

Thoresby was asking a great deal of Bligh and his fellow evangelicals, for he was actually asking them to break the law as it stood, and Bligh's reply (dated 25 November 1872) was at first most cautious:

"My Dear Sir,

Your letter of the 20th inst. opens up a most difficult and delicate subject for clergymen of the Established Church to deal with."

Bligh emphasized that he spoke for himself however,⁷³ and having stated this he then continued: "So far, therefore, as I am personally concerned, I have very great pleasure in responding to your invitation. Some other clergymen may probably unite with me..."

Considering the delicacy of his situation as a priest of the Established Church, Bligh's response was generous; and on Sunday morning 15 December 1872 he preached at Spa Fields.⁷⁴ The position with regard to his appearance within another parish was made easier by virtue of the fact that the Vicar of Clerkenwell at that time was the Reverend Robert Maguire who was favourably disposed towards the FCE. In fact the denominational magazine noted that he had "endeavoured to compensate for the unwisdom and harshness of his predecessors by doing everything in his power to show his sympathy for the Free Church of England in his parish."⁷⁵

There was no sense in which the service was made a public demonstration. No public announcement had been made, and the FCE Magazine reported that "the congregation assembled was not large". Nevertheless it was a bold and a significant step taken by a public figure who was also an incumbent in the Establishment. It also furthered the cause of a denominational integrity in the eyes of the Establishment, and it gave much encouragement within the FCE.⁷⁶

Perhaps the depth of Bligh's commitment to the cause that he had befriended, however, was made even more clear to the denomination itself and to the public at large in the April of 1873. The first page in the FCE Magazine for that month opened with the heading "Important Declaration of Evangelical Clergy in favour of the Free Church of England".⁷⁷

This started with a letter from Bligh which stated that the declaration "has been privately circulated among a limited number of clergy, and which has now had a sufficient number of signatures to justify my asking for its publication". It was hoped, he continued, that "something will grow out of it in other quarters - e.g., in the approaching conferences of the Church Association."

The declaration set itself firmly into the context of contemporary theological debate in the second paragraph:

"2. We have noticed with alarm the tendency of the late "BENNETT Judgement" to lower that (distinctive Protestant) character, and to establish a compromise unworthy of our old Reformers....."

The fifth paragraph took up the theme of Prayer Book revision, and the sixth lamented the lack of any sign of liturgical revision in the Established Church. Then in paragraph seven followed the statement of public support for which Thoresby had hoped:

"7. We have, therefore, determined, at this grave crisis, to express an open sympathy with these kindred church bodies in England and Ireland which have made revision of the Prayer Book a leading question. We allude to the dis-established Church of Ireland and the Free Church of England...We shall be glad henceforth to act in friendly co-operation with both these bodies."

The declaration was signed by 51 Anglican clergy, most of whom were incumbents, and a number of whom were distinguished men.⁷⁸

In passing, it is worth noting here that there was quite evidently a firm identification of the newly disestablished (1869) and determinedly Protestant Church of Ireland (Anglican) with the FCE and its aims and objectives. Significantly, in F.S. Merryweather's history of the FCE which was published later that same year, he actually referred to the "Free Church of Ireland" as being one of the "natural coadjutors of the evangelical section of the [Church of England] clergy". Benjamin Price was obviously of the same mind, for, in the manuscript of his unpublished autobiography, he later wrote:

"Covocation, in a rejoinder, conveyed to the signatories an assurance that their expressions of sympathy were more than reciprocated, and that it was

equally our desire to unite with them, as also with the now Disestablished Church of Ireland in contending for the Protestant faith." 79

In the light of these feelings, and greatly encouraged by such a wealth of Anglican Evangelical support, it is little wonder that neither the FCE, nor its later offspring, the REC and the RCE, ever moved to establish congregations within what was seen as being the territory of an ally in the Protestant cause.

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So far, the liturgical changes (and especially the reformed Prayer Book which enshrined them) had indeed given to the new denomination a distinctive style. The style was, however, different from that of the Connexion as it used to be, for it was very much the style of the Evangelical wing of the Established Church itself. Indeed, in his sermon in Spa Fields, Bligh had remarked that the worship was virtually identical: "Had I closed my eyes when following your minister in the service this morning I could not have told that I was not in the church in which I myself minister and worship." 80

The Declaration of April 1872 was a high point for many, because it succeeded in forming some sort of alliance (however unofficial) with members of the Church of England. But the evidence indicates that at this stage no more could be done, similarity of style or not.

A conference of Evangelical Clergy and Non-conformists was held in the National Club in Whitehall on 10 July 1873. It was a distinguished gathering chaired by Lord Shaftesbury, and both Ebury and Bligh were present - together with several clergy and laity from the FCE and the CHC. But clearly, there was little to be done or said with regard to reciprocal approaches between the Established Church and nonconformity. The article in the FCE Magazine which reported the conference was openly critical. Ebury was the first to propose a resolution, "but it was couched in language so vague that it amounted to nothing".

Eventually the meeting agreed that both non-conformists and members of the Church of England had a right to expect the Established Church "to exist as a Protestant institution" - if it was to remain as the Established Church. But that was virtually all that was decided, and the editor owned himself to be disappointed that there was neither "boldness of utterance" nor "a well devised plan of liberal co-operation". 81 In truth, however distinguished the people

involved, and however much goodwill there was, the net of the meeting was cast too wide. The people involved were from traditions that were too diverse for there to be any great source of agreement other than the vaguest generalities; and in any case, neither Shaftesbury nor Ebury nor Bligh had any real executive authority within the Established Church.

That which could be accomplished already had been, - through the good offices of Ebury and Bligh, and within the narrow field of liturgy and Prayer Book Reform for a yet small new denomination.

1 b) The Wearing of the Surplice by clergy of the FCE

Within the Church of England the surplice controversy had been at its height in Exeter in 1845 (see above). Even by the end of the 1860s bad feeling on this had not entirely vanished. A cartoon in the magazine Fun for 20 November 1869 made comment on what was obviously a current London issue. The drawing is of a clergyman in the pulpit, wearing surplice, scarf and hood. Obviously "a la mode" he also wears a well trimmed beard, "grizzled" hair and a monocle! The heading to the comment beneath is "A new view of vestments. (A fact)". In the picture, a child ("Little Innocent") pulls his mother's sleeve and says: "Oh, Ma! Isn't he a rude man to preach in his night gown and braces!" 82

Nevertheless, it is clear that, by 1870, both in the pulpit and obviously at the Holy Communion, the surplice was becoming increasingly commonly worn in the Established Church. In the light of this, a very strong indication of the changes within the FCE which were pulling the denomination away from the Connexion is the fact that, at the end of the 1860s, the surplice began to be seen as an accepted vestment for the minister at several of the FCE churches.

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At what exact point it became acceptable in the FCE to wear the surplice during divine service (other than in the pulpit) is not clear. What is obvious is that, during the later 1860s, as the "style" of worship in the new denomination became more and more like that of the low church party in the Establishment, there is sometimes almost a conscious emulation of the custom of Evangelical clergy, by their Free Church of England counterparts. Thus the change of custom over surplices in the one tradition is likely to be a mirroring of that change in the other.

In August 1868, the Manchester newspaper Sphinx published a very full article on the new denomination, and this included a particularly detailed account of the new FCE church which had been built just a couple of months earlier in Broughton Lane.⁸³ Above all, the writer pointed out the similarity between the new church and those of the evangelical tradition in the Church of England. He spoke of the care with which the very traditional interior was furnished.

But the description of the minister is significant: "The clergyman, the Rev. J. Yeates, is 'Bearded like the pard'. He wore the surplice and bands and the black scarf".⁸⁴

During the service however (as was the custom in the FCE until comparatively recently), the minister retired to change out of the surplice. The writer noted: "The sermon was delivered in the black gown".⁸⁵ But what the writer in Sphinx also made clear is that the wearing of the surplice did not seem to be a controversial matter within the custom of the FCE: "The clergyman at Broughton Lane is a Congregational minister who has not the slightest objection to the church service, nor to the surplice."⁸⁶

A year later (1869), in London, the foundation stone of Christ Church, Teddington was laid by Lord Ebury.⁸⁷ The Surrey Comet covered the event very fully: "The ceremony commenced at three o'clock...at which hour Lord Ebury appeared on the platform attended by Mr. Sugden (in academical cap and surplice)..."⁸⁸ Ebury was a distinguished and militant protestant, but clearly the Rev. John Sugden's surplice caused him no concern whatever.

Three years later (1872) the Free Church of England at New Malden, Surrey, used the surplice as a matter of course. The Church Times had been severely critical of the Vicar of New Malden, but was evidently surprised and displeased also to find that the new Free Church of England (which had been founded as a reaction to the teaching of the Parish Church) also used surplice, "stole" (the writer clearly means scarf) and hood.⁸⁹ There is a studied amusement in the report in the FCE Magazine that the Church Times should express surprise at all! The feeling of a conscious "mirroring" of low-church Anglican custom in the FCE of the time is very distinct. But by the same token, such "mirroring" meant that the older customs and style of the Connexion were becoming more and more remote.

2. Administration

a) The change of title from "Conference" to "Convocation"

For the first time in the Free Church of England, in 1868, the central administrative assembly appears with a new name. In previous years, both FCE and CHC had held their "Conferences" at Spa Fields, but in the July edition of the denominational magazine, the FCE meeting of 24 June at Spa Fields bears the title "The Fifth Annual Convocation of the Free Church of England".⁹⁰ The term "Convocation" was, in fact enshrined in the 1863 Poll Deed of the new denomination; but the sense of it there was more as a genus description rather than a formal title, and it had not generally been used.⁹¹

When in 1872, the Church Times was displeased to find the minister at the FCE in New Malden wearing traditional canonical habit, it also found fault with the use of the title "Convocation". Once again, there is a disingenuousness in the surprised amusement of the FCE Magazine editor:⁹² "It (the Church Times) is surprised to find that...we actually have the coolness to dub our church assembly by the name of Convocation! The Church Times is evidently wrath..."

It is not a matter of imitation being "the sincerest form of flattery", for apart from the Evangelical wing of the Established Church, there was no love lost between the two denominations. Rather was it more and more clearly the adopting of the style of much in the Establishment by way of rivalry, and for the sake of providing an acceptable alternative to those within the Church of England who were dissatisfied with it.

2 b) The adoption of the title "diocese"

In 1790 the Countess formed an Association of ministers and laymen to create a system for the future governance of the Connexion. In the resulting "Plan",⁹³ the country was divided up into 24 "districts", each with its own Committee which was in turn to send representatives to a yearly Conference.⁹⁴ In fact the "Plan" largely failed through the disagreement and opposition of those who worked with Selina.⁹⁵ But the "district" system, though modified, remained.

In the early days following 1863, both denominations used the same administrative machinery and Conference;⁹⁶ and even when divisions began to grow by 1867, both denominations used the same system of four "districts":

London or Southern District, Western District, Northern District, and Eastern District. In fact, the FCE Magazine for July 1867 published a list of churches and clergy under the title, "The Free Church of England (including the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion) arranged in Districts".⁹⁷ Each of the 4 districts had a President and a Secretary, and each year, the Conference (which was elected from the Districts) in turn elected a President.

These titles for the FCE, however, were a matter of custom rather than statute. The FCE Resolution of June 1863, and the Poll Deed which followed in August that year⁹⁸ had actually made provision for a system of dioceses; for it envisaged: "one or more of the Presbyters, chosen by his fellow Presbyters, taking the oversight...in a given district or diocese"...⁹⁹

This indication was taken to its logical conclusion in the 1870 meeting of Convocation at Spa Fields on Wednesday 29 June. The account in the denominational magazine gives no indication of any discussion on the change of title (the discussion would almost certainly have been well before Convocation, and "in camera") - and in any case, probably to avoid open confrontation, the two titles are used at the same time: ¹⁰⁰

"The next business was the nomination of the officers and the council...the registration of churches and clergy, the re-arrangement of dioceses, and the division of England into four districts...."

The title "dioceses" is lightly used along with "districts", there is no dwelling upon it, and no comment. But, just one year later, at the Convocation in June 1871 at Spa Fields, the proceedings were "adjourned for an autumnal meeting in the Northern Diocese...."¹⁰¹ Later on in the detailed report of Convocation, the two terms appear to be interchangeable: "The list of secretaries of the dioceses is now completed, the Rev. J. Brunskill, for the Northern District...."¹⁰²

Then, following the account of Convocation, there is a list of clergy, together with the counties, newly divided into "Ecclesiastical Districts". Following the title, in small print, is the information that these districts will be "divided into Dioceses as the increase of the church shall require." ¹⁰³

At this time in the FCE there seemed no set pattern to the use of one term or the other. Frequently the double usage was confusing, and in 1872 when the Bye Laws were published, these also seemed to use the terms interchangeably.¹⁰⁴ But, in fact a standardisation was already beginning, for by 1872 the concept of the FCE Episcopate was established (see below), so that whenever the Bishop

was mentioned, the area he represented was referred to as the "diocese:" "The Chairman of the Meetings shall be the Bishop of the Diocese...."105

The inconsistencies were not completely ironed out until the end of the 1880s or even the 1890s.¹⁰⁶ However, in the first published Year Book of the Free Church of England, 1895-1896, the country is divided clearly up into two dioceses, Northern and Southern. Each has a bishop: and this is substantially the same arrangement as is in force in 1993.

3. Ministry - the introduction of the order of Bishops

From the time of the primary Presbyterian ordination "in the secession", the Connexion had functioned with just a single order of ministry. But the years 1863 to 1876 saw profound changes in the ministry of the new denomination.

The founding resolution of the Conference in June 1863 laid down, in effect, the fully structured plan for a Protestant episcopal church that was both reformed in polity, yet traditional in its worship and ministry. That resolution was enshrined by law in the Poll deed of August 1863, and by its registration in Chancery. Nevertheless, it took fully 13 years for the basic implications within the deed to be developed by the denomination and brought to a workable form. The function and "shape" of the ministry, moreover, changed on the way.

Foremost in all these developments was the adoption of the office of bishop. Moreover, in August 1876 an even greater change was made with the introduction into the ministry of the FCE of the ancient apostolic succession.¹⁰⁷

BUT, just as the finally developed forms involved indicated a complete identification of the denomination with the model of the (Evangelical) Establishment, so it effectively ended any real possibility of an federative union with the CHC. Whatever the proclaimed theological justifications of such as Price and Merryweather, the gap in practical terms had simply become too great. Again, the eyes of many in the FCE, from 1873 onwards, turned away from the Connexion, and towards the new Reformed Episcopal Church of the USA.

The Resolution of June 1863 made it absolutely clear that the system of episcopal oversight was indeed to be vested in a person rather than in the collective authority of the Conference. It is also clear that there was the intention to make the episcopate territorial:¹⁰⁸

"...one or more of the Presbyters, chosen by his fellow Presbyters, taking the oversight for the common good of all the congregations, in a given district or diocese. And, further, that one of these be chosen Bishop Primus, or President".

At this early stage, however, the position envisaged was clearly elective, and there was no mention of consecration. Moreover, although "Deacons" were spoken of, these were the lay elders of a non-conformist tradition and not the first stage of a three-fold ministry. This was later made clear in the actual Deed Poll registered in Chancery:¹⁰⁹

"...there are two orders of Ministers, videlicet, Bishops and Deacons. The first order shall be designated Bishops, or Presbyters, or Elders, the words being applied in the New Testament to the same persons...After these follow the Deacons, under which name are also included Managers and Churchwardens".

Again, there was no notion of the indelibility of orders - this, after all, was what had caused James Shore all the trouble from Phillpotts. Indeed, the Deed Poll later specified: ¹¹⁰

"The Convocation shall, from time to time prescribe and declare the duties of the Bishop Primus and the Diocesan Bishops respectively, and the period of time for which they shall remain in office..."

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Whatever the plans of those who formed the 1863 Resolution and Deed Poll, there had evidently been a coyness in the matter of introducing the notion of an episcopate in any practical form.¹¹¹ Benjamin Price told of the first official use of the title in his autobiography, and he dated its appearance to the Spring of 1868 when, as President of the FCE Convocation, he had consecrated the new St. John's Church at Tottington, Bury, Lancashire [illustration p. xviii].¹¹²

Almost certainly the author and "designer" of this service was T.E. Thoresby, who, from the first, had been very ambitious for his plans for a "Free Church of England". But it is certain that he had not properly consulted Price over the service format at Bury. In his unpublished autobiography, Price told of his unhappiness at the local announcement stating that "the church

would be consecrated by the Bishop Primus of the Free Church of England". It appears to have been the first that he had heard of the matter:¹¹³ "My first impression on reading this announcement was one of dismay..."

Exactly why such a "fait accompli" was presented to him in so important a matter is hard to understand. But it is absolutely clear that the over enthusiasm on the part of Thoresby and other organisers of the event caused great embarrassment both to Price and the denomination. Certainly Price himself was from a strongly Welsh Calvinistic Methodist background.¹¹⁴ Even the Connexion was the church of his adoption rather than his birth; and the service at Bury, together with the title given can only have savoured strongly of an Establishment against which he had fought so hard in Ilfracombe.

However, Price continued by indicating that there were others with Thoresby involved in this adoption of the episcopal title, and their advice was firm. He had been told that "the term "President" was unknown to church people, whereas "Bishop" was an office familiar to all. Furthermore he continued, "Our friends further assured me, that had they used the former it would have damaged the cause immeasurably."¹¹⁵ Whoever "our friends" were, Price's fears were allayed to the extent that the opening ceremony took place as announced.¹¹⁶ Yet, the fact that his own memory makes such a feature of the controversy indicates that, whatever he decided for the sake of unity, he was unhappy. And others were even more so!

The account of the Consecration of St. John's Church was published in the May edition of the denominational magazine. But almost certainly there had already been strong internal dissension, for the account is followed by an article entitled "The Free Church of England Ordination". By pointing to the accounts of the Apostolic church, the author attempted to show how the Biblical model was that of a two-fold ministry as the Poll Deed of 1863 had outlined. The first order was that of Bishops or Presbyters or Elders, and the second that of Deacons. In fact FCE writers have returned to the theme of a truly New Testament Episcopate again and again through the years.

The discussions in the article are complex and deal in minute disagreements over certain New Testament textual interpretations, particularly from the Pastoral Epistles and the book of the Acts of the Apostles. Thus the writer of the article in 1868 compares 1 Timothy 4.14 with Acts 20. 17 & 28 to show that the *πρεσβύτεροι* were actually *ἐπίσκοποι* - "that is, the Presbyters or

Elders were Bishops".¹¹⁷ The reasoning is therefore quite simply that if "Episcopate" is a function that is possible within the total understanding of the nature of "Presbyterate", then the role of Price (a Connexional/F.C.E. Presbyter) is to be considered both acceptable and legal when it includes Episcopal functions like consecration and ordination.

Although the ground had been argued over many times through the centuries, it was especially important for the new denomination to get the issues clear for its own satisfaction and those of its critics both within the Establishment and outside. Price was "Bishop" because he was "President" of the Conference. Yet he was not actually episcopally consecrated: his episcopate was functional rather than theological, and (at this stage anyway) it was elective. Indeed, as the period of office was for one year before possible re-election, his episcopate could in no sense be permanent.

Within five years, F.S. Merryweather's authoritative apologetic on the FCE was published. Chapter 2 examines the Constitution of the denomination, and his emphasis is on the functions shared by the order he identifies as both presbyter and/or bishop. But he makes clear, as one of his points, the custom of the early *πρεσβύτεροι* in electing one from amongst themselves "as a president bishop".¹¹⁸

The ambiguity in much of the New Testament textual interpretation makes many of his ideas perfectly reasonable: but in his attempt to explain the adoption of episcopacy by the FCE in the only way it could, he overstates his case by asserting "This is quite certain, that the Episcopacy of the early church was elective and not successive." ¹¹⁹ Clearly he was reflecting the fears of many in his continual attempt to draw direct Biblical parallels with Price's situation.

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Unease over the introduction of the title continued. Although he was a leading supporter of the new denomination, the Reverend J.B. Figgis quite evidently had known nothing of what was to take place at Bury. In a letter to the FCE Magazine in June 1868 he pointed out how, when the Connexional Executive Committee had seen the announcements and had protested, not only "was this remonstrance unheeded, but a service has been used, in which the "Bishop flourishes scores of times". ¹²⁰

His was a powerful voice in the denomination, and the measure of the embarrassment felt by those with whom he disagreed so strongly is seen in the fact that his letter of complaint is put within a prepared article in the June magazine. The article has a set of numbered notes and comments together with a detailed reply from Thoresby himself.¹²¹ The arguments were re-iterated - the plans in the Poll Deed, and the claim of a "New Testament" ministry. Again significantly, the editor responded to a biting comment by Figgis that the service had bordered "on the ridiculous and the ritualistic" by pointing to the origins of the format used. Not only was it similar to that used in eight Anglican dioceses, but its antiquity would be vouched for by the writer Charles Edward Harrington - "Antiquity, &c. of Rule of Consecration."¹²²

The article was defensive, and there was clearly a deep embarrassment because proper consultation had not been made - especially within what many still considered to be a viable federal relationship with the Connexion. Price's autobiographical work was written perhaps 20 years later, but even then his words were "carefully" framed, and he wrote frankly that the Connexion "objected to the whole proceedings."¹²³ The relationship between the two denominations was, in fact, badly damaged, and there appeared for all to see what was a double set of values within the already ailing federative agreement. Thoresby, Willcocks, the editor of the FCE Magazine and others saw Anglican custom as the norm. Conversely, the traditional non-conformists within the Connexion would not only never have used either title or service format as at Bury, but the very idea of justifying what had been done by appeal to Establishment precedent would have been utterly repugnant.

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Just 2½ months after the consecration of the new church at Bury, the Annual Convocation of the FCE was held at Spa Fields Chapel, on 24 June 1868. In the account published by the FCE Magazine in July, there are clear indications of the internal stresses caused by the controversy.¹²⁴

There is a distinct note of defiance at the outset, for the Presidential address is entitled "Opening Address by the President Bishop". It is a rallying call to members of the denomination and a firm call for unity in the ranks. In fact, early on in the address, the unity of the Established Church was brought into question, together with (as so often) a declaration of the

seeming imminence of disestablishment.¹²⁵ It was into this picture that Price then fitted the FCE - "Securing liberty as well as upholding law".

There is no doubt that Price was a powerful leader of men with a gift for clear and forceful logic. At the same time there was too much "purple prose" and bravado in an address which was an all too-obvious attempt to counterbalance the dissension of the previous months.

Evidently, the Convocation of 1868 was dealing with considerable internal division and bad feeling. The account in the denominational magazine gives little more than the addresses contributed; but Price, in his later autobiographical sketch gave more information. He told how both the influential G. Jones (C.H. minister of Tunbridge Wells) and Figgis "were strongly opposed to the term "Bishop "being used." Subsequently at Convocation, Figgis proposed a motion (seconded by Jones) that the term "President" should be used. In the ensuing vote it was decided that the term "Bishop" should be used in the FCE: significantly Figgis and Jones were the only dissentients.¹²⁶ The episcopate was now not merely a matter of theory, but an accepted working function - hence Price's title in the July edition of the FCE Magazine, "President Bishop".

The die was cast. Whilst the episcopate remained only a concept in the Poll Deed, the relationship could work easily enough between the two denominations. But the Bury decision had forced the pace. The fact was that if Convocation had accepted the views of Figgis and Jones it would have had to deny the basis of its Poll Deed, and the whole integrity of the denomination would have been accordingly questioned - for authority had been invested in the episcopate, however that episcopate was interpreted. Yet, the divisions and the certain bad feeling brought about by the overwhelming vote made the end of the federal relationship an inevitability - albeit delayed.

The development of the concept of the FCE Episcopate, and the growing gulf between the two denominations, 1868-1870

At the June Convocation of the FCE in 1868, Benjamin Price was elected for a third year as President.¹²⁷ In a way the denomination had placed itself in a very difficult situation. It had decided (or it was about to decide by overwhelming majority) that a practical episcopal polity was the way forward, and yet the only episcopate that clearly worked and that was understood by the

country as a whole was one which was both permanent and indelible. Quite evidently, an episcopate of the sort envisaged in the consecration service printed earlier in the year could not easily work as an annually elected post. A presidency could, but an episcopate as outlined by the Poll Deed had both a territorial and a theological/pastoral authority which could best be exercised only by a traditional and permanent role modelled on the Establishment.

Again, it was evidently the intention of Thoresby and others in the long term to produce some form of rival Protestant-episcopal church to the Establishment. The task was now to keep and preserve what was clearly a monarchical-episcopal system that all could easily understand, but somehow to marry with it the "democratic" concept of the presbyter/bishops - and this all the while being made acceptable to an avowedly protestant (and often militantly protestant) membership!

In the September of 1868, a letter was written by "J.H.D." to the editor of the Manchester newspaper the Sphinx.¹²⁸ It asked for details of Price's consecration, and pointed out that to the best of the writer's knowledge, Price did not stand within any traditional succession.

A reply was printed by the editor of Sphinx, having been received from "a competent authority" in the FCE. Yet the wording was defensive and too-strongly couched. Apostolic succession was condemned as "a Popish invention", the real connection with a source of authority being the candidate's own reply to the call of Christ himself - the process being sealed by the Holy Spirit. Again, the argument was advanced that the episcopate of the early church "was elective, not successive". The writer attempted to show that this concept of episcopate was not only in accordance with the principles of the early church but also of the Reformers themselves many centuries later.¹²⁹

The difficulty for the FCE and its apologists was that the concept of a functioning episcopate simply had not yet been worked out in the light of experience. They were early days for the denomination, and both the theory of episcopate and its place in the life of the denomination was to change markedly through the following years.

Quite evidently, the denomination was in no way capable of speaking with one mind. Ideas and customs were neither standardized, nor were they even widely understood. A large part of the reason can only have been that, with the federal relationship of Connexion and FCE, people from greatly differing backgrounds and traditions were continuing to struggle with the increasingly difficult gulf of understanding between them.

In November 1869 the FCE Magazine published an article on the present position of the denomination and the need to work at an extension fund. Here, Benjamin Price was referred to as "primus" of the church.¹³⁰

Both the position and title were actually enshrined within the Poll Deed (although the alternative title of President was actually given also).¹³¹ Yet this was the first time that the title had been quite so conspicuously used. Whether or not this in itself caused adverse reaction is not known, but in the following month another article took up the theme of ecclesiastical organisation in the light of the possible "beginning of the end of the Anglican Church as an Ecclesiastical Establishment." Here the debate on titles continued, and one clerical correspondent suggested a three-fold ministry of "superintendent, presbyter and probationer". It was suggested, however, that "the senior superintendent....elected by the general Convention, might be the 'primate' or 'primus'." ¹³² Matters often seemed both repetitious and at the same time confused. Indeed this is supported by Price's own statement in his autobiography that "the term President was by degrees dropped, and that of Bishop came gradually into use".¹³³ By the same token, it was by 1870 that the term "diocese" began to be more generally used instead of "district" (see above).

Certainly, although by 1870 there were still many who looked for formal unity between the two denominations, the paths of both were obviously continuing to diverge. The August edition of the FCE Magazine that year carried an account of the Connexional Conference,¹³⁴ and it is evident that the denominations were no longer working their administration "in tandem" as in the past. The Conference was held at Spa Fields on 27 and 28 June: this was then followed by the FCE Convocation on 29 June.

Again it is significant that, whereas the President-Bishop of the FCE continued to be Benjamin Price,¹³⁵ the retiring President of the Connexion for 1869/1870 was the Rev. G. Jones, and the newly elected one was the Rev. J.B. Figgis -

both of whom had strongly opposed the adoption of the episcopate just 2 years before!¹³⁶

There was a forlorn call for unity once again in November 1870 when "A Friend of Union" pointed out the many similarities in the two organisations. The editor spoke warmly of the aim for unity in the Christian church as he commended the letter by "A Friend of Union."¹³⁷ But the reality was that the more authoritarian and "Establishment" the FCE became in its ministry and government, the further away the traditional rank and file of the Connexion grew. A reply to the plea made was published the following month, and this illustrated, somewhat brutally, the truth as many saw it.¹³⁸

It is not the Free Church of England that has taken an unjustifiable flight into churchism, but the Connexion that has gravitated down into unjustifiable Dissent...."

In a later letter to the editor, the writer revealed that he was actually a member of the Connexion. But like many in the older denomination (then and later) he was openly critical of the weakening effect, as he saw it, of the progress towards congregationalism.¹³⁹ Once more, the difficulty is clearly shown of a unity between two denominations, both of which were developing in different directions, and one of which was continuing to suffer radical internal division.

The developing concept of FCE Episcopate, and the relationship between the two denominations, 1871 to 1873

At the Midland District Meeting in October 1870, a recommendation had been passed to the Executive Committee of the FCE that measures be adopted which might lead to a closer union between the two denominations.¹⁴⁰ Following this, the years 1871-1873 show a renewed and serious attempt by both denominations to reverse the serious drift apart.

Certainly, in the Summer of 1872, not only were determined attempts made to preserve the federative relationship, but even to extend it. The Tenth Annual Report was presented to Convocation on 25 and 26 June 1872, and this spoke of the great feeling still within both "that the two bodies should be united in Christian work". The report recognised the problems over trusts and different legal organisations. But it suggested, as a way through, that the existing possibility for Ministers and Managers to sign the "Free Church Declaration" be

made more use of. Thus, it suggested "the home work to be carried on by the Free Church of England Council, and the foreign work (at least for the present) by the Executive Committee of the....Connexion...".

Realistically it made the proviso that the Council and the Committee each receive "a fair representation of the one body on the working staff of the other".¹⁴¹ Significantly, in the list of Churches and Clergy at the beginning of the Report, there was a section which told of FCE services held at Connexional Churches "whose ministers have joined the Free Church of England". The six clergy included Figgis at North Street, Brighton, Thoresby at Spa Fields, George Jones at Tunbridge Wells, and Thomas Dodd at Worcester.¹⁴² Later in the 1872 Report, Thoresby included the correspondence between himself and E.V. Bligh;¹⁴³ and a note at the bottom of page 15 states clearly that although the denominations and organisations are separate, "the ministers and managers (of the Connexion) are entitled, on certain conditions, to be admitted to the Free Church of England."

The following year, in the Summer of 1873 this initiative was extended. The monthly meeting of the FCE Council took place on 8 April at Spa Fields. It was agreed that whenever possible there should be a closer union and a fuller co-operation between the denominations.¹⁴⁴

Just one month later, at the quarterly meeting of the Council on 13 May 1873, this was translated into serious and detailed proposals: ¹⁴⁵

- "1st. That the ministers and numbers of either body should be received as ministers and members of the other...signing either the 15 Articles if Free Churchmen or the Declaration if from the Connexion.
- 2nd. That the Convocation...and the Conference...meet at the same time and place...as one assembly...
- 3rd. That the Bishop President of the Free Church of England be President of the Conference."

The resolution was carried unanimously, and by late June, unity seemed imminent. As Convocation was assembling and the July magazine was going to press, the editor asked for prayer in the matter.¹⁴⁶

Convocation began on Monday 23 June, and once again, Conference was held together with it. The Rev. George Jones was re-elected President for the following year, and in his address he rejoiced in the prospect of the union. It

was resolved that in future the list of Connexional Ministers be drawn up in two schedules: "the first of those who have signed the conference-deed and the second of those who had not."¹⁴⁷ But, at this point, it was recognised that the ever-present problem of several of the main trusts would "prevent absolute union, at least for the present". Nevertheless, the meeting re-affirmed the intention to seek "personal union and hearty co-operation", and a little later¹⁴⁸ it was unanimously agreed that by signing the Articles or Declaration, ministers and members of one denomination might be received by the other. It was further agreed that in future, members of Convocation and Conference should meet together at the Annual Assembly, and that the district and diocesan meetings should be united.

At this point, the Bishop President of the FCE took the chair, and the Convocation of the FCE also agreed to dual membership for ministers and members of their denomination - also that the administrative sessions would be held together. Significantly, in the "Annual Report" of the FCE Council which followed,¹⁴⁹ the "Divine right of Episcopacy" and the notion of the Apostolic Succession was condemned.

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At this point, it is worth briefly examining the ideas within the young FCE on the matter of the identity and role of the episcopate as they had developed by the time of the dual membership agreement of 1873. Although it is virtually impossible to trace the process of the change in ideas, it is interesting to see that a milestone had been reached in July 1872 in yet another article on the subject of the episcopate of the first century.¹⁵⁰ It agreed that the delegation by St. Paul of an apostolic authority upon Timothy at Ephesus and Titus in Crete was an expression of a definite "ecclesiastical polity".

The work envisaged in the Pastoral Epistles was that of an overseer who was to ordain "elders" and to set in order the problems of the local ecclesia. The writer finished with the declaration that the FCE, "whilst recognizing the value of an Episcopal organisation, regard it, not as a divine ordinance of God, but as a convenient custom of the primitive age in harmony with Apostolic sanction".¹⁵¹ Interestingly, despite changes to come, this statement is remarkably similar to the second of the present "Declaration of Principles".¹⁵²

This was to be as close as any definition was to get to a New Testament idea of episcopate that was remotely likely, in any way, to be acceptable to both CHC and FCE.

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Clearly, each denomination was doing the utmost to accommodate the other: indeed it is possible that given time and real sympathy on the part of the FCE, the embryo of union might have developed. If this had succeeded, then there is no doubt that the greater number of churches and clergy, operating as a single unit, would have had far more of an advantage in not only survival, but even expansion. The resulting denomination would also have had a well established theological college in which to train its men.

NEVERTHELESS, for all the good will and the resolutions involved, a full and functional unity simply was not possible. Each denomination recognised its own need for unity, and there is a feeling almost of desperation in the haste of the progress in just a few years from hostility to a bewildering bonhomie between the two. The fact remained that the ministry, organisation and the theology of both denominations had grown too widely apart. For all the hopes and tactful words about Episcopacy, the FCE was continuing to look towards the model of the Establishment (as the next three years were to show), and the Connexion was not only continuing to look back to its Calvinist roots, but it was continuing to have internal troubles over the relationship of the Trustees and the Connexion itself to the College.¹⁵³ The result was that despite the interchangeability of membership and the united administrative sessions, both Churches continued a separate existence, as did Convocation and Conference - each with its own President.

The fatal blow to the precariously mended federative agreement was to come after January 1874 when news had been received that Dr George David Cummins, co-adjutor Bishop of Kentucky in the U.S.A., had resigned from the Protestant Episcopal Church "to transfer my work and office to another sphere of labour".¹⁵⁴ Certainly, the protestant sympathies which forced his resignation on 10 November 1873, and his subsequent founding of the Reformed Episcopal Church in the next month, were profoundly damaging to the Anglican Church in America.¹⁵⁵ But the opportunities thereby opened to the Free Church of England were to change its nature profoundly, and at the same time to render the unity decisions of Conference and Convocation in 1873 a dead letter.

The Reformed Episcopal Church, the Free Church of England, and the
Federative Union of 1874

The Reformed Episcopal Church

It would be pointless to make any detailed examination of the foundation of the REC in America in 1873/4, because the work has already been done with minute attention to detail and documentation. Colonel Benjamin Aycrigg's Memoirs of the Reformed Episcopal Church, completed in 1873, is a large and very detailed work containing letters, synodical and press reports covering the earliest years of the new denomination.¹⁵⁶ Again, Annie Darling Price's History of the Reformed Episcopal Church (1902) contains some useful information on the synods and personalities to the end of the century - although the section on the REC in Britain largely ignores the great complexities and divisions involved.¹⁵⁷

However, perhaps the best of the available texts detailing the origins and early years of the movement is that by the former Professor of Church History at the Reformed Episcopal Seminary in Philadelphia, the Reverend Dr. Allen Guelzo, The First Thirty Years - a fine compendium of information and resources.¹⁵⁸

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The Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States of America was as divided as the mother Church of England during the 1850s, 60s and 70s over issues of theology and churchmanship. Professor Albright points out that there were not the same number of actual legal cases.¹⁵⁹ Nevertheless the issues were those of tractarian teaching and ritualism, the inability for clergy to preach or officiate outside P.E.C.U.S.A. (because of the need for the formal permission of the incumbent of the parish concerned), and, as in the United Kingdom, the special focus of theological discontent over the regenerative theory of baptism.

A number of distinguished people either left P.E.C.U.S.A. in the early 1870s, or were deposed - as was the successful rector of Christ Church, Chicago, Charles Edward Cheney.¹⁶⁰ On 10 September 1871, the Reverend William Cooper¹⁶¹ dedicated the new independent and liturgical Immanuel Church in Chicago, and this new church achieved recognition from the Free Church of England.¹⁶²

The churchmanship issues amongst the bishops in P.E.C.U.S.A. seem to have been more polarised than amongst those on the English bench. Not only were the American bishops themselves from widely differing backgrounds, but there was in any case a heavy "congregational" bias in the authority of the Province. Consequently, it was not surprising that one of the American bishops who was a former Methodist minister also seceded, and a major split became inevitable.

George David Cummins [illustration p. x] was a fine preacher and a militant Evangelical who had left the Methodist Church in 1845 to be ordained into P.E.C.U.S.A. In 1866, his considerable gifts took him to the episcopate as co-adjutor bishop of Kentucky. But he remained strongly opposed to the ritualism which he saw increasing, and he became more and more at odds with his diocesan, Benjamin Bosworth Smith - from 1868 the Presiding Bishop.

In October 1873 during the international meeting of the Evangelical Alliance at New York, Cummins preached a sermon and received communion at a Presbyterian church. This earned him the sharp and public censure of the English Bishop of Zanzibar who was in New York at the time. Although no action was taken at that point, Cummins was also involved in other disputes. These involved Bishop Whitehouse of Illinois, and his own diocesan - on the matter of jurisdiction in the diocese of Kentucky.

In fact Cummins did nothing final until 1873 when, as a culmination of the troubles which beset him and many other evangelicals, he wrote a letter to Smith on 10 November 1873, and he carefully gave his resignation as co-adjutor, saying that he was "transferring his work and office to another sphere".¹⁶³ On 24 June 1874, the Presiding Bishop pronounced his deposition, and this was ratified by the General Convocation on 17 October 1874.

Meanwhile, on 2 December 1873, a group of distinguished churchmen, including 8 ministers and 19 laymen met in New York city and formally organised a new denomination, the Reformed Episcopal Church. The work to be done was considerable and it was to cover a wide area, and on 7 December 1873, Cummins consecrated Charles Edward Cheney who had been elected a bishop at the first Convention. It is interesting to see that amongst the "Declaration of Principles" adopted at the first meeting was one on episcopacy that was very similar indeed to that of the FCE. Episcopacy was recognised by the REC "not as of divine right, but as a very ancient and desirable form of church polity".¹⁶⁴

This then was the situation of the new Protestant episcopal denomination to which the attention of the Free Church of England was suddenly drawn in 1874.

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News of the secession of Cummins was announced in the FCE Magazine in January 1874, and the complete text of the resignation to his diocesan bishop was printed.¹⁶⁵ But, in fact, a fairly extensive correspondence with the FCE had already been taking place from the moment that the new denomination had organised itself on 2 December 1873 in New York.

As Registrar of the FCE, Merryweather wrote to Cummins on 17 December 1873. Fortunately the correspondence had been carefully kept by his widow when Cummins subsequently died in 1876, and Frank Vaughan included some of the correspondence in his History. Merryweather evidently sensed an opportunity for some sort of relationship between the two denominations, for on or about 16 December 1873 he forwarded a collection of documents describing the work of the FCE, and then a day later wrote another letter which pointed out the very considerable common ground between the churches. He claimed that he was writing unofficially, but observed that there might be the opportunity for "effecting a powerful protestant union...in both countries".¹⁶⁶

T.E. Thoresby wrote just two days later on 19 December. Again he pointed out "Your platform and ours are nearly identical", and he spoke of the work on the new and reformed FCE Prayer Book. He also suggested the possibility of some sort of unity, "we are willing to take counsel together and to co-operate on the ground of perfect equality...." ¹⁶⁷

Once again it is significant that the FCE initiative was being taken by those who were the active "party men". Merryweather had been the leading lay figure in the setting up of the new FCE at New Malden, and, of course Thoresby was one of the main figures behind the progress of the entire movement.

Bishop Cummins subsequently wrote to several members of the Council expressing "an earnest desire for union".¹⁶⁸ Resultingly, on Tuesday 10 February, having heard his letters, the quarterly meeting of the Council asked the President Bishop to reply on their behalf.¹⁶⁹ They noted great similarities both in doctrine and worship, and they were quite clear that the way forward was for a unity scheme to be drawn up:

"submitted first to the General Council of the Reformed Episcopal Church...then to the...Convocation of the Free Church of England."

Price signed the letter on 10 March 1874.¹⁷⁰ But it is interesting to see his more cautious approach, for it was probably his first communication with Cummins - the Council minutes had spoken of Cummins having written to "members of the Council", not to the President Bishop. Again his letter is decidedly less "enthusiastic" in tone than those of Merryweather or Thoresby.¹⁷¹

Nevertheless, the Secretary of the Executive Committee of the REC, the Rev. Marshall B. Smith, replied at once to Price. His letter, dated 2 April 1874, spoke of their unanimous approval, and of the committee appointed to prepare the resolutions for the General Council.¹⁷²

At the second General Council of the REC in May 1874, a plan of union was proposed by Marshall B. Smith¹⁷³ and adopted, their decision being telegraphed to England on 23 May 1874.¹⁷⁴ In the "Articles of Union", it was suggested that: i) delegates might be sent annually to either Convocation or the General Council. ii) In consecrations and ordinations, Bishops and Ministers from either church might take part. iii) Clergy from either church would be eligible to function in the other. iv) Communicants might be received from one to the other on letters of dismissal. v) Congregations of either church might transfer their connection to the other on agreed terms.¹⁷⁵ Benjamin Aycrigg commented: "This practically makes the two bodies one".¹⁷⁶

This plan of "Articles of Federal Union" was subsequently accepted by the Convocation of the FCE on Tuesday 23 June 1874 at Spa Fields,¹⁷⁷ and signed in England on 17 November that year.¹⁷⁸ The motion was proposed by the Rev. George Jones and seconded by Merryweather; and it was agreed that in the Autumn, Convocation would re-assemble to meet an official deputation of Cummins and Aycrigg from America.¹⁷⁹

An important milestone in the history of the FCE had been reached. Indeed, the new Federative Union had been achieved without too much trouble in England, for Jones, who proposed the REC Union was actually President of the Connexion, and he spoke on 23 June of the continuing co-operation between the FCE, and the Connexion.¹⁸⁰ Again, it is interesting to see that the decisions of the FCE were being made from the standpoint of success, for it was in fact gaining members and building more churches each year.¹⁸¹

The FCE 1874 to 1876: the continuing of federative unity with the REC, and the adopting of the historic episcopate in 1876.

By 1872 the title "bishop", or "Primus" as applied to Price, was in general use in the FCE - as indeed were the other similarity "Anglican" terms of "diocese" and "convocation". Yet in an editorial in the FCE Magazine for February 1874, the writer spoke of the Episcopal element in the denomination being "very cautiously introduced".¹⁸² Furthermore, just some 8 weeks after the article was published, at a meeting of the joint Midland District on 15 April: "the Reverend Hubert Bower was appointed the District 'Bishop'..." - this to be approved later by Convocation.¹⁸³ In practical terms therefore it was still seen as an elective office, despite suggestions that, for stability, a bishop might well be elected for a fixed period of 5 or more years. Yet at this same time, negotiations were taking place for union with the new and traditionally episcopal REC in America; and it is fascinating to see the gradual changes in attitude and theological stance which were clearly being displayed in the FCE.

In the February 1874 edition of the magazine, for instance, whilst the editor attacked the "superstitious dogma" of the Apostolic Succession, he pointed out: "it is not the ceremony of consecration, or setting apart, or the laying on of hands" that the FCE objects to, but the theory of an unbroken succession "in any 'order' of men, and the presumptuous claims that are based upon that theory".¹⁸⁴ He continued by giving clear indication of changes yet to come:

"The church has established the principle by the election of its President Bishop, but left the further development of the Episcopate until the organisation of the church had become more complete."

In April and June of that year, there were further discussions in the magazine on the nature of the early church episcopate, especially on the interchangeability of the two terms "Epicopos" and "Presbuteros" in Acts Chapter 20.¹⁸⁵ But in the June edition, a letter from J.R. Lumley, Honorary

Secretary of the denomination, took the matter of episcopacy in the denomination to its logical conclusion.

In his consultations with the learned Incumbent of Torrington (in the diocese of Lincoln), Thomas Wimberley Mossman, Lumley had received much information and help with the interpretation of the two ministerial terms in the Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. In the June magazine, he now published an extract from a letter which Mossman had written to him on 31 January 1874:¹⁸⁶

"I think it would be a grand thing if all the Evangelical and Ortodox (though so-called Dissenting) churches in England would receive the Episcopate, by means of Bishops Cummins and Cheney".

The reasons he gave were significant, because they had nothing to do with theology, but rather the status of such a ministry by conforming to an acceptable norm in the eyes of the world. He continued:

"This would...give the Nonconformists a status, which could not be denied by the haughtiest and stiffest of our Anglican Prelates. The Wesleyans, the Presbyterians, and others would all have an Apostolic succession, which Anglicans, upon their own principles, must admit to be as valid as that of...the Archbishop of Canterbury..."

There is a way in which the historic episcopate is now seen as almost a weapon in the hands of those who had ceded from the Establishment.

Mossman may well have written those words to Lumley, but the suggestion accords so well with the ambitions of the "party men" of the FCE that it is not hard to see the work of Thoresby and possibly Merryweather in the background. Such a situation as envisaged by Mossman would indeed have seen a vast Episcopal "Free Church" which was outside the control of the state and its ecclesiastical servants - as the Countess had envisaged.

It was also during this year that the direction and progress of denominational identity and thought was perhaps aided by the sudden death of the Reverend James Shore who had given so much support in the creation of the new FCE. Shore was living in semi-retirement in Buxton - where there had been an FCE church since 1868. On the morning of Wednesday 12 August 1874 he was thrown from his horse, and had died from his injuries within a couple of hours.¹⁸⁷

In October 1874, a substantial contribution was made to the debate on the episcopate by the publishing of an article in the Magazine by Bishop Cheney on the nature of episcopate in the REC. The value of the piece was not in what it said, for it was, substantially, another plea for the model of the ministry to be that of the Apostolic community.¹⁸⁸ Rather did the value of the article lie in the man who wrote it, and upon his distinct and innate authority.

In a way, Cheney's situation was similar to that of Shore. His deposition by P.E.C.U.S.A. for refusing to use "regenerative" words in the Baptism Service was a sacrifice for principle, and his word as a theological authority and a distinguished personality of the new REC bore great weight, even in England.¹⁸⁹ The article repeated the line taken so often in the FCE Magazine, but its personal involvement made it more significant - as indeed did the news given two pages later that the REC already numbered nearly 2000 communicants, some 20 parishes and between 20 and 30 ministers.¹⁹⁰

Despite the hope that both Cheney and Aycrigg would visit a re-assembled convocation that Autumn, it was evidently not possible. At the monthly meeting of the Council on 8 September 1874, it was proposed that Bishop Cummins be invited to the next annual Convocation in June 1875.¹⁹¹

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From two articles by Thoresby on "Orders in the Free Church of England" in the FCE Magazine for January and February 1875,¹⁹² it is clear that there was dissension on the nature of the episcopate from the more protestant members of the CHC. In upholding the two-fold ministry, he cited references from the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles, and the Revelation of St. John the Divine to show the presbyters and bishops as the same order in the New Testament Church.

But it would have been unlike Thoresby to make such a volte-face without some advantage, whatever the opposition. Indeed, careful examination of the January article shows that whilst appearing to rein in on the progress in theological thought on episcopacy in the FCE he had in fact taken matters yet a stage further! He began by reiterating the Poll Deed of 1863: "in the Free Church of England there are two orders of ministers - videlicet, Bishops and Deacons..." But he continued: ¹⁹³

"So that a person ordained in the Free Church of England is ordained...for life or good behaviour; and this person, on being chosen by his fellow-bishops or presbyters to preside, for a given time and for a stated

purpose, over a district or diocese, does not need re-ordination and does not enter into a new order of office..."

At first sight, he appeared merely to be taking up the theme introduced by Benjamin Price to Lumley and Mossman on the matter of the impropriety of re-ordination for non-episcopally ordained ministers. But what he was also doing was to introduce the concept of the indelibility of orders for both bishops and presbyters. These he identified as one order, of course. Yet nevertheless the contrast to his earlier work with the imprisoned James Shore who fought to rid himself of the legal entrapment of indelibility is astonishing. If not quite the doctrine of indelibility, "...for life or good behaviour" comes close to it.¹⁹⁴

Once again, despite his re-iteration of the two-fold order theory, it is possible to see Thoresby as an influential figure in the FCE, looking determinedly towards the model of the Establishment. Indeed, on 9 February he addressed the Council on the matter of the constitutions of the FCE and the REC "with special reference to the consecration of bishops and the making of deacons".¹⁹⁵ The resulting resolution on "harmonizing the constitutions...in order to secure a more complete corporate union and co-operation" may well have disguised its true intent by its wordiness. But it is nevertheless clear that preparations for receiving the ancient succession through the hands of the American bishops were at least at the discussion stage.¹⁹⁶

Just a little later, this resolution reported in the Rock,¹⁹⁷ and the quotation began with the information:

"a Ritualistic clergyman was known to say that the Ritualists dreaded the Free Church of England, but if ever their Bishops received consecration through Bishop Cummins they would dread it still more."

Yet again, the traditional episcopal succession was being portrayed as a possible weapon in the hands of the FCE, and again it is not difficult to detect the hand of Thoresby - although there is no documentary proof.

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From this point, having accepted the principle of "harmonizing the constitutions", the pace of change in the FCE increased - so much so that there were clearly difficulties for some of the people involved.

At a meeting of the Council at Westminster on 13 April 1875, the resolution was made that "the Constitutions and Canons of the Reformed Episcopal Church of America be recommended to Convocation for adoption as the bye-laws of the Free Church of England". Proposed by Thoresby and seconded by Merryweather, it was to proceed to the quarterly meeting a month later.¹⁹⁸

The amount of detail given in the report is an indication of the tremendous burden of work that Thoresby in particular must have undertaken at this time. Such a "harmonization" involved close and minute examination of the Canons, Constitutions and custom of both new denominations. It also had to take account of how, in realistic terms, a compromise could be reached with the differences in the FCE, which was a flourishing and independent denomination having its own liturgy and fast developing individual style.

Again, the feelings, customs and Canons of the Connexion had to be taken into account. And it is quite clear that if there is any point at which the fragile federal relationship between the two English denominations began to be finally severed - this is it. To mould two similar denominations together was just possible. But to attempt to take in a third as well was an impossibility - especially when that third denomination was too fragmented to take any binding decision on politics and customs so far removed from its own.

A brief review of the report

Again and again it is seen that the theological and canonical boundaries of the FCE were to be extended to match what Thoresby and others evidently considered a stronger system. One of the first observations made was that it might well be necessary to go beyond the confines of the Poll Deed.

In this respect, perhaps the most difficult problems were those over the ministry of the two bodies, for the REC had a three-fold order of ministers (however they viewed the second order), whereas the FCE was still locked into the New Testament model it had so long proclaimed in defence of its own elective episcopate, and this was a two-fold order of ministry. Even so:

- i) As to the consecration of bishops, the Rev. J. Sugden had suggested that when any man was set aside for the office, the American "Office for the Consecration of Bishops" should be used.¹⁹⁹

ii) As to the diaconate, evidently there had been misgivings: "With our American friends they are probationers for the regular ministry". However it was proposed that FCE deacons might take part in preaching and evangelizing by special license, and that a special service might be used for that purpose.²⁰⁰

Finally, when examining the actual REC Canons, Canon IV, "Of Presbyters and their ordination" required a minimal alteration.²⁰¹ But, the overall effect to those who examined the detail was bound to be salutary, for whatever words were used to justify the changes later on, or however the functions of "bishop" and "presbyter" were differentiated, to all practical intents and purposes, what was being prepared for was a three-fold order of ministry.

The Quarterly Meeting of Council took place on 11 May 1875 at Spa Fields,²⁰² and the report sent by the Council on the "harmonization" of the Constitutions was accepted "almost unanimously". But most significant was the general turning of the denomination towards America for the historic episcopate. Firstly, the Eastern District, in its Report, wished "to impress upon the Council the importance of active steps...to secure the consecration - through the American Bishop or other recognised Protestant Episcopalians - of bishops into the Free Church of England". Again, it was reported that:²⁰³

"...until late in the evening...the council were discussing the matter of the Constitutions, but especially the general desire existing for a more pronounced Episcopacy...."

Obviously there were misgivings, and once again the magazine was used to "dilute" the strength of the theological changes. In the June edition, an article entitled "Consecration" attempted to placate those who saw this as "a recognition of Romish and sacerdotal claims".²⁰⁴ In consecration or ordination, says the writer, the FCE "simply sets apart or gives authority to certain officers in the church to execute special ecclesiastical functions". The old term is used only because the adoption of a new term would lead to "confusion and misunderstanding".

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At this stage it is worth noting that a number of changes were taking place in the swiftly growing REC in America. In brief, the visit of Bishop Cummins to England for the June Convocation did not happen because of his failing health.²⁰⁵ And it is possible that it was in response to the growth of the church, especially in Canada, and the uncertainty of the health of Cummins,

that three more men were elected as "Missionary Bishops" at the Third General Council of the REC in May 1875.²⁰⁶ The Rev. James Latane, M.A., the Rev. William Nicholson, D.D., and the Rev. Edmund Cridge, B.A. were each from distinguished backgrounds. Cridge in particular was to play an important part in the history of the FCE [illustration p. x]: a Cambridge graduate, he had been Dean of the Cathedral at Victoria until his secession from the Anglican Church in Canada because of its "sacerdotalism and sacramentalism".²⁰⁷

Internal strain within the FCE: 1875.

It was during the summer of 1875 in particular that the pace of change began to make several problems evident. Certainly the determined move towards the historic episcopate, together with the theological changes involved, were proving too much for the Connexion. When the Convocation of the FCE met at Spa Fields in June 1875, it was entirely devoted to FCE business. The link with the Conference was broken, and from this year on, all future annual meetings were separate.²⁰⁸

Again, the evident parting of the ways must have made life intolerable for several of the clergy and laity who had, by conviction, made their home in both denominations. F.W. Willcocks, who was a leading layman at Spa Fields, was increasingly embittered with the way the relationship had progressed; and his pungent criticism of the FCE was to be made known later in his memoirs of Spa Fields.²⁰⁹ But more significantly at this time and stage of the negotiations with America and within the denomination, Thoresby resigned as General Secretary of the FCE.²¹⁰

His resignation caused great concern, for he was a powerful and effective manipulator of men and situations. Again, his theological acumen, practical legal instincts and sheer dynamic force of energy²¹¹ made his continuing place in the denomination an absolute necessity in the eyes of many. Accordingly, he was prevailed upon to withdraw his resignation and to continue "at least till Christmas": but in the event he agreed to continue as before.²¹²

1876

As the months progressed, public interest within the FCE on the matter of historic episcopate was fed by from time to time by the magazine. In March, it was announced that at the Quarterly Meeting of the Council on 8 February, the

vital motion on the episcopate had been passed:

"future Bishops...shall be consecrated or set apart to their office in accordance with the form of Consecrating a Bishop as revised and set forth by the Second General Council of the Reformed Episcopal Church."

It was also agreed that at future FCE consecrations: "A consecrated Bishop or Bishops, and three or more Presbyters be invited to conduct the ceremony of Consecration".²¹³

The motion, proposed by Merryweather and seconded by the Rev. P.X. Eldridge, "was carried with only two dissentients".²¹⁴ But even though matters seemed to be progressing there were still objections. The leading article in the April magazine noted that it was the American service that was to be used: "The Form of Ordaining or Consecrating a Bishop". But the term "ordaining" found objectors as it implied a third and distinctive order of ministry.²¹⁵

Such an objection was bound to be brought up because the differences between the two denominations were too great simply to be swept under the carpet. Even so, what evidently prevailed was the more pragmatic stance, such as that (cynically) of Lord Ebury. At a meeting on 23 February on Prayer Book Reform, the matter of Cummins's journey to England to give the historic episcopal succession to the FCE had evidently been discussed. According to Aycrigg, Ebury "did not know whether Bishop Cummins still retained the electric touch, but he supposed that would not be disputed."! ²¹⁶

Certainly, on Tuesday 9 May 1876, the news was received that the Northern and District meetings had urged that a committee be appointed to amend the Poll Deed so that the more distinct Diaconal and Episcopal elements could be incorporated, as in the constitution of the REC. A committee was appointed, and it was arranged that its report be made to the next Convocation.

Yet despite these seeming advances, a tension was evident in both FCE and CHC at this time. Not only was there open criticism of the Connexion for its lack of support in the revision of the Prayer Book,²¹⁷ but the matter of the ministry and the Poll Deed was evidently causing further unease. The opening article in the July magazine spoke frankly of "much anxiety" over the work of the Committee. To add to the pressures in the relationship between the FCE and the Connexion, it was announced on the same page that Bishop Cridge of the REC would be visiting England, and that he would take part in the proceedings of the Convocation, which would be adjourned until his arrival in August.²¹⁸

In fact Bishop Cummins himself had originally been expected at the Convocation, but after illness he died suddenly at Lutherville, at 2 o'clock on Monday 26 June 1876.²¹⁹ On 12 July, Charles Edward Cheney was subsequently elected Presiding Bishop.²²⁰

Perhaps the tension and uncertainty of the times aided the difficult negotiations over the Deed Poll. For although the discussions on the matter occupied most of Convocational time on Tuesday 27 June, it was eventually agreed unanimously that explanatory declarations be appended to the Deed Poll to make clear the Episcopal and Diaconal functions within the FCE ministry.²²¹ All was now ready for the visit of Bishop Cridge to bring the ancient line of succession to the FCE, and the Council was instructed to arrange details.²²²

The adjourned Convocation and the Consecration of Bishops: August 1876

For the first time ever, a meeting of Convocation was held, not at Spa Fields, but at the new Christ Church FCE, at Teddington, Middlesex, on 15 August 1876. Also present was the official delegate from the REC in America, Bishop Edward Cridge, and the main business was that of preparation for the consecrations that were to take place.

Earlier that day, the minister at Teddington, John Sugden, was elected and commended to Convocation for consecration as Bishop.²²³ This was to be at the new Christ Church, Westminster Bridge Road, Southwark, the following Sunday afternoon.²²⁴ Sugden was a fine man, originally from Kingstown (Dun Laoghaire) in Ireland.²²⁵ Having graduated at the University of London (B.A.),²²⁶ he had been educated for the Bar, but following his conversion spent many years as a missionary in India.²²⁷ In January 1865, he had become minister of the new church in Teddington,²²⁸ and in the following year became an influential member of Convocation and the FCE Council.

However, at the same meeting at which Sugden had been elected, it was also resolved that "a special Consecration Service for Bishop Price (confirming all his episcopal and ministerial acts, in the past) be held this evening before the Ordination of Deacons."²²⁹ This resolution indicated the satisfactory conclusion to what had been a particularly difficult and painful time for Benjamin Price. Vaughan says nothing of this in his History. But in his autobiographical sketch Price included his own account of that time together with the correspondence involved.

As he said, the visit of Cridge gave the FCE an opportunity of acquiring what "in the estimation of the Ritualists themselves would be considered a Valid Ministry, and of completing in my own case what had been overlooked at the time of my appointment...and I was pressed on all hands to avail myself of it."²³⁰ Certainly he felt that the office of Bishop should have been given with the offering of public prayer - which it had not.

But on the other hand he was most unhappy about involving himself in a service which might "invalidate my episcopal acts" - for he had exercised the office of bishop some years by then. Again he was unhappy that the service might "seemingly to admit the Doctrine of Apostolical succession".

Others in his position might not have felt so concerned. But there was in Price none of the hearty pragmatism that appeared in Lord Ebury. On a number of occasions, such as when the REC had been formed, others had pushed forward to make contact, but Price had consistently failed to thrust himself along the path toward the Episcopate. He was still essentially an old fashioned Calvinistic Methodist who had gradually accepted the changing church to whose ministry he had been called, but which still from time to time caused him acute embarrassment because of its "decidedly church tone".²³¹ He had been worried by the affair at the opening of Tottington Church when the title had been given him without consultation, and he was worried now.²³²

As soon as Cridge's ship had docked and he himself had arrived in London, Price had written to him to share his misgivings: "for eight or nine years now I have executed the office of a Bishop in the Free Church of England and have been everywhere acknowledged as such". He put to him the problems of seeming to declare invalid the episcopal acts already done, or to give tacit recognition to the principle of the apostolic succession. He suggested a slight change in the Litany of the Consecration Service: "that he may..." (then add) "as in the past so in the future", (then original text) duly execute the office..." He further suggested that at the words of Consecration, "Take then" be omitted. The text would then read: "We confirm the authority to execute the office..."²³³

The letter was statesmanlike and direct, and Cridge's reply from Princes Gate Hotel, South Kensington on 7 August was equally so. He agreed wholly with Price's feelings, and also to the suggested modifications. In his own "quaint" style he declared: "It affords me pleasure to regard our relation as that of

fellow soldiers in the Lord's army conferring together by what lawful stratagem we may dislodge His adversaries."²³⁴ Price was satisfied.²³⁵

That Tuesday evening at 6.30 pm ²³⁶ in Christ Church, Teddington, Price was presented to Bishop Cridge by the Reverends Thomas Dodd (Worcester C.H.), T.E. Thoresby (Spa Fields) and John Sugden (Teddington). He was consecrated by Cridge, who used the REC service together with the amendments suggested, and then both Price and Cridge together took part in the service of Holy Communion which followed, as in the traditional Prayer Book form. Also during the service one man was ordained Presbyter and six were ordained Deacons.²³⁷

The following Sunday afternoon, at 3 pm on 20 August at Christ Church, Westminster Bridge Road, John Sugden was formally presented to Cridge by the Reverends T.E. Thoresby and A.S. Richardson (Malvern C.H.). Following the Litany and the Veni Creator Spiritus, as at Teddington, Cridge assisted by Price, consecrated Sugden (together with the Presbyters present - as is still the custom in the FCE).²³⁸ The congregation numbered "several hundred".

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The editor of the denominational magazine was absolutely correct when he said in his opening September article that these events: "mark, we verily believe, the commencement of a new era in the life of the Free Church of England".²³⁹

It had changed very markedly from the time of the Poll Deed just 13 years before when it was still tied by an umbilical cord to its increasingly Congregational-biassed parent. From September 1876, the denomination was a fully recognizable Protestant Episcopal Church. Its style and form were very similar to those of the Establishment, with a reformed Book of Common Prayer, and, to all outward intents and purposes a three-fold order of ministry. It was a flourishing and growing denomination with some 50 functioning churches in England, Wales, the Channel Islands, Australia and Bermuda.²⁴⁰

A chart-survey in the Appendix (pp. 570 ff.) gives further details. But in the light of the evidence available, it is likely that, at the time of the annual Convocation in Summer 1876, the FCE had churches founded, or affiliated, in:

BRITAIN: Avebury, Wilts.; Atherton, Lancs.; Alston College Chapel, Lancs.; Addiscombe, Surrey; Barrow-in-Furness; Beaumaris (Summers); Birkenhead;

Braintree, Essex; Brighton (CHC); Buxton; St. Paul's, Cardiff; Chatteris, Cambs.; Cleeve Hill, Glos.; Cobnash, Herefs.; Everton, Liverpool; Furrrough Cross, Devon; Leominster; Exeter; Golden Hill, Staffs.; High Wycombe; Hollinwood; Ilfracombe; Kennerleigh, Devon (?); Ledbury; Leamington (CHC); Littlehampton; Ludlow; Lynmouth; Middleton (CHC) Lancs.; New Malden, Surrey; Oswaldtwistle; Putney, Surrey (?); Sandown, I.O.W.; Shoreham, Sx. (CHC); Southampton; Spalding, Lincs.; Teddington; Tenby; Topsham, Devon; Tottington, Lancs.; Tunbridge Wells (CHC); Tyldesley (CHC), Lancs., Wheelton, Lancs.; Willesborough, Kent; Wilsden, Yorks.; Worcester (CHC); Ulverston.

AUSTRALIA: Rockingham, North Aus. (?) BERMUDA: St. George's.

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In the matter of the consecrations, the FCE kept a fairly low profile - certainly as Price would have preferred it. The national press seemed to take little or no interest in the matter, although there was a considerable exchange of letters in The Rock. "Ed. Fysh"'s enquiry as to the origin of REC orders was answered by Henry Herbert of Doctors' Commons on 3 November.²⁴¹ "Lex" then questioned Price's "confirmation of Episcopate" and the fact that Sugden was raised to the episcopate "per saltem"; also that the consecration was performed by a single bishop rather than the canonical three.²⁴²

Correspondence on the validity of orders "per saltem", or through a single consecrator, continued into December; then as the editor robustly commented: "Any man whose judgement is free and unbiased must admit that the Free Church bishops are quite as good as the best of their order. - Ed." ²⁴³

Lord Ebury was amongst those who regarded the consecrations as a victory for the cause of Protestant churchmen. In a characteristically trenchant letter to the Bishop of Rochester, who had appealed to him for financial aid to set up the new diocese of St. Albans, he referred to the FCE as an Episcopal church which was a worthy alternative to the excesses of the Establishment. Perhaps understandably he refused to respond to the appeal: "I...must keep something in reserve, because, should the plague continue to increase at its present rate, I shall have to seek a refuge elsewhere."²⁴⁴ Interestingly however, he did not specify the FCE.

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The most significant result of the consecrations for the FCE itself was the fact that it made the progress of break-up in the federative relationship with the Connexion irreversible. Bad will continued on both sides, and F.W.

Willcocks published a circular on "The Consecration of Bishops" which was heavily criticised by the editor of the FCE Magazine.²⁴⁵ Subsequently

Willcocks's feelings and objections were even clearer in his memoirs of the Chapel at Spa Fields which he published in 1884:²⁴⁶

"...Laxity in the admission of associates,²⁴⁷ and unscrupulous persistency on the part of many who were utterly ignorant of the real purpose of the promoters of the foundation deed,²⁴⁸ and assumptions and imitations of ecclesiastical dress, orders and styles of address²⁴⁹ caused the withdrawal of nearly the whole of the Founders²⁵⁰ - from what was hoped would have been a valuable ally and source of strength".

For a few years the denominations continued with a limited relationship.

Price says vaguely: "In the course of time, the two bodies came to be spoken of as Associated, not Incorporated".²⁵¹ Certainly as I.M. Mallard points out in his dissertation,²⁵² by 1879, the list of FCE churches shows only 6 which belonged to the Huntingdon Trust, and these were because of long standing clerical loyalty: Brighton (Rev. J.B. Figgis); Spa Fields (Rev. T.E. Thoresby); Leamington (vacant); Shoreham (Rev. C. Knowles); Tunbridge Wells (Rev. George Jones); and Worcester (with Rev. Thomas Dodd).²⁵³

In point of fact from the moment federal union with the REC was signed, the relationship with the Connexion was breached. In any case, both denominations were continuing to progress in two different directions, the Connexion into Independency (Congregationalism) and the FCE in the manner and style of the Establishment, from which in critical eyes of many like Willcocks, it was becoming indistinguishable.

For the FCE, as a liturgical church, a conventional episcopal system was the only way forward that was clearly understood and appreciated by a significant number of evangelical and protestant churchpeople. The Connexion, so deeply divided, and so weakened, provided no alternative example. In real terms, the consecrations of 1876, therefore, made this breach permanent and irreversible. Although a number of further attempts were made to reconcile the two bodies over the succeeding 40 years, the umbilical cord was effectively cut for ever!

In that this work is an examination of the growth and development of denominational units rather than individual congregations, a detailed study of each of the many churches and congregations established would be inappropriate. It is nevertheless important to understand the way in which so many of these small churches were founded and then run - often by the very militant Protestant laity who had established them. Thus, a closer examination of the factors involved is made in a Case Studies Chapter in the Appendix.

However, with regard to the many churches which were founded between the years 1863 and 1876 (probably more than 66), a number of points are worth noting very briefly - although, by the nature of the present work, any proper examination would need to be the subject of a future project.

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1. The deciding factor in the great majority of FCE foundations was that of a new and particularly strident ritualism in the local parish churches. Again, most examples of such conflict seem to have been in the cities, towns and industrial areas of the country. It was where this conflict was most bitter and most entrenched that the new Free liturgical churches seem to have been most successful and long-lasting.
2. Certainly the great majority of these new FCE churches were in the towns. Most were in the industrial and urban areas: many were founded in the cotton towns of Lancashire and the West Riding of Yorkshire. A very few small churches or missions were set up in the more rural areas, such as Bendish, Cobnash, Chatteris, Cleeve Hill, or Bishop's Cleeve. But possibly because of a greater conservatism amongst the influential laity and the clergy in the country, rural FCE churches were very few. Indeed, those which were founded did not last.
3. Whereas the earlier sources of influence for the FCE seemed often to have come from the older landed classes, during the years 1863 to 1876 it is interesting to note the members of the newly wealthy middle classes who were instrumental in setting up churches. At Tottington, Lancashire, the "patron" was Mr. Hugh Roberts, a local mill owner (FCE Year Book, 1960-61, p. 3). At Oswaldtwistle, it was another mill owner, William Hoghton (ms. by Mr. T. Taylor). At Wheelton the prime mover of the movement was Peter Todd, another mill owner (FCE Magazine, November 1870, p. 303). At Hollinwood, near Oldham, the "patron" was the engineer Thomas Milnes of Chadderton Hall (FCE Magazine,

various eds. March 1870 to June 1871; Vision, Autumn 1951, p. 202 f.; Worrall's Directory (Oldham) 1871). In all four places the services and Sunday Schools were started on mill premises.

Similarly, at Golden Hill in Staffordshire, the FCE services, together with a Sunday School, were started in "Mr. Williamson's works" - the subsequent church building being erected at J.H. Williamson's personal expense (FCE Magazine, August 1873, p. 154; November 1873, p. 216; January 1874, p. 11; February 1874, p. 27 f., etc.). In Birmingham, the builder of the Cregoe Street Mission was Mr. William Moreton, a wealthy Birmingham businessman (Harbinger, December 1866, p. 320; FCE Magazine, June 1867, p. 172; April 1868, p. 108). Further examination would certainly show similar circumstances at other of the FCE churches in the new industrial areas. There is a way therefore in which the burgeoning of the FCE in the industrial areas during the 1860s and 1870s might be partly seen as a particular type of "entrepreneurial" middle class reaction to the increasing ritualism of the times. These were changes by members of a new and wealthy industrial class who were not prepared to identify themselves wholly with non-conformity (unlike Sir Titus Salt in Shipley, near Bradford), yet were prepared to make their protests by setting up an acceptable Protestant alternative to the worship at the parish church. Certainly they usually had both the property and the financial means to carry this out.

In this fruitful field for further research it might also confirm that, generally speaking, in the rural areas there was neither the particularly flagrant ritualism in the parishes nor the militant feelings amongst the local "society" for such radical steps to be taken against the Established Church.

4. Another factor worth noting is that the majority of these churches and congregations did not survive more than 10 or 12 years - some far less. But even at first sight it is evident that with such a large number of churches and mission stations being established in so short a period, it was virtually impossible for the new denomination to cope with them and their needs properly. Until August 1876 there was only one Bishop who was functioning electively within a new and largely untried administrative structure. There simply was not the infrastructure, money, clergy or experience to deal with such a sudden growth - over and above the 16 churches already functioning before 1863.

CHAPTER 4

1876 - 1880, DIVISION AND SUB-DIVISION; THE FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, THE REFORMED EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN ENGLAND, & THE REFORMED CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

Introduction - the situation and the events outlined

When Benjamin Price and John Sugden were consecrated in August 1876, it is evident that the influential members of the FCE saw the ancient episcopal succession as an indisputable seal of authority for the denomination. This was made clear by Sugden's own statement: "I was pressed on all hands to avail myself of it." ¹ Certainly, although there were just some 50 FCE congregations by 1876, many saw the consecrations as a possible way of ensuring future advance for the FCE by providing an acceptable Protestant alternative to rival the increasingly ritualistic Established Church.

The denomination had changed very markedly since 1863. For, in the thirteen years since its registration, it had moved from being a presbyterially ordered non-conformist sect to being a conventional Protestant episcopal church. Yet the one thing which these new developments could not bring to the FCE was the stability which would enable the denomination to grow to be a really serious threat to the Church of England. The main weakness was the ever increasing pressure of a "churchmanship" dispute between the "episcopal" party on the one hand, and the traditional non-conformist party on the other. Ultimately the pressure became intolerable, and the FCE simply divided.

In the meanwhile, it is hardly surprising that as the REC had been introduced to English churchmen by the consecrations of Price and Sugden, it should be only a matter of time before it would itself be founded in Britain as a separate denomination - for its style and polity were very much those of the "episcopal" party within the FCE. Thus the tiny new REC was mainly the result of the split within the FCE. However, those pressures which had split the FCE then continued to grow within both denominations. Resultingly, the pressure which split the FCE once then continued to split the tiny new REC which had resulted. Finally, it very nearly split the remainder of the FCE once more.

Such was the instability, that the four years following 1876 were amongst the most chaotic that both the denominations were ever to experience in Britain. On several occasions the whole movement could simply have failed through becoming divided and sub-divided out of existence. In the event, the denominations

survived. But it did mean that from 1880 onwards for some sixteen years, there were actually three "Free" episcopal Churches, and not just the one as in 1876. Chapter four traces the convoluted story of those five years, 1876 to 1880.

The origins of the REC as a separate denomination in Britain.

From 1873 to 1876, the relationship between the FCE and the REC in America was most cordial. But, even though the strength of this was such that in August 1876 Bishop Cridge came over to consecrate Price and Sugden for the work of the FCE, it was clear that full organic union between the two denominations was simply not possible. As Frank Vaughan pointed out, the constitutional differences were very great. Again, Aycrigg noted that when the Council of the REC examined the FCE Poll Deed, it was clear that a Federative Union was the best that could be produced.² Certainly, in 1874, the FCE and REC were very different. Not only was the FCE presbyterially ordered, but it was still tied to its Calvinist Connexional roots.

Even after the consecrations in 1876, the prospect for Union was just as distant. In his Memories Vaughan says: "Both bodies were the subjects of internal change and some tumult, storm and stress, the details of which need not now be recalled."³ Clearly, this referred to the time of the establishment of the REC in Britain. Further, in his History, Vaughan gives some basic outlines of the process by which the denomination was set up here;⁴ but he was understandably coy about giving any detail of the disputes involved.

It is, however, possible to build up the picture of events by examining letters, editorial comment and the "Jottings" columns in the FCE Magazine, together with numbers of other newspaper reports and correspondence. The correspondence section of The Rock also sheds considerable light on troubles at the close of 1877. It is also possible to cross-check a number of points with the meticulously detailed Memoirs of the REC by Colonel Benjamin Aycrigg. Finally, several valuable insights are provided in the Vestry records of both Bishop Sugden's church at Teddington and Gregg's church, Trinity, Southend.⁵

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As in former years with the federal union between the FCE and the Connexion, there was a clear division between those who wished to make the FCE more like

the Established Church (though pronouncedly Protestant), and those who, on the other hand, wished to keep to the more conservative and dissenting tradition.

In the early days of the FCE/REC Federative Union, there was evidently a powerful lobby for full unity, and this continued after the consecration of the two English Bishops. In the February 1877 edition of the FCE Magazine, the editor wrote of his own treasured correspondence with Cummins: 'his letters were warmly expressive of a desire that the Reformed Episcopal Church and the Free Church of England should be "closely united in the good work" '.⁶

Perhaps one of the most well known and distinguished of the lobby was Lord Ebury, and he evidently saw the federative agreement of 1874 as a binding obligation for the FCE. In Summer 1876, the Bishop of Rochester had written to him to ask for his assistance in the setting up of the new diocese of St. Albans (see chapter 3, p. 124). In his surprisingly sharp refusal Ebury reminded Rochester that "the anti-reformation spirit has gone on unchecked". He continued by calling to the Bishop's attention the growth of "the Episcopal Free Church of England...who are in union with the Reformed Episcopal Churches of the United States of America and Canada".⁷

Two points are especially significant. Firstly, he had clearly seen the 1874 agreement between the two denominations as a binding organic union. Secondly, it was evidently with this in mind that he gave the denomination a slightly different title, "the Episcopal Free Church of England". It could have been just a "generic" descriptive title - but on the other hand there were others who also wished to change the FCE; indeed, over the next two years, the change of name was to become a matter of most serious debate.

It is manifest from Ebury's support for the FCE over the years, and from the particular theological direction he wished it to take, that he like many others, saw the more conventionally ordered REC as a greater weapon against the ritualism of the day - simply because it would provide the ordinary churchgoer with a virtually identical protestant alternative to the parish church. Indeed, it is almost certainly in response to the technical and legal inability of the FCE to become fully and organically united to the REC that Ebury was later to be in the forefront of the setting up of an English branch of the REC. Conversely, others like Thoresby continued to pull in the opposite direction.

Certainly there were a number of FCE clergy who supported the line shown by both the editor of the FCE Magazine and Ebury. Consequently, by the early part of 1877, when it was clear to all that a full and organic unity was simply not to be, then an alternative proposition was made.

At the Quarterly Meeting of the FCE Council on Tuesday 13 February 1877, the Reverend Philip Norton formally proposed a motion for "the establishment of a distinct branch of the Reformed Episcopal Church". The motion was lost. Next came a motion by the Reverend P.X. Eldridge "as to the alteration of the title of the Free Church of England". This was also lost.⁸

In fact, the account of the Quarterly Meeting in the magazine is just in very brief outline, so it is not altogether clear what the issues involved were. However, in his Memoirs of the REC, probably drawing on information provided in correspondence with the Reverend A.S. Richardson of the FCE, Aycrigg indicated that the problem at the meeting was not simply that the motion requesting the REC to establish itself in England had been lost, but rather that it was signified that "the REC has no right to establish itself in England without the consent of the FCE, or that it must consult with the authorities of the FCE before so doing...." ⁹ It becomes clear therefore that the problems were actually over authority and territorial right.

But what the account of the Quarterly Council Meeting also illustrated is that at some time a most serious division within the Council of the FCE itself had developed. Indeed, Bishop Sugden, the Reverends Philip Norton, P.X. Eldridge, A.S. Richardson, and G.H. Llewellyn, together with at least one of the laymen present (Simms), were subsequently instrumental in the foundation of the English branch of the REC.

The situation in which the two denominations found themselves within another year was a great deal more complex than was ever indicated by Vaughan or any other writer on the subject. But this is to look ahead too far for the moment. What is important is that the divisions of opinion within the FCE had been established and noted, and that the possibility of starting a separate branch of the REC in England had actually been mooted.

The Establishment of the REC in Britain, 1877.

After the events of February 1877, the next moves towards the extension of the REC to England took place very quickly indeed.

Writing in 1902, the American REC historian, Annie Darling Price, stated that: "In April, 1877, a petition was sent to the Reformed Episcopal Church, setting forth the need and opportunity for the establishment of the Reformed Episcopal Church in England."¹⁰ Writing in 1936, Frank Vaughan gave the further information that this petition was signed "by Lord Ebury, a member of the FCE, at Teddington, and others connected with Convocation, though in their private capacity". He also stated that "this petition recommended the Reverend T. Huband Gregg, DD, MD, late Vicar of East Harborne, near Birmingham as Bishop of the proposed branch...in this country."¹¹

In fact, neither writer gave any idea of the complexity of these events, or of the convoluted and "political" arrangements which surrounded them. Indeed, the speed with which everything was done, including the selection of an episcopal candidate, makes it clear that secret negotiation had already been done by the time of the February Quarterly Meeting. Certainly this would account for the evidently acrimonious nature of some of the proceedings, for it would have been impossible to ensure absolute secrecy over such important negotiations.

Quite apart from the complex politics of this development, what is also not realised by any today, is that the contest for leadership of the new denomination in England involved not just one (Gregg) but probably four people.

The contest for the leadership of the REC in Britain, 1876-7.

(i) Bishop John Sugden [illustration p. xi]

It is clear that Sugden was not happy with developments within the FCE, and the Vestry Book of Christ Church, Teddington (1871-1887) tells of his resignation from the denomination within a year of Ebury's petition. Indeed, although he had remained the Minister at Teddington, the minutes of a meeting on 21 February 1878 show that Sugden was already a member of the REC.¹²

Significantly, Sugden and Ebury had been well acquainted for some time, for Ebury was instrumental in the opening of Christ Church, Teddington, to which

Sugden was called in 1865 [illustrations pp. xvii & xix]. In any case, Ebury had been greatly involved with the personalities and leaders of the FCE. In addition, both men had been closely involved in the revision of the FCE Prayer Book.¹³

Yet Sugden could not possibly have left the FCE so soon after the meeting of February 1877. Not only had he just been consecrated the previous August, but if he himself had gone forward to be the new leader within two months of such an important denominational meeting, it would have appeared to all as a vote of no confidence in the denomination. It would also have seemed an act of gross disloyalty to Bishop Price, to whom he owed much; and what is clear is that both Sugden and Price were men of conviction and deep personal integrity. (Sugden's career is examined more fully below.)

(ii) The Reverend A.S. Richardson.

Before joining the FCE, Richardson had been a Connexional minister for many years. Indeed, during these negotiations he was actually Minister at the Countess' Church in Malvern. He was, however, the principal correspondent with the REC in America on behalf of the FCE,¹⁴ and was certainly regarded as "having the ear" of the American leaders.¹⁵ But, as with Sugden, it would have been very difficult for Richardson's name to go forward in April 1877. Not only would it have appeared to be openly disloyal to the denomination he had been serving for some time, but as the main correspondent with the American church it would have appeared as a piece of blatant self patronage.

That he regarded himself as suitable "episcopal material" however is undoubted. As his career was to show, he was not without personal ambition, and was subsequently consecrated a Bishop for the REC in 22 June 1879. (Richardson's career is examined more fully below.)

(iii) The Rev. Dr. William Lane, & the "Spilsby Circular".

A third possibility for leadership of the REC in Britain was a former Vicar in the established church, William Lane. Writing from Spilsby in Lincolnshire early in 1877, Lane had produced a declaration of protestant principles based largely on those of the REC in America in 1873. He proposed the formation of a "Reformed Episcopal Church of England and Scotland". This "Circular" was published enthusiastically by The Rock, and it was circulated in support of a

group of 17 aggrieved protestant parishioners in Spilsby. According to The Episcopal Gazette, these people subsequently joined the Wesleyans.¹⁶

However, from the account of the REC Fifth General Council at Philadelphia in May 1877, it appeared that Lane had already applied to Bishop Cheney for consecration. On making further enquiry, the Committee of the REC discovered from the FCE that they had already "peremptorily refused" an application from Lane to join the denomination. The Committee consequently advised that Lane "be neither consecrated...nor received into the ministry of this Church".

Certainly the strength of their reaction to Lane can only have been enhanced by further information from Aycrigg. This was that, on the basis of his support by the seceders from the local parish church, Lane's documents were actually headed with "a mitre crossed with a crozier and a crown". Furthermore, the document styled him "Bishop-designate of the Reformed Episcopal Church" - an astonishing piece of assurance!¹⁷

(iv) The Reverend Thomas Huband Gregg, DD, MD [illustration p. xi]

Gregg was a strange, complex and brilliant man whose life might more justly be the subject of a separate study. Intense public pressure together with a life of constant controversy and gross overwork ultimately took his mind and his physical health. Although he died in middle-age, he left behind a denomination of a dozen or so churches, the early development of the Southend General Hospital, and a reputation as a leader of men.

This is not the place for anything other than the briefest of outlines of his background and career. But it is necessary to know these things in order to understand why he became the candidate for Ebury and the others in April 1877 - certainly to understand his frenetic and troubled career in later years.

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Gregg was born on 1 March 1840 at Ballymahon (Goldsmith's birthplace), Co. Longford, in Ireland. His family were Protestant settlers from Scotland in the 17th. century, and they had long held lands at Oldtown in the County. A distinguished local family, Gregg's father was Rector of Ardagh, and his brother former High Sheriff of the County.

Gregg was educated at Trinity College, Dublin, graduating BA in 1861. He was ordained deacon at Salisbury in 1863, and priest there the following year. His pastoral ministry took him eventually to the Vicarage of East Harborne near Birmingham, then in the diocese of Lichfield.¹⁸ Here he remained from December 1869 until he resigned in the Spring of 1877 - ostensibly over the ritualism of the Establishment and, in particular, the results of the Risdale Appeal in Privy Council.

Gregg's interests were wide-ranging, and his intellectual ability very considerable. Whilst in a curacy at St. Paul's, Wolverhampton, he was Chaplain of the South Staffordshire General Hospital, and during this and subsequent years whilst in other parishes in the Midlands he studied at the Queen's Hospital, Birmingham where it was possible to work part-time through Queen's College for a medical qualification. He was a member of the Midland Medical Society (a "Fellow"), and eventually qualified as a Licentiate in Medicine and Surgery at the Royal College of Surgeons in Edinburgh.¹⁹

Whilst at Harborne, and on the strength of his Edinburgh Licentiate, he completed the requirements for the degrees of MB and MD at Trinity College, Dublin, taking both degrees in the Summer of 1873.²⁰

But Gregg was also an able theologian. From June 1865 to November 1872 he edited and produced the evangelical expository magazine Gilead together with numbers of pamphlets, mainly on anti-ritualist subjects. In November 1872 he withdrew from the editorship on the grounds of "pressure of work", his place being taken by Frederick Harper of Queen's College, Oxford.²¹ Indeed, although Gregg produced no major theological work, he had evidently returned to academic theology, for he graduated DD at the Winter Commencements at TCD in 1876. The exercises for this included a sermon "ad populum" in English, and a sermon "ad clerum" in Latin - both performed before the Regius Professor of Divinity.²²

Gregg was always a very "public" person. His background was that of a powerful landowning family in the Irish protestant ascendancy, and even though he chose to make his career in England rather than Ireland, there was still clearly the expectation of his family and of himself that he would, with his undoubted ability, occupy a position of leadership in whatever he did. This is especially evident in later years when he was continually involved in disputes over theology, local church matters, local public health, and, in fact,

anything in which he wholeheartedly believed. The result was that he was constantly in the local press, and constantly a centre of public attention.

In all honesty it must be said that Gregg was not without a very considerable personal ambition. Many have seen Gregg as little more than an ambitious self-publicist. But to accept this unquestioningly is to see the man out of context - and also to ignore the fact that he was somebody who actually did have something to say, however unpalatable was the message or his way of giving it.

The support for Gregg as bishop for the REC in Britain.

Gregg was an uncompromising protestant, and the undoubtedly successful circulation of Gilead together with the fluent militancy of his pamphlets gave him both a platform for his opinions and a ready audience to hear them.

Startling facts about the confessional in the C. of E., Evangelical-ism....Weighed in the balances and found wanting, Poisoned bread; or why I do not now subscribe to the British and Foreign Bible Society, and a wry and sardonic condemnation of official attitudes to ritualism entitled The Archbishop's two black cats, or a few plain words for plain people about Romanism and ritualism²³ - these are just a few of the works that flowed out from Gregg's fertile mind. But he also produced a spate of small works on essentially practical issues, such as the problems of emigration, health care and temperance. These included New Zealand: its climate; work; wages and cost of living, Drink: what it costs, and the intensely practical guide from a practising physician The Baby; how to wash it; clothe it; and feed it.²⁴

Consequently Gregg was a well known figure to those like Lord Ebury and the Hon. and Rev. E.V. Bligh, who supported very much the same causes, both theological and social.

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It was always said that the reason for Gregg's resignation from a benefice in the Established Church was the outrage caused by the Bennett Judgement, and then the result of the Appeal in the Risdale Case.

In the Bennett Judgement of 1872, the Privy Council had made the momentous decision that "this Court has no jurisdiction or authority to settle matters of faith, or to determine...the doctrine of the Church of England".²⁵ Some four

years later, the Court of Arches had condemned Fr. Risdale for his ritualistic innovations. However, the result of an appeal to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in 1877 was that, although many of the findings of the Court were upheld, the taking of the Eastward position at the Altar for the celebration of Holy Communion was effectively legalised. The reaction of many, including The Rock, was shrill.²⁶

Certainly, in the preface to his pamphlet The Risdale Case and the Bennett Judgement, Gregg claimed that his leaving the Church of England was due to the legal outcome of these cases.²⁷ But in fact, Gregg was making preparation for departure well before the result of the Risdale Appeal became known.

It was in the Autumn of 1876 that Gregg began to appear on the platform at FCE meetings. In fact, at the Midland District Meeting of the FCE on 9 November, he gave "an admirable address on the Free Church of England Movement".²⁸ Further to this, in the denominational magazine for April, it was announced that Gregg had been asked to be minister of the new FCE at Southend".²⁹ But no further positive action was taken by Gregg until the evening service at Harborne on Sunday 13 May 1877. He preached at length on the implications of the Risdale Case, and promised a letter to the congregation which would tell them of the decision he had decided to take.³⁰ The result was his resignation from the Established Church, and the FCE Magazine for June announced: "We hear that the Rev. Dr. Gregg has been accepted by the General Council of the Reformed Episcopal Church, and that he will probably be consecrated a Bishop."³¹

Meanwhile, the April petition from Lord Ebury and others to the REC requested an independent branch of the REC in England with Gregg as Bishop. Yet it was clearly not an official FCE representation. Moreover, it betokened the beginnings of great confusion between the two denominations for many years; for the same magazine column in June spoke of Gregg's secession from the Church of England and his acceptance of the incumbency of a congregation which had left the Establishment. No further detail was given, but this was actually the large congregation which had been started by the Rev. P.X. Eldridge at Southend in Essex - ostensibly a new and important work within the FCE!

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At face value, the process of Gregg's secession, taken stage-by-stage does not seem too unreasonable, even if major decisions by Gregg were obviously made

well before the sermon on the Risdale affair. But other information provides considerable surprises: firstly from the pages of the Episcopal Gazette in 1879, and secondly from the correspondence books of Archbishop Tait at Lambeth.

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In the edition of the Episcopal Gazette for November 1879, some significant information on Gregg was given, that: "Having sought the Episcopate at the hands of the Archbishop of Utrecht for his own purposes, and failed, he had the assurance to apply to Bishop Beckles for recognition, with the same selfish ends..."³² The author is unknown, and in fact gives no further corroborative detail or proof - other than to say that both attempts failed. Yet although the article was unpleasant in tone, there is no reason to doubt the truth of the matter. Indeed, a brief examination of the circumstances of the times support the likelihood of what was written.

(i). On 8 December 1869 the Vatican Council had opened in Rome as the "Twentieth Oecumenical Council". But amongst the complex revision of church discipline and theological thought, it was the definition and pronouncement of the infallibility and universal ordinary jurisdiction of the Pope which caused widespread misgivings amongst many Roman Catholics in Europe.

Those who refused to accept the new dogmas were anathematised.

Even so, the result was the formation of the non-subscribing Old Catholic Churches in Germany, Austria and Switzerland - all of which joined with the earlier Dutch Church of Utrecht which had separated from the rule of Rome in 1724.³³ Part of the interest to so many was the fact that new episcopal churches were being founded. To this end, on 11 August 1873, J.H. Reinkens was consecrated by the Bishop of Deventer at Rotterdam for the church in Germany.³⁴ Later, on 18 September 1876, Reinkens consecrated Professor Eduard Herzog at the old parish church in Rheinfelden for the church in Switzerland.³⁵

There is no corroborative evidence of an application by Gregg to Utrecht for Episcopal orders. But the time when such an application would have been made was indeed in 1875 or 1876, when interest in new episcopal churches was great in English theological circles - and when such a consecration for England would have been seen as a specifically anti-Roman Catholic act. But clearly, at this time there was not enough support for another catholic, and non-Roman, church in England, for Gregg failed in his application.

(ii). The reference to Bishop Beckles is highly significant, for it indicates that Gregg was involving himself in the complex and unpleasant controversies between the evangelical and catholic factions in the Scottish Episcopal Church.

The partial repeal of the harsh penal laws in 1792 marked a change in the official attitude of the state to the Episcopal Church in Scotland. But, it was a church deeply divided and fatally weakened. "A shadow of a shade" was Sir Walter Scott's famous description of the remnant left after the repeals of 1792. In 1688, there had been 14 Bishops, including 2 Archbishops, and some 900 priests to care for the two-thirds of the nation who followed the Episcopal Church. By 1792 there were just 4 Bishops, 51 clergy, and "a handful" of laity. Following the Act of Union of 1707, many English people had moved North. They were usually totally out of sympathy with the Jacobite aims, and consequently were permitted to worship in the tolerated "licensed chapels".³⁶

Thus there were two different forms of Anglicanism within Scotland - each often hostile to the other. And although by the middle of the 19th century much had been done to unite the two factions under the Scottish bishops, a number of the independent "English" churches remained.³⁷ Moreover, they tended to reject both the theology and the ministrations of the Scottish Bishops.

Indeed, by the middle of the 1870s, there were independent congregations at St. Thomas, Edinburgh; St. Vincent, Edinburgh; St. Jude, Glasgow; St. Silas, Glasgow; St. Peter, Montrose; St. James, Aberdeen; St. John, Dundee; the English Chapel in Nairn; and, in addition, a number of private chapels. Gregg evidently saw this situation as an opportunity for himself as a leader in the "English" and protestant cause, for a problem experienced for some time was that of providing episcopal ministrations for these congregations.

On a number of occasions, bishops who were not in official English episcopal positions had officiated in these independent Scottish churches. Bishop Gobat of Jerusalem had conducted a confirmation at St. Jude's, Glasgow in the early 1850s, and this act, together with others, was the cause of an official remonstrance by the Bishop of Argyle in an open letter to the Primus in 1858: he feared "a set of independent chapels...with some colonial bishop (at home disabled) engaged to confirm and consecrate at intervals".³⁸

According to the Reverend Dr. Gavin White, this was done from time to time with the connivance of the Scottish bishops who were thereby enabled to avoid open

controversy with often powerful English immigrants. But the tacit understanding was that the visiting bishops were not to be in any official episcopal positions in England.³⁹

This evidently caused many administrative problems for the churches in question, and in 1877 the "Association of English Episcopalians in Scotland" was formed "to secure the continuance of the services of a Bishop of the Church of England..." In fact, the Constitution of the Association actually offered the opportunity for positions to "bona-fide clergymen with English or Irish orders"; and candidates were asked to contact the Secretary in Edinburgh or "the Right Rev. Bishop Beckles, South Kensington".⁴⁰ Edward Hyndman Beckles had been consecrated as Bishop of Sierra Leone in 1860. In 1869 he had returned to England, and from 1873-1896 he was Vicar of St. Peter's, Bethnal Green.⁴¹ However, as an ex-Colonial bishop, he satisfied both the Association and (tacitly) the Scottish bishops, for he was providing episcopal ministration for the independent churches in Scotland when needed.

The Episcopal Gazette says that Gregg had sought consecration from Beckles, but, in fact, the Association had not been formed until 1877; and in that June Gregg was consecrated in the REC. It is highly likely therefore that Beckles had already been serving in Scotland on an ad-hoc basis; and it is therefore possible to see Gregg as having approached him on the matter of the episcopate some time in 1876 when plans for a permanent episcopal oversight for the "English" churches in Scotland were being discussed.

What Gregg proposed to Beckles is unclear. There would have been no advantage in leaving the security of a freehold in Harborne merely to move, still in priest's orders, to a possibly part-time ministry in Scotland. It is far more likely that he saw an opportunity for consecration as a permanent Suffragan to Beckles in Scotland. The Episcopal Gazette makes it clear that it was consecration that Gregg was seeking; and it is perhaps possible to see corroborative evidence in the fact that, although he was unsuccessful in his application to Beckles, his interest and interference in this strange and troubled Scottish scene, continued until the late 1880s.

Gregg and Scotland

The May 1879 edition of Our Church Record, (the official organ of Bishop Gregg's new denomination after his secession from the REC), announced that

Gregg had introduced a clergyman to the trustees of St. John's, Dundee.⁴² On Wednesday 11 December, Gregg himself preached on the Reformed Church of England at St. John's.⁴³ Subsequently, in the February 1880 edition of Our Church Record, it was announced that it had been unanimously decided by the Incumbent, Wardens, Trustees, Vestry and congregation to make application to join the Reformed Church of England under Bishop Gregg. An ominous note added "...hitherto ...under the jurisdiction of Bishop Beckles".⁴⁴

Certainly for a while, work continued here under the oversight of Gregg. The February 1882 edition of the denominational magazine spoke of good work being done at St. John's - but it also gave details of an outstanding debt of £1400.⁴⁵ Yet the relationship with Gregg was obviously not strong, for after a brief contribution in the March magazine, no more was heard from Dundee.

In fact, the congregations of the independent churches were gradually being assimilated into the Scottish Episcopal Church. Many of the members were Scottish, and the links with England and especially with an ex-Colonial bishop in London must have seemed very remote. How much more remote with a bishop from another denomination who lived even further away in Southend!

In any case, in 1882 the Scottish Episcopal Church changed its Canons so that the feelings of nearly all of the independent congregations could be accommodated.⁴⁶ Thus the Association of English Episcopalians in Scotland lost its *raison d'être*,⁴⁷ and apart from the congregations of St. Silas, Glasgow, and St. Thomas, Edinburgh, to all intents and purposes, the long-standing division amongst the Scottish Anglicans was over.

That Gregg's Scottish adventure began considerably before his consecration in June 1877 is clear; but it also illustrates a powerful ambition which was later to make him over-extend himself with more than he could possibly cope.

The Tait Manuscripts

The letter books of Archbishop Tait of Canterbury provide interesting evidence that, some considerable time before the results of the Risdale Appeal, Gregg was showing more than a passing interest in the recently formed REC in America.

On the 12 October 1876, Gregg wrote from Harborne Vicarage to Archbishop Tait asking the simple question as to whether or not the orders of the bishops of

the REC in America were valid.⁴⁸ It was a somewhat unusual letter for a beneficed priest to have written to the Primate of All England - indeed he gave no real reason for the question posed. In fact it was the sort of letter which no one would write, unless they were asking for a final authoritative following their own, probably very considerable, researches and questionings.

The Archbishop's reply was made by his chaplain, and was breathtakingly untruthful! The note in pencil on the side of the letter reads: "Has had no official intimation of the existence of such a church".

Yet for Tait to claim this was absurd. The vigorous Protestant reaction to ritualism in the American Episcopal Church was at its height in 1873. Cummins' decision to receive the Sacrament at the united communion service in the conference of the Evangelical Alliance that year was the culmination of a long process of protest which had already resulted in the resignation or deposition of a number of distinguished churchmen. A second member of the conference to be censured was none other than the Very Reverend Dr. R. Payne Smith, Dean of Canterbury.⁴⁹ It was, in America, a "cause celebre"; and there is no way in which Tait cannot have been very aware of the controversy which had surrounded his own Dean, and of the schism which had resulted.

Gregg was not satisfied with the reply, and on 25 October he wrote a second time from Harborne.⁵⁰ Carefully he pointed out that the REC was the result of an episcopal resignation from PECUSA. He asked the specific question "are those consecrated by Cummins valid?" Tait was clearly put out by the repeated request for an answer; and a note at the top of the letter says "ack." But there was no answer given. Just a fortnight later, Gregg was a principal speaker at the Midland District Meeting of the FCE, and was making a powerful speech in support of the work of the denomination.⁵¹

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It is fairly evident that Gregg had made up his mind to leave the Established Church at least by the time he had written to Tait on 12 October 1876, and probably months earlier than that.

Again, the evidence seems to indicate that, to this end, he had actively sought the episcopate in Holland, Scotland and finally America; and the last stage in the process was to gain the support of certain leading figures in the the FCE.

Certainly he had the active support of Lord Ebury, and, as the Episcopal Gazette had said rather acidly, he had "got on the blind-side of Mr. Richardson"⁵², who was the official FCE correspondent with the REC. Indeed, a later article in the denominational inset of the REC church magazine at Yeovil in Somerset stated plainly that Richardson had "obtained the testimonials which secured Bishop Gregg's election and consecration".⁵³

Frank Vaughan incorrectly states that Gregg attended the Fifth General Council of the REC where he was duly elected bishop for the REC in Britain.⁵⁴ But, in fact, the sessions of the Council took place in Philadelphia from 9 to 15 May, and it was on Sunday evening 13 May that Gregg preached the sermon at evensong in Harborne which indicated the end of his career in the Established Church. However, during that session of the General Council, firstly it was resolved "That the work of this church be extended to the Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland". Secondly, Gregg was proposed as the bishop by the General Committee in absentia. He obtained 23 clerical votes out of 29, and 20 lay votes out of 27.

It was at that point that a telegram was sent to Gregg to tell him of the decision of the Council. He then set sail from England, arriving at New York on 19 June. On 20 June, at the First Reformed Episcopal Church "corner of Madison Avenue and 55th. Street", New York, he was consecrated by Bishops Fallows, Cheney, and Nicholson together with 8 Presbyters of the REC. The Rev. Dr. Holditch of the Methodist Episcopal Church also laid-on hands. Aycrigg reported that "No vestment except the plain black gown was worn by anyone".⁵⁵

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In fact Gregg's visit to America was brief; for Aycrigg records that "On Saturday, June 23, Bishops Fallows and Gregg started for England".⁵⁶

The English branch of the REC was therefore a reality. But the fact was that, from the very first moment that the decision was made in America and that Gregg was consecrated, there was bitterness and dissension. Almost immediately there was a serious split within the new denomination in England, which was not to be healed for virtually 16 years.

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The FCE and the REC in Britain - the problems of 1877

Many at the Fifth General Council of the REC in 1877 foresaw problems over the election and immediate consecration of Gregg, and they described it as "precipitate".⁵⁷ Certainly the General Council did not appreciate that the signatories of the petition sent, like Lord Ebury and A.S. Richardson, were acting in a private capacity. The official attitude of the FCE had been made quite clear at the Quarterly Meeting on 13 February 1877 when the vote to establish a branch of the REC in Britain was lost. Thus, it would be true to say that the whole situation surrounding Gregg's election was basically flawed.

However, once Gregg was consecrated, then the FCE seems to have been determined to make the best of the situation. After all, not only did the FCE owe the historic episcopate to the American church, but some of its most important members were very much in support of all the REC stood for - as had been obvious at the Quarterly Meeting in February.

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Although no more than a federative union between the FCE and the REC had been thought possible, by the August of 1877 this view seems to have changed. In sending its Presiding Bishop, Samuel Fallows, to England for a personal visit, the REC took the initiative in the matter.

Fallows landed in England on 4 July 1877, and it was announced that, after a visit to the Continent he was to attend the Council Meeting of the FCE with Bishop Gregg "to discuss the terms of union between the Reformed Episcopal Church and the Free Church of England".⁵⁸ However, the meeting was plainly unsatisfactory, for the September Magazine reported that both Fallows and Gregg "took part in the discussion as to the best mode of carrying into effect the Articles of Federative Union, existing between the Free Church of England and the Reformed Episcopal Church".⁵⁹ In other words, there had been no progress beyond the original agreement of 1874.

Fallows sailed back to America on Saturday 18 August,⁶⁰ and whatever people's hopes, the failure of what was a crucial negotiation is not hard to understand.

Firstly, the August 1877 edition of the FCE Magazine published an extract from Bishop Cridge's report to the Fifth General Council in which he spoke of the

two consecrations he had performed for the FCE. This, he said, "cements the union between the two bodies, (and) it gives them influence with the conservative element, which has a force in England unknown perhaps elsewhere".⁶¹ Even so, the REC was obviously aware of the need to "offer the olive branch", and had sent none other than its Presiding Bishop on a visit.

For its part, the Free Church of England was equally keen to make the best of the visit by their distinguished guest. To start with, Gregg was clearly accepted without question as the official delegate from the REC; and this was despite the fact that until very recently he had associated himself so publicly with the older denomination. But it was not only Gregg who was perceived by many to have made a "volte face". In his Address to the Annual Convocation of the FCE on Tuesday 26 June 1877 (some seven weeks earlier), Bishop Price had had to announce that the new FCE church at Southend had left the denomination: "the Committee....have chosen the Rev. Dr. Gregg, as their minister, and have decided to adopt the name of the 'Reformed Episcopal Church'".⁶²

Further, at the Annual Convocation of the FCE on 26 June, a sub-committee, which had met to consider the intended extension of the REC to Britain, presented its findings. Whilst accepting the right of the American denomination to take such a step, the resolution "nevertheless deeply deplores even an appearance of division and rivalry". The sub-committee further proposed a joint delegation from both bodies "to meet and consider the subject".⁶³ But it was too late, for the REC had already consecrated Gregg six days earlier.

Yet another blow to the self esteem of the FCE was accidentally provided at this time by the Manchester Guardian. A leading article on 4 July quoted an article in the New York Herald on the consecration of Gregg, and made the mistake of assuming that it would now give the FCE an episcopal oversight which it had not formerly had! This mistake was swiftly corrected by the secretary of the denomination in a letter dated 7 July.⁶⁴

As if the news of both Gregg and the new cause at Southend were not bad enough, such a mistake in a national newspaper, although accidental, can only have made relationships even more difficult between the denominations that Summer. But the Autumn was to bring even more difficulties.

Problems for the FCE and the infant REC, Autumn 1877-1879

The severity of the problems faced at this time by both the FCE and the infant REC are nowhere even hinted at by either Vaughan or Annie Darling Price. Even the basic question as to where the actual membership of the new denomination came from was only briefly touched-on by the Rev. G. Hugh Jones (a distinguished FCE minister) in his article in Hastings' Encyclopaedia: "the latter [REC] grew out of the former [FCE], withdrawals having quietly taken place from the Free Church of England..."⁶⁵

Indeed, examination shows that the fortunes of both the FCE and the infant REC were closely bound up. Certainly, as the result of the 1874 federative agreement, a number of the clergy felt a duality of loyalty. When later this caused resentment with some of the more conservative members of the FCE, unfortunate letters to the press were written (doubtless, unwise words were said) and the bad feelings toppled over into rivalry.

A major problem for the REC occurred when Gregg realised that, as a "missionary bishop", firstly, he was essentially a man "under authority", and secondly, that authority was the presiding bishop of the REC - in America. Moreover, as soon became clear to the American church leaders, it was an authority with whose style Gregg was not happy.

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But to those who were leading the new REC in England, it became clear very quickly that Gregg's ideas were markedly different from those of the parent church in the USA. This in itself is not significant until it is realised that Gregg was by nature a fighter of causes who was never prepared to let pragmatism get in his way.

A most revealing letter from Gregg's successor at Harborne, dated 28 October 1878, makes it clear that even there, there had been disunity and strife:⁶⁶

"You have rightly been informed that 'the late Bishop of Lichfield was heartily glad to get him out of his diocese', for those were the very expressions the late Bishop used to me when on a visit to my house. I entirely refrain from mentioning his name in the parish, lest I should stir up strife and heart-burning among my (now happily) united congregation.

When taken together with other information from Gregg's career, the letter indicates one who seemed to be naturally the centre of constant controversy. Little wonder that Benjamin Aycrigg commented how, shortly after his return to England, Gregg: "appeared to us to indicate a change of base."

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Aycrigg provided some details of the following long-lasting dispute in the specially printed confidential section to his Memoirs. More detail was provided later in 1879 by the Episcopal Gazette, whose writing was frequently unpleasant - but of great use, especially as so few handwritten sources remain. This was the result of the growing bad feeling between Gregg and Richardson which was to degenerate into little more than personal abuse on both sides!

On 13 September 1877 Gregg wrote a letter marked "Private" to the Secretary of the General Council in America, the Reverend Marshall B. Smith. Its tone was distinctly manipulative, and he wrote to say that he was under attack from many whom he had thought to be friends. As he understood it, part of the problem was that his chief consecrator, Samuel Fallows, was formerly a minister of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, and, in fact, his consecration to the episcopate had been "per saltum". Gregg knew full well that such a consecration was perfectly valid and acceptable. Nevertheless he felt keenly about it, and his claim was always to be that he was fully and purely in the episcopal line of Canterbury.

His request was simply that in all documentation, the names of the other bishops present, Cheney and Nicholson, should appear prominently in order so that it should not appear that he was consecrated by Fallows alone. He also reminded Smith that the words of consecration were pronounced by each of the three bishops in turn.⁶⁷ Yet his facts were incorrect, for the words of consecration had been pronounced by Fallows alone. Moreover, it was interpreted by Fallows himself as being a request to "falsify the records".⁶⁸

Further correspondence was sent by Gregg to America during the next weeks. Letters of 23 October and 6 November in particular disturbed both Smith and Aycrigg, for, as Aycrigg subsequently said "He assumed such new positions that we thought it improper to discuss them in private letters".⁶⁹ Consequently, Smith and Aycrigg wrote a joint letter on 26 November 1877 in which they laid their fears frankly before Gregg that: "there are unexpected and important differences of opinion between you and us". They proposed that the main points

made by him be brought up before the Standing Committee "as an unofficial preliminary to bringing them officially before the General Council for its official decision".⁷⁰

Gregg had raised five points which he saw as necessary "to avoid the name of 'Yankee Church' in 'conservative England'":

- (i) A Prayer Book different from that of the REC in Canada.
- (ii) A special lectionary for the United Kingdom.
- (iii) Different Articles of Religion from other REC jurisdictions.
- (iv) The ability to receive presbyters from other -denominations without applying to the Presiding Bishop.
- (v) The ability to receive new parishes into "representation in the General Council" rather than having to apply to the the General Standing Committee as usual.

Gregg was being very difficult. He wanted virtually complete independence, with the British REC as a separate province - and yet he had been consecrated as "Missionary Bishop", responsible to the Presiding Bishop. His response to the letter of suggestion made by Smith and Aycrigg made no reply to the points put whatsoever: he merely accused them of a breach of confidence because they had revealed extracts from his letters in trying to sum up his points. Yet his reply was illogical; for it was impossible for them to make any response to such important points without consulting the denominational authorities.⁷¹

Exactly how these strained relationships were patched up between Gregg and the leaders of the REC is not clear. However, a formal address was sent by the clergy and laity of the REC in the UK which, more-or-less, summed up the matters which Gregg had brought up the Autumn before. As a result, in May 1878, the Sixth General Council of the REC agreed that:

"the Reformed Episcopal Congregations in the 'United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland' are hereby authorised to form a GENERAL SYNOD there....empowered to frame and revise the Book of Common Prayer..." Furthermore, three Commissioners were appointed to confer with three other Commissioners from the new General Synod "to prepare...to secure to the Congregations in each country their own more immediate self-government."⁷²

The resolution was immediately telegraphed to Gregg in Southend, and he replied with a letter to the Reverend Marshall B. Smith, dated 8 June 1878, to thank

them. But, in fact, any time of peace which this may seem to have bought the authorities of the American church was illusory rather than real! As Aycrigg shows in his Memoirs, the matters of the previous November had rankled with Gregg, and there were many recriminations as their communication of the year before was shown to the newly appointed church authorities in England.⁷³ A wiser man would have known when to be tactfully silent. Gregg did not know.

But this is to look too far ahead for the moment. The letter sent by Gregg to prepare the General Council for their work towards the Resolution was sent at the end of 1877 or the beginning of 1878. The signatures of those who were now declared to be clergy of the REC showed that, sometime that Autumn, there had been a major "change" in the relationship between the REC and the FCE.⁷⁴ The signatories were: Bishops Gregg and Sugden; the Reverends A.S. Richardson, Philip Norton, Philip X. Eldridge, W. Francis E. Ashe, Gordon J.H. Llewellyn, T. Henry Leeson, William Hawes Simms, and some twenty laity. Yet Sugden, Richardson, Norton, Eldridge, Llewellyn and Simms had all been FCE clergy.

Certainly, it was clear that there had been an expansion of Gregg's clergy numbers at the time of the opening of the new building for Trinity Church, Southend on 23 April 1878. Considering the fact that this work had been started by the FCE, it was unlikely that there would have been any official representation from the older denomination. But in the account of the opening ceremonies in the Southend Standard for 26 April 1878, it was noted that Bishop Sugden actually preached at the opening service. Moreover, amongst the other clergy present were Richardson, Eldridge, Norton, Llewellyn and Ashe.⁷⁵

It must have been at the turn of the new year therefore that the split had occurred, and although there is no documentary proof, it had almost certainly been brought on by the events surrounding the opening of the new FCE church at Littlehampton in 1877. It was, moreover, a crisis which was to make a permanent change in the natures of both denominations - and a great deal of heart-searching for the remaining clergy and lay officers of the FCE. For by the time of the Annual Convocation on 25 June 1878, not one of those former FCE clergy who had signed the letter as from the British branch of the REC was present.⁷⁶

St. Saviour's. Littlehampton, September 1877

In the mid-1870s, the Vicar of Littlehampton introduced what were condemned by some of his parishioners as "Popish practices". It was reported that the

meeting of the Parish Council in 1875 was "devoted to tearing the man to shreds",⁷⁷ and by the Summer of 1876, affairs had become the source of comment in The Rock.⁷⁸ By 29 September, it was reported that Free Church of England services had been started in the Assembly Room of the Norfolk Hotel by the Rev. Philip Norton of Cardiff, who was commuting between the two towns.⁷⁹

In the Littlehampton News, for 10 March 1877, Norton told how: "A General Committee was formed, a Clergyman appointed (Norton himself), an excellent site secured...and about £700 promised towards building a church". However, there were difficulties - amongst them, a new and specifically "moderate" daughter church set up in the town by the diocese of Chichester. A number who had formerly attended St. Saviour's consequently moved to the new Anglican church (probably St. John's).⁸⁰ Nevertheless the work of the FCE community continued, and despite financial problems,⁸¹ the foundation stone for the new FCE church was laid on Wednesday 29 August 1877 on the site in the New Road.

The service itself was conducted by Bishops Sugden and Gregg. Also present with Philip Norton were J.B. Figgis and Hubert Bower, both from Brighton. But, looking at the proceedings now, it is clear that in the weeks or days before the ceremony, an important change had taken place for both the church community and Norton, its new minister.

During the service, Philip Norton gave a brief talk on the history of the movement in Littlehampton. In the FCE Magazine for October 1877, he was quoted as saying "I came here to form a church under Free Church principles". At the foot of the page, the editor commented ' "Free Church of England principles," the Reverend Gentleman should have said; for he certainly had not received authority from the Council, to form a church at Littlehampton on any other principles...."⁸² But, perhaps tactfully, what the FCE Magazine did not report later, and what the Littlehampton News did report at the time, was the full text of the last part of that sentence..."having obtained an excellent site and a large sum of money for such a Reformed Episcopal Church."

This vital clue of the two extra words was immediately picked up by the ageing, but still militant Thomas Elisha Thoresby of Spa Fields Chapel; and he immediately wrote a strong (and an exceedingly tactless) letter to The Rock.⁸³ As this paper was published weekly rather than monthly, Thoresby's bitterness over a very distinct change of denominational loyalty was broadcast to the country two full weeks before the account of the service in the FCE Magazine.

His letter actually said "it is Mr. Norton's intention to leave the Free Church of England and to join this Reformed Episcopal Church, if, indeed, he has not already done so." He also pointed out that when Norton left that church, a new minister was likely to be appointed by the Bishop of the REC rather than the FCE which had nurtured that movement from the beginning.

But more importantly, as one who was clearly privy to the political pressures of those weeks and months, he pointed the finger of blame squarely at Gregg: "I do not wish to insinuate that the 'Yankee' bishop is responsible for these proceedings, but the whole thing looks, as the Americans say, 'tarnation cute'." According to Thoresby, the reason for this was: "Just to secure 'orders equal to the Archbishop of Canterbury'." Here, it is highly likely that he was quoting Gregg himself, and taken in combination with that man's letter to Smith and Aycrigg of 13 September 1877, it shows that the matter of "purity" of succession had assumed overwhelming importance to Gregg. Feelings within the FCE were running high, and evidently the division shown in the Midlands District Meeting the previous February was wider than ever.

But in addition, Thoresby followed his letter to The Rock of 14 September with another on 21 September.⁸⁴ Here, his information must have been, for many, very startling: "It ought to be known that five or six of the ministers of the Free Church of England have intimated their intention of leaving their present position and going over to the Reformed Episcopal Church...in this country." Once again, he gave reasons which fitted perfectly with what Gregg himself seems to have felt: "The reason...is that our 'orders' are not valid, not being equal to the Archbishop of Canterbury's."

Thoresby's most militant tone was dangerous, for, as matters stood, as an "elder statesman" of the FCE, he was openly giving credence to division:

"These gentlemen who want this fetish episcopacy have a perfect right to go over to the Reformed Episcopal Church of America, but they have no right to take the churches opened in the Free Church of England with them. Let...each take its own course, one for Scriptural and Early Church episcopacy, and the other for episcopal fetishism, and the difficulty will be gone".

The problem for the leaders of the older denomination was very real, for a considerable number of their clergy and people obviously "leant towards" the REC in that it represented the traditional Established Church (reformed) even more than the FCE, and in turn, the Connexion before that. If therefore the

relationship forged with America in 1874 could somehow be preserved, then it might be possible to keep the denomination itself from serious division.

In the same issue of The Rock in which Thoresby had written his second letter, Philip Norton was stung into replying to Thoresby's first letter.⁸⁵ His words for Thoresby were bitter. However, he continued by giving a most valuable analysis of the way in which the thinking of the denomination had developed and divided in recent years:

"The truth is, and it must be made public, the Free Church of England has been, and is, composed of two divergent elements. On the one hand there is the "Church" element (of which for seven years I have been a member), whose object has been to makean Episcopal Church, "free" from Sacerdotalism. On the other hand, there is the Dissenting element, headed by Mr. Thoresby, that is bitterly opposed to this aim".

Norton had highlighted the problems at the heart of division in the FCE. Moreover, towards the end of his long letter, he gave further valuable information: "It is not true that I intend to leave the Free Church of England, although, like Bishop Sugden, I wish to join the Reformed Episcopal Church". Yet Norton's explanation was less convincing; for to show how a joint loyalty was perfectly feasible, he had earlier pointed out that both Bishop Sugden and Mr. T.L. Wilson, treasurer of the FCE had "been nominated by Bishop Gregg on his Standing Committee". Thus, he pointed out, both denominations together might have "presented lately at Littlehampton a united front to the foe." But his words simply do not ring true. Thoresby, utterly dedicated to what he saw as the FCE, had reacted to the words that Norton had actually used; and in those words Norton indicated to all intents and purposes that he and St. Saviour's had taken an important step away from the older denomination.

In the light of the clearly widening gap between leading members of the FCE, it is hardly surprising that a split was inevitable - however much the editor of the denominational magazine and others wished to keep a precarious unity.

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The damage however was done. Evidently Philip Norton had joined the REC (even if he had not yet left the FCE) by the end of August 1877. The other clergy subsequently joined the REC some time between the writing of Thoresby's second letter to The Rock (14 September 1877) and the writing of the Memorandum which went to the General Council in America, probably at the end of the year. For in that communication, Sugden and the others signed as clergy of the REC.

The only positive evidence for a specific date appears in an article on the REC in The Record for 17 May 1878. The writer says: "On 15 November, 1877, the first admission and reception of five Presbyters took place." No further information is given;⁸⁶ but the absence of the men at the Convocation in June 1878, together with Price's evident sadness in his address, makes it clear that they had indeed left the FCE. Certainly, with regard to John Sugden, at a meeting of the Church Officers of Christ Church, Teddington on 21 February 1878, the minutes record that "Bishop Sugden...read to the Committee his reason for resigning his position in the 'Free Church of England' & uniting himself with the 'Reformed Episcopal Church'..."⁸⁷ Thus it was probably sometime after the turn of the new year that, the decisions being made, the division occurred.

Who, ultimately, was responsible?

The reason for division was probably a mixture of both personality differences and the way in which the thinking of the denomination had developed. Certainly Gregg believed passionately in a conventional "English" protestant episcopal church whose Orders and Episcopal Succession were unimpeachable. At the other extreme, Thoresby and others had a lifetime behind them of loyalty to a strong Calvinist theology, and to a denomination which resisted any quasi-magical interpretation of the Apostolic Succession within episcopacy.

Probably Price stood between the two extremes. His experience as a bishop over the years must have taught him the value of pragmatism - hence he allowed himself to be consecrated by Cridge in 1876. Nevertheless, he came from a Welsh Calvinistic Methodist background, and there is no doubt that, in the event of a division over the concept of orders and episcopacy, he would side with the older and more protestant tradition.

Sugden also came from non-conformity, and like Fallows, he had been consecrated "per saltum". Thus, on the one hand he had a loyalty to the American church; yet on the other he also had a loyalty to the conservative protestant tradition. But whilst he will have been uneasy about Gregg's interpretation of episcopacy, it is likely that the extreme reaction of Thoresby (and maybe Price) actually forced Sugden to make his decision.

Whilst it was politically and practically desirable for Gregg to have him on his side as a bishop, Sugden's background and "per saltum" consecration did not bode well for any future working relationship. Gregg saw himself very much in

the style of the traditional "monarchial" bishop. Further, he and Sugden were actually more different than had been Sugden and Thoresby. So within the new "English" REC there was a basic and an important flaw from the earliest days.

St. Saviour's, Littlehampton - conclusion

The new church was handsomely built in brick and knapped flint. ⁸⁸ But it did not serve the REC for long, for continual debt dogged the congregation. It eventually failed some time around 1889. After several years in secular use, it was bought by the Wesleyan Methodists in 1898; and up until 1974, it was still being used as a Methodist Church. ⁸⁹

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Spring & early Summer 1878:

Establishment reaction to the new REC in Britain

Early in 1878, an article in the Manchester Guardian regretted the giving of the ancient episcopal succession to Nonconformists: "The worst of this from an Anglican point of view, is, that these Free Churchmen got hold of an American bishop from whom they derive unquestionable orders".⁹⁰ But so seriously was the matter taken by the Established Church that, as reported: "it was one of the subjects which engaged the attention of their lordships in Convocation on Monday (14 February) when they sat all day with closed doors".

The REC in Britain was later the subject of discussion in the Upper House on 14 May 1878, and such was public interest, that within a very short time their debate was being published by such journals as The Record and The Guardian.

At this stage, it is significant that it was Gregg and the REC who received most of the adverse attention of the Bishops and the press. His style and theology were virtually indistinguishable from that of the Evangelical wing of the Church of England, and for this reason he was perceived as being a threat by the Convocation. On the other hand, the FCE was perceived as being heavily bound into Calvinistic and Connexional roots which were very different from the Establishment. In Vaughan's Memories and Reflections, he examined these times, and he remarked that the FCE "never seems to have attracted the same open hostility as was later reserved for the Reformed Episcopal Church..." He pointed out how, "From the Anglican point of view...it was generally regarded as merely another dissenting body, merely masquerading as Churchmen..."⁹¹

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For his part in the debate in the Upper House of Convocation, Archbishop Tait was clearly trying to play down the problems caused by the new REC. He started by saying: "It is not unnatural that we should be a little startled by the first marked instance of a Dissenting body claiming Episcopal succession..." He later assured the assembled bishops "I do not feel any great alarm about this invasion, and I should be very sorry if we let it for a moment be supposed that we had any alarm about it." Yet, although he was clearly trying to minimise the consternation felt by many, his words demonstrated that there were indeed both confusion and alarm.

The charge against Gregg (somewhat unfairly) was that he had represented himself to the average churchpeople, and particularly to those of Littlehampton (diocese of Chichester) and Southend (diocese of St. Albans), as a bishop of the Established Church. Tait commented "This sort of misrepresentation will not hold water..."⁹² The contributions of other bishops varied according to the experiences they had undergone in their dioceses, and also according to their own personal theological standpoints. But their worries were real.

The Bishop of Llandaff was the elderly Alfred Ollivant - a great builder of churches. His experience had taught him that, very often, the growth of Non-conformity was due to the failings of the Established Church. In his charge to the diocese, of 1866, he had said: "generally speaking, the people are Dissenters, not so much on the score of principle, or deliberate conviction, as from the neccessity of circumstances, which have prevented them from being one fold under one shepherd."⁹³

In his diocese, largely due to the militant ritualism of Fr. Griffith Arthur Jones at St. Mary's, Bute Street, Cardiff, the flourishing FCE had been built in Loudoun Square. No fewer than three other FCE communities were to grow out of this church in the Cardiff area.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, Ollivant's attitude was one of an unbiassed realism: "The report refers to the excesses which certain of the clergy have indulged in with regard to ritualism as being one of the causes of this movement. I confess I concur in that observation."⁹⁵

In the diocese of St. Albans, because of the ritualism at the ancient parish church of Prittlewell, Southend, the new REC community had grown vigorously. Moreover, Gregg was preparing numbers of candidates to be confirmed at Trinity Church on 6 May 1878. Because of its theological and liturgical similarities to the Evangelical wing of the Church of England, the new movement was proving both confusing and attractive to many, and the Bishop of St. Albans was forced to issue a public warning to the people of Southend:⁹⁶

"We...do hereby declare...that the said Bishop Gregg, whether canonically consecrated or not, has no authority or commission from us to administer that rite...and we do warn you not to bring your children to such Confirmation."

But his concern was such that, in the Convocation he said that he "could not describe the mischief that Bishop Gregg is doing in Southend."⁹⁷

The Bishop of Chichester was troubled in exactly the same way by the new cause of St. Saviour's, Littlehampton. Again, in April 1878, following the official opening of the new church, it was announced that a confirmation was shortly to be held there by Bishop Gregg. Like the Bishop of St. Albans, Chichester was also forced to publish a warning to the people of Littlehampton.⁹⁸

In fact, at this time, the problems over confirmations seem only to have occurred in the dioceses of Chichester and St. Albans; but the "nervousness" of other bishops was clear in their reported comments. The Bishop of St. Asaph agreed with the Bishop of Peterborough that "the real want was that they should do away with excesses in ritualism". The Bishop of Lincoln declared that "the heresy is assuming large proportions".⁹⁹ A further problem was identified by the Bishop of Hereford who, on 14 May, pointed out the problems that were bound to occur as the result of clergy who had been ordained by Gregg to a bona-fide ministry within the new denomination. This had already happened when an incumbent in his diocese had wished to engage a man ordained by Gregg. As The Guardian pointed out, whilst it was clear that they could not legally be presented to any benefice, yet there would always be the problem as to whether or not they could subsequently be ordained within the Established Church. The writer asked, "Will any Bishop take on himself to pronounce them to be canonically laymen merely?"¹⁰⁰

In fact, the presence of clergy ordained by Gregg who subsequently wished to minister in the Established Church became a source of continual trouble in the following years. A number of them were honourable men who had great abilities, but the difficulties for them, and for the Established Church itself, were to be very considerable. Conversely, there were other and unexpected problems to be faced by the Church of England, where good and canonically ordained Anglicans wished to minister within the REC for various reasons.

Perhaps the most curious example was provided by Bishop E.H. Beckles himself who had, whilst being Vicar of his East London parish, also been functioning as a bishop for the "Association of English Episcopalians in Scotland" (see above). Clearly he was both unwell and in financial difficulty, for a letter from him to Archbishop Tait, marked "Private" and dated 20 August 1878, asks the Archbishop if he can find him another position within the Church of England. He explains that he wishes to retire from his "office in Scotland", but that with a large family, he simply has not the means. It is curious to note that the roles between himself and Gregg have now been reversed, for,

perhaps as some form of inducement to Tait, he says that he has been asked to be "a parson in the Reformed Episcopal Church". The comment by Tait's Chaplain on the letter was "Arbp. to write", but there is no further correspondence.¹⁰¹

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Although the reaction of the Established Church and especially the members of the House of Bishops was, on the whole, most uneasy, not everybody shared the same views. "An Evangelical Rector" wrote to The Record, on 27 May 1878: "The commotion it has caused in the Upper House of Convocation is amusing, and at the same time satisfactory". The writer also pointed out that the religious press were markedly divided in their opinions of the new movement. "The exceedingly bitter remarks of the Guardianpresent such a striking contrast to the Christian tone adopted by the Record...."¹⁰²

Nevertheless, despite the fact that a number of the bishops recognised quite clearly that a blatant and openly ritualistic approach to worship was the cause of many of the problems, yet, as the Bishop of Peterborough pointed out, legislation (the Public Worship Regulation Act) was of little positive use.¹⁰³ Again, the principal complicating factor was bound to be that, although the "canonical" nature of REC ordination was denied by the Bishop of Winchester, yet as he also remarked, "We cannot deny that there is episcopal ordination".¹⁰⁴ Accordingly, it was decided by the Upper House at the close of that session on Tuesday 14 May 1878, that the matter be referred to a special committee.

It was later decided that further discussions should take place when all the Anglican bishops were assembled that July for the 1878 Lambeth Conference. The Guardian felt this to be particularly appropriate as the assembly would then contain the American bishops who had had the experience of dealing with the Reformed Episcopal Church from the very beginning....and had also had to deal with some of the consequences of a parallel episcopal jurisdiction.¹⁰⁵

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Autumn 1878: division within the new English REC

There is no doubt that the worry expressed by the Bishops in the Convocation meetings of February and May together with the public letters issued by the Bishops of Chichester and St. Albans gave great encouragement to Gregg. He was producing reactions in high places, and with his new churches and services of Confirmation, he was issuing a challenge to the Established Church. But the encouragement that he felt actually lead him into a serious miscalculation.

The first General Synod of the new English REC met on 19 June 1878, and "affectionate greetings" were sent to the FCE (no information on the Synod itself is available). The FCE Convocation was held just six days later on 25 June, and together with the greetings, a letter from Gregg proposed that a joint Committee be formed from both churches. It was hoped that, as the REC Constitution and Canons were then being revised, it might be possible to include "a clause...for those churches now under the (FCE) Poll Deed".

Certainly many viewed this with suspicion, for they saw an attempt by Gregg to make real what the Manchester Guardian had said in error just the previous June. But what caused the greatest concern was the fact that he signed the letter "T. Huband Gregg, Bishop Primate of the REC in the United Kingdom".¹⁰⁶ The title was foolish, for he and Sugden were the only two REC bishops in the UK. But more than that, this was a serious political error, for it alienated the FCE to the extent that, at a meeting of the Council on 3 September, any further moves towards union with Gregg were rejected because the new REC was too "unsettled...as regards its constitution and its organization".¹⁰⁷

There was a further important development for the new REC at a meeting of the General Synod on 17 September 1878 when the matters of a new Prayer Book and the changing of the English Constitution and Canons were discussed. But even at this stage, the concern of the American authorities was such that they sent across to the meeting Mr. H.B. Turner, one of the Commissioners specially appointed by the General Council to look into the proposed changes in the UK. In fact, his observation was that the changes did not conform to the ruling of the General Council, and he advised alteration.¹⁰⁸ Vaughan says frankly that "a difference of opinion arose between the Bishop and the delegate".¹⁰⁹

Annie Darling Price further says that the Declaration of Principles had been "tampered with", with one section being taken out and another altered. The

important Second Article, "This Church recognizes and adheres to Episcopacy, not as of Divine right, but as a very ancient and desirable form of Church polity", had been replaced with the words "A recognition of and acquiescence in Episcopacy as a very ancient and desirable form of Church polity". Considering the continual insistence of the FCE and the REC in America that the concept of the Apostolic Succession was a "dangerous fable", such a change by Gregg was most unwise, for it seemed to strike at the roots of the reform movement.

Vaughan also speaks of a disagreement over proposed changes in the new Prayer Book,¹¹⁰ and Aycrigg notes the particular problem of the fourth rubric before Morning Prayer:

"And forasmuch as...doubts may arise in the use and practice of the same ...the parties...shall always resort to the General Standing Committee for the United Kingdom, or to the Bishop having jurisdiction, for decision. And if the Bishop be in doubt, then he shall send for the resolution thereof to the Primate, whose decision shall be final".

As Aycrigg commented, this gave Gregg "an arbitrary power that is unknown in the REC; as it is unknown in the 'Church of England as by law established'".¹¹¹ Furthermore, Gregg's assumption of the title "Primate" caused great offence in America, and Aycrigg later stated bitterly:¹¹²

"he claims the title of 'Primate' for life, whose 'decision shall be final' on all questions of 'Doctrine, Discipline, and Worship', and thus, a superiority over the actual Primate of all England, who has not this Papal power...although he is a Peer of the Realm, ranking in honor next to the Blood Royal".

Perhaps most astonishing of all was Gregg's reaction when Turner had raised his objections on behalf of the General Council; for, explaining that he felt unwell, Gregg left the chamber. Those who remained urged Turner to accept the Constitution as it stood, stating that later alteration could be made as the General Council saw neccessary. Yet the fact was that Turner's visit had been a waste of time. Gregg had made far reaching changes that were unacceptable to the American authorities to both the Constitution and the Prayer Book. When challenged, he had left the discussions - and clearly he would not be bound by any agreements made without him.

Even so, Gregg must have felt secure enough to challenge the authority of the General Council. Certainly he had Sugden as a bishop, together with his church at Teddington. He also had some nine other clergy, with congregations in Southend; Prittlewell; Littlehampton; Yeovil; Spalding; Malvern; Goldenhill; Ledbury and Swindon. There was also new work at Tue Brook in Liverpool and

Hemel Hempstead. As the Bishop of Lincoln had agreed with St. Albans at the Convocation on 14 May 1878, "the heresy is assuming large proportions".¹¹³ Further, the Nonconformist had said on 22 May: "The Bishops are now confronted with a movement that they cannot control and that cannot be put down by episcopal denunciation".¹¹⁴

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As the result of what was a clear impasse, some time towards the middle of October, Gregg wrote to Presiding Bishop Samuel Fallows in America requesting letters dimissory in order that he might simply continue on his own. Astonishingly he stated that if the letters were not received within thirty days, he would act as if they had been received.¹¹⁵ But it is quite clear that Gregg was determined to take his own course of action whatever Fallows said. For, inexcusably, and without any permission from America, on Tuesday 5 November 1878, at 8 p.m., in Trinity Church, Southend, Gregg single-handedly consecrated the Reverend Nicholas Roundell Toke as a Bishop for the United Kingdom. He had not even waited for the thirty day expiry period that he had given the church authorities in America.¹¹⁶

Yet Gregg paid a heavy price for his actions. Not only had he prejudiced any future relationship with the REC in America;¹¹⁷ but that Autumn's events were to culminate in a disastrous division within the new English denomination.

The new bishop

Like Gregg, Toke was from a distinguished clerical family. The second son of the Rev. Nicholas Toke JP, of Godington Park, Kent, his roots were also in Ireland, for he was the grandson of the Rt. Rev. John Leslie, Bishop of Kilmore. Having taken his degree at Cambridge, he eventually became Vicar of Knossington in Leicestershire;¹¹⁸ and it was from here that he resigned over growing ritualism in the Establishment.

But such a serious step as the subsequent consecration of Toke cannot have been taken by Gregg without months of preparation. The Southend press described his Consecration as "impressive throughout"; moreover the "style" of the event was very Anglican, and in fact, a number of Anglican clergy took part in proceedings.¹¹⁹ Yet nothing had been mentioned when the General Synod met with Turner in mid September.

Interestingly, Vaughan does not mention Toke at all. But what he does say in his Memories is that Gregg had mapped out the whole country into dioceses, "each bearing the ancient name culled from the history of the British Church". Gregg himself had taken the title of "Verulam" (St. Albans), and Sugden was "Bishop of Selsea" in the South and the West.¹²⁰ Thus, although no title was given to Toke at that time, it is possible to see his consecration as the next stage in a long-laid and country-wide plan for the new REC. Yet to those who came from non-conformity, such ambitions must have seemed uncomfortably close to the pattern of the Established Church - especially with Gregg as "Primate".

In fact, the events surrounding the Consecration caused a complete division within the REC in England. In the December FCE Magazine, the editor noted that Gregg seemed "left almost alone by the withdrawal of his coadjutors". Toke actually worked with Gregg for a couple of years, but certainly Sugden resigned his position with Gregg, and other clergy and important laity went with him. In a letter to the Daily News¹²¹ Sugden explained that, at the consecration:

"Bishop Gregg was the only one (bishop) present. Save one minister, and one esteemed layman, an officer of the Reformed Episcopal Church at Southend, I am not aware that any members of the Synod were present. I may add, that Bishop Gregg has formally applied for his dismissal from the Reformed Episcopal Church, with the view of forming a new English sect with the same name, and chiefly under his own absolute sway."

So, Sugden, Richardson, Norton, Bower, H. Townley Sugden, Eldridge, Ashe, Llewellyn, Leeson and Simms (together with at least eight churches) had all left Gregg.¹²² For those who knew what Gregg's plans had cost, the title "Primate" must have had a very hollow ring.

The increasing isolation of Bishop Gregg.

But the fact was that, towards the latter part of 1878, Gregg was becoming more and more isolated from the whole of the episcopal Protestant community. Certainly, having been largely responsible for serious schism in the FCE there was no trust for him there; moreover, his communication to the Convocation signed as "Primate" had only strengthened suspicions.

Again, he was openly aggressive towards the Established Church he had left. During November 1878, he wrote two militant open letters to the Bishop of St. Albans, largely on the matter of the disputed validity of the consecrations performed by Bishop Cummins after his resignation from PECUSA.¹²³ But, in truth, Gregg's aggression had little to do with the bishop's reply or

continuing ritualism in the land. He was taking on St. Albans "qua" Establishment: and many content to take a less militant line must have felt very uncomfortable.

In his second letter, dated 19 November 1878, not only did Gregg remind the Bishop that: "... the Church of Rome considers ...that all Anglican Prelates are at best 'most respectable laymen...'", but he then allowed his discretion to ebb even further. He continued: "We have now our own Canons and our own Revised Book of Common Prayer, and as Anglican Bishops, we mean to provide an ecclesiastical home for Church people who have been driven from their churches by priestcraft or neglect".¹²⁴ Not only was this a threat, but the claim to be an Anglican bishop was as unwise as it was inaccurate, and can have served only to add fuel to the opposition of the Church of England.

So with this as an indicator of the way in which relationships surrounding Gregg could be soured, it was hardly surprising that a strong reaction from the remaining members of the REC was soon forthcoming after the consecration of Toke on 5 November 1878. On 9 November, the Reverend A.S. Richardson wrote to the Rock as Secretary to the General Synod of the REC, and announced: "Sir, It is right you should know officially that Bishop Gregg has severed his connection with the Reformed Episcopal Church, deeming it wiser, for reasons of his own, to form a separate sect". The claim to the title of "Primate" had rankled, for Richardson continued: "He has therefore no authority to use our name, nor to advertise himself as 'Primate' - a term introduced at his instigation..."¹²⁵

Official confirmation of Gregg's break with the denomination was quick to follow from the authorities in America.

On 6 December 1878, Richardson passed on to the Southend Standard a letter headed: "Office of the United States Attorney, New York, 21 November 1878".¹²⁶ It was addressed to Bishop John Sugden from Stewart L. Woodford, Secretary of the American Commissioners of the REC, and it informed both Sugden and Richardson that the Executive Committee of the REC had advised the Presiding Bishop to withhold Gregg's requested letter dimissory for the present. Woodford continued by saying that all future correspondence would be with Bishop Sugden and the Reverend A.S. Richardson, and not Gregg.

He also included the official resolution of the Executive Committee dated 22 November 1878: "Resolved, that this Executive Committee recognise Bishop John Sugden and the Synod, acting with him, as the Ecclesiastical Authority of the Reformed Episcopal Church in the United Kingdom...."

Bishop Gregg's Debt.

But there was a further complicating factor involved in the bad feeling between Gregg and the American leaders. For in order to sail to New York for his consecration in June 1877, the REC in the USA had actually loaned him the money to make the journey. The amount concerned was not great, but Gregg's failure to make any attempt to honour the debt was the cause of deep bitterness in America. But nothing of this became public until November 1878, when the facts were published in the Episcopal Gazette.¹²⁷

The facts were given by Benjamin Aycrigg himself. Aycrigg sent a private letter (written in the third person) to Gregg, dated 12 April 1879, in which he asked for the refunding of "the loan of Seventy Pounds Sterling advanced to him in New York, in the form of five gold Sovereigns in Wall Street, and One Hundred and Fifty Dollars paid for his return passage to England, per check dated June 31, 1877, for \$210...."

Disgracefully, Gregg's response was to send an open postcard on 28 April 1879 (again in the third person). He denied that he had seceded from the British branch of the REC, and said that he would be prepared to reply to Aycrigg's communication on receipt of "a suitable public apology...for the untruthful and libellous assertions under the heading 'Bishop Gregg's Secession', pp. 312 - 319 from 'Aycrigg's Memoirs of the Reformed Episcopal Church'".

Aycrigg continued by telling how the £70 was Gregg's own estimate of the expenses needed - this to be eventually returned from a new Sustentation fund to be created in Britain. But Aycrigg also told how Gregg had assured him that the American church would not bear any expense for the consecration. In fact, as he remarked bitterly, the total cost, including the £70 loaned, was estimated to be \$1100, or £220.

Gregg was making matters impossibly complicated. On the one hand, in his post card to Aycrigg of 28 April 1879, he asserted that he had not seceded: but on the other hand, on 8 November 1878, he had written a letter to Philip Norton of Littlehampton enclosing a circular. He explained that he and Bishop Toke were no longer under the jurisdiction of the American Canons, but that each minister and congregation had to decide which they preferred, "the English or foreign jurisdiction."¹²⁸

What Gregg was actually doing at first was to claim that there were two REC jurisdictions within the UK. Then, by April 1879, being compelled to accept that the other branch had official recognition, he changed "tack". Whilst still recognising two REC jurisdictions in the UK, one "English" and the other "foreign", it is clear that he hoped that in continuing to claim that he had not seceded, somehow it might be possible for him to appear to represent the true branch of the denomination in the UK. The logic was convoluted and unreal.

Meanwhile, on 29 January 1879, the General Committee of the REC had met in America, and "as there was no authority in America from whom Gregg could demand dismissal", and as he had both abandoned those who had chosen him and refused to call a Synod, the letter of dismissal was formally refused.¹²⁹

By the early Summer of 1879 therefore, Gregg was completely isolated. By his actions he had alienated the Church of England, the FCE, the REC in America, and the new REC in the United Kingdom - together with most of the clergy and many of the laity who had supported him just twelve months before.

The two jurisdictions of the REC in Britain, 1879-1880

Nevertheless, although Gregg was isolated from the rest of the REC, there were still many areas of success in his work.

The expansion of his own congregation in Southend was such that a new aisle had to be added to cope with the numbers. This was opened on Trinity Sunday, 8 June 1879;¹³⁰ and although the expansion involved debt, and there were disputes over pew rents,¹³¹ yet the numbers continued to increase. In the First Annual Report for the year ending Easter 1879, Gregg recorded that the Sunday School, opened on 19 August 1877, "now numbers over 300 scholars and some 30 teachers".¹³²

Further, by April 1879, although the clergy who had left him took their churches out of his jurisdiction, not only had the Southend work expanded to a Mission Hall at Prittlewell close by,¹³³ but he had new congregations in Hemel Hempstead, Welshpool, Tue Brook, Wolverhampton, Kennington and Sidcup.¹³⁴ The work at Sidcup was particularly important, because it involved the patronage of the Lord Lieutenant of the county of Kent, the Earl Sydney, who had parted company with the parish church over the issue of ritualism in the services there. It was to this new cause that Bishop Toke went as the incumbent.¹³⁵

But in addition to Gregg's expanding work in the UK, relations between a section of the REC in Eastern Canada and the American authorities were bad, and distinct interest was being shown in Gregg's jurisdiction, despite the vast distance involved.¹³⁶

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The Seventh General Council met at Christ Church, Chicago, from 28 May to 3 June 1879, and the steps taken to secure their work in Britain were both stern and thorough. Yet, in the light of the success that Gregg was continuing to enjoy, it is hardly surprising that the censure of the American authorities, did not have the salutary effect anticipated. In fact it seems only to have given further impetus to his work.

On 2 June, the Reverend A.S. Richardson, one of the British REC Commissioners, had a special meeting with the General Committee in Chicago in order to obtain clarification for the complicated situation in the UK. Here, with his powerful contacts and flourishing community at Southend, Gregg was continuing to imply some sort of senior and official status for his branch of the denomination. In fact the Council gave its official recognition to Sugden as the "Presiding Bishop" in Britain. They also recognised his Synod as the official one in the United Kingdom.¹³⁷ Yet it has to be said, that even with the newly recognised Synod there were internal problems. Bishop Cheney introduced a resolution that the Synod in the UK conform to the Canon Law and cease its quarrelling.¹³⁸

But perhaps the most bitter pill for Gregg to swallow was the fact that the official Synod of Great Britain had sent notice of their election of Richardson to the episcopate. He was to assist John Sugden with the growing work to be done; and at the meeting of the General Council, the nomination of the UK Synod was accepted. Richardson was duly elected in Chicago; and on 22 June, at St.

Paul's Church in Philadelphia, he was consecrated by Bishops William Nicholson and Samuel Fallows. In addition, James A. Latane of Virginia and R.F. Stevens of Virginia were consecrated for the growing work in America. Following Richardson's consecration, at the one hundred and eleventh Commencement of Rutger's College, the degree of Doctor of Divinity was conferred upon him. ¹³⁹

As might be expected, the July edition of Gregg's magazine carried a bitter report on the session of the General Council, and the American REC authorities were continually referred to as a "foreign jurisdiction".¹⁴⁰ Later in the 1880s, Gregg's endless comments about Richardson as a "nonconformist minister" with an "American doctorate" were tedious and offensive: though perhaps no more so that the continual rough treatment meted out to Gregg by Richardson in the Episcopal Gazette for 1879/80.

But the account of Gregg's General Synod shows an even more bitter reaction to the American vindication of Sugden and Richardson. At Sidcup on 1 and 2 July 1879 under the chairmanship of Gregg as "Primate", the meeting resolved that there had been no real or valid election of Richardson. Therefore: "the so called confirmation...and the subsequent "Consecration" are respectively null and void..." As a further act of defiance and independence, the Synod revoked the Constitution and Canons of the previous September (in the presence of the American Commissioner but in the absence of Gregg), and a new Constitution and Canons were adopted.¹⁴¹

Although Gregg's claim had been that he had not seceded, by these acts of the General Synod in Sidcup, he had cut loose entirely from the authority of the General Council. Furthermore, by denying the validity of Richardson's election and consecration,¹⁴² he stopped any possibility of a reconciliation with the other branch of the REC in Britain for a long time to come.

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However, Gregg's ideas on the nature and identity of his denomination were evidently different from both the other REC in the UK, and the FCE. In the editorial to Our Church Record for September 1879, Gregg said: "The seeds of our Reformed Church of England (*italics*) are being sown, and in time all good seed must grow".¹⁴³ The descriptive phrase "Reformed Church of England" had been used before, but now it appeared as an actual title.

What Gregg had wanted all along was a denomination that resembled a thoroughly protestant form of the Established Church in every respect - episcopal authority and primatial position included. His recent letter to the Bishop of St. Albans had referred to both himself and Toke as "Anglican" bishops, and now the new title of the denomination reflected this aim. Indeed, it was not long before the denomination was known merely as "The Reformed Church of England"; and at the meeting of the General Synod at Southend on 13 and 14 July 1880, this was adopted formally as the title. As Gregg explained at the Synod, his aim was not to create anything new, but to reform something old.¹⁴⁴

There was a bitter irony in Gregg's words; for, as from 27 May 1880, just seven weeks before the meeting of Gregg's Synod in July 1880, the REC General Committee in America erased his name from their list of clergy - he having "established another Church under altered Declaration of Principles".¹⁴⁵ The division was complete: there were now three separate Protestant episcopal churches outside the Establishment.

The extent and strength of Gregg's RCE by December 1880 - an overview

i) The United Kingdom

There is no doubt that, of the two new REC denominations, the Reformed Church of England was in the stronger position. There is equally no doubt that the reason for this was the outstanding leadership of Gregg, who had the ability to plan his work, and then to carry it out despite all the opposition that came from many different quarters. Above all he also had the energy, to undertake numbers of different projects at once.

At some stage, Gregg had lost the support of Lord Ebury: yet, on the other hand, by founding Christ Church, Sidcup he had gained the influential support of the Lord Lieutenant of Kent, the Earl Sydney. Again, although he had lost John Sugden and the greater part of the clergy of the REC in Britain, he had consecrated a new bishop who was both "well connected" and had the experience of a career in the Established Church.

By December 1880, information in the denominational magazine shows churches, and usually clergy, in: Southend, Prittlewell, Braintree (formerly FCE), Kennington, Old Ford (East London), Hemel Hempstead, Wolverhampton, Liscard (Wirral - illustration p. xviii), Tue Brook (Liverpool), Sidcup, Christ Church

Mission at Sidcup, and Warrington. In Wales, he had churches in Welshpool, Welshpool Canal Mission, and Groes Llwyd (near Welshpool). In Scotland, Gregg still had St. John's, Dundee.

ii) The RCE in Canada

In Our Church Record for April 1879, it was reported that a group from the REC in Eastern Canada were interested in Gregg's denomination.¹⁴⁶ In the July edition, it was announced that the Rector of St. Bartholomew's REC, Montreal, the Reverend Dr. Brandram Ussher, had applied by telegram on 12 June 1879 to join Gregg's jurisdiction. The reason for this was disagreement at the General Council meeting in Chicago,¹⁴⁷ and the August edition indicates that this was over the election of Bishop William Nicholson as President of the General Council, and Presiding Bishop of the REC.¹⁴⁸ Gregg visited Canada, sailing from Liverpool on Thursday 25 September 1879.¹⁴⁹ Meanwhile, congregations were set up in New Dublin and Ottawa, and there were further requests for RCE work at Hamilton and Toronto.¹⁵⁰

Gregg's visit lasted from Monday 6 October when he landed at Point Levy, Quebec, until 8 November when he set sail for England in the steamer "Moravian". During that month he travelled many thousands of miles, preaching thirty times, presiding at the first meeting of the Canadian Synod of the RCE, consecrating two pieces of burial ground and conducting confirmation.¹⁵¹ In addition, he also had meetings with the Secretary of the American REC (the Rev. Dr. Edward Wilson) and Bishop Latane. Both meetings were fruitless.¹⁵²

Richardson referred to the visit as "a disastrous failure".¹⁵³ But the strength of Gregg's new work had actually provoked a strong reaction from the American authorities. A convention of the REC (USA) had been held in Ottawa in July 1879, and resultingly a separate Canadian Synod was formed. On 1 July 1880, Bishops Nicholson and Latane consecrated Edward Wilson for the REC in Canada.¹⁵⁴

Meanwhile, it was agreed by the 1880 RCE (UK) Synod that Bishop Toke should take episcopal oversight of the Canadian branch of the denomination.¹⁵⁵ Consequently, in September that year, he visited the Dominion, ordaining two clergy at Montreal on 6 October.¹⁵⁶ By the end of 1880, there were congregations at Montreal, New Dublin, Farmersville, Washburne and Lachine.

The "Orders" of the RCE

Finally, what above all must have given Gregg encouragement in his aims in 1879 and 1880 was the knowlege, that the working committee set up by the Convocation of Canterbury in 1878 to enquire into the orders of the new REC in England could come to no satisfactory conclusion. Members of the episcopal committee were the Bishops of St. Albans, Lincoln and Chichester.

In Our Church Record for October 1879, Gregg jubilantly announced information from someone (anonymous) who held "important ecclesiastical position in the diocese of Canterbury and who personally knows the Archbishop". The bishops concerned had obtained legal advice; and Gregg reported that Archbishop Tait had been told that "The orders conferred by Bishops Gregg and Toke are as undoubtedly valid as any conferred by your Grace".¹⁵⁷

Indeed, the "Report of the Episcopal Committee" amongst the Tait Papers at Lambeth comes to no firm conclusion whatsoever. Thinking at the time was governed by the concept of legality as being enshrined within an actual tactile succession of the laying-on-of-hands. Certainly there was no shadow of doubt that Cummins was not deposed at the time he consecrated Cridge, so that Gregg and Toke stood well and truly within the succession which had come, ultimately, from Canterbury. There seemed little doubt that the succession was irregular: but its validity could not be disproved. The report suggested: "...it may be desirable to deliberate with the American Bishops at the Lambeth Conference on the best means to be adopted for checking it".¹⁵⁸ But for the moment, Gregg saw the confusion, and it gave him strength and assurance.

Such was Gregg's assurance in fact that in March 1880 he abolished the title and position of "Primate". Not only had it been the cause of trouble, but Gregg would be able to claim credit as a good Protestant for his initiative.¹⁵⁹

The strength of the REC (Sugden and Richardson) by December 1880

The official resolution of the American Executive Committee of 22 November 1878 recognising Sugden and his Synod left them in a strong legal position. But it is quite clear that Gregg's powers of leadership, organisation and energy could not in any way be matched by John Sugden. What energy there was was to be provided by A.S. Richardson, but his mercurial personality and poor business sense were to serve the denomination badly during the years to come.

John Sugden and the problems of Christ Church, Teddington

In November 1878 Sugden was no more than 58 years of age. A most able man, he took a BA degree at the University of London, and had intended to proceed to the Bar. But his conversion at the time of his training had led to a move to India where he worked "for many years (as) a highly respected missionary of the London Missionary Society".¹⁶⁰ From India he had returned to Britain, and by 1865, he was working in a church in Kingstown (Dun Laoghaire) in Ireland. From here he was called by the Vestry to Christ Church, Teddington.¹⁶¹

This is not the place for a detailed survey of the troubles at the church, but in brief, perhaps the greatest problems Sugden had to face came after his consecration in August 1876. This was because (as has already been indicated) Sugden, Lord Ebury, and certain others in the FCE felt that the only successful way forward for the denomination was to be closely modelled on the Establishment. Yet the extreme opposition to this by Thoresby, and probably Price, was the reason why Sugden and others of like mind had left the FCE at the close of 1877.

Sugden had remained at Christ Church: the Vestry had given him its support, and saw no reason to take any action.¹⁶² However, the congregation had been born out of the strife surrounding the ritualism of the parish church, and a number of the church officers held very militant views on what constituted correct Protestant thinking and liturgy! The congregation were split, and life was made very difficult for one who was not a forceful man: "...gracious presence and gentle speech" was one opinion.¹⁶³ Another spoke of "his intensely sympathetic and lovable nature".¹⁶⁴ Furthermore, the "many years" of missionary service in India had probably sapped much of his strength.

Bad feeling in the church came to a climax in the early Spring of 1879. The REC style of worship under Sugden was not acceptable to a number of people, and the Annual Report for Christ Church, published on 31 March 1879, noted with regret Sugden's resignation. The REC was suspected as being a source of ritualism, and the report continued: "The growing prevalence of Sacerdotalism...illustrates more and more the neccessity for the work of the Free Churches (the writer means FCE churches) and...while admiring and loving their deserving Minister, every member of the congregation will stand by the cause hitherto so well sustained."¹⁶⁵

Sugden gave more information in a statement made at the Annual Meeting of the Seatholders on 21 April 1879. He stated frankly that his association with the REC had been "repeatedly made the occasion of disingenuous remark, and has been misused to occasion alienation within this church itself."¹⁶⁶ On this occasion he was persuaded to withdraw his resignation.¹⁶⁷

But Sugden was tired. At the Annual Meeting of the Seatholders on 13 April 1880, he asked for the help of a younger assistant minister. He stated that he had now been in the ministry for thirty seven years, and was feeling the pressure of public duty. This was hardly surprising, for not only was he clearly none the better for his years in India, but in addition, in June 1879, following Gregg's secession, the General Council had made him the Presiding Bishop for the REC in Britain.¹⁶⁸

Over the succeeding months, relationships did not improve, and in addition, finances were strained. By October 1880, when there was an application for the vacant curacy from a Mr. Le Jeux, it was decided that the church was no longer in the position to be able to offer the post.¹⁶⁹ Finally, at a Meeting of the Church Officers on 19 December 1880, Sugden stated that he had decided, with regret, to send the Trustees his resignation.¹⁷⁰ At a further Meeting of the Officers on 22 December 1880, he refused to withdraw his resignation, and gently suggested that they should give their new minister "more spiritual support". Again, he suggested that there should be "more cohesion amongst themselves". Significantly, his pamphlet entitled Farewell also made it clear that there were some who wished to change "downwards" from the Church of England pattern that Christ Church had been founded to maintain.¹⁷¹ Within three months Sugden had left Teddington and had moved to Eastbourne in semi-retirement - a sad end to a fine ministry.

Leadership in the denomination - its growth and its problems

It was Sugden's growing inability to cope with the rigours of leadership that led the Synod to elect A.S. Richardson as bishop, and as already stated, he was consecrated on 22 June 1879 at St. Paul's, Philadelphia. Meanwhile, he remained the incumbent of the distinguished Connexional church at Malvern. But, there was evidently a need felt to strengthen the episcopate still further, for having been elected (like Richardson) at the General Synod on 26 November 1878, the Reverend Hubert Bower was consecrated at Littlehampton on 19 August 1879 by both Sugden and Richardson.¹⁷²

Born in Gloucestershire in 1835, Bower trained for the ministry at New College, London (Congregational). He had worked for some years in the Connexion before moving to Devon as an FCE minister.¹⁷³ Following this, he lived in Brighton and joined the REC. But by the time of the General Synod of May 1879, he was living at Ventnor on the Isle of Wight, and was "Acting Secretary to the General Synod pro tem".¹⁷⁴ Unlike the two other bishops, Bower did not have care of a church.

By the end of 1880, even though Bishop Sugden had announced his retirement from Teddington, he retained the position of Presiding Bishop for the REC in Britain. As such, he presented his written report to the Eighth General Council in America in May 1881. In it, he explained how the system of episcopal oversight worked. "By the arrangement of the Synod, the Country has been divided into two Jurisdictions; the one embracing the counties north of the Severn and the Thames, and the other the counties south of those rivers. The southern district falls to me, and the northern to Bishop Richardson. Bishop Bower has, at present, no jurisdiction."¹⁷⁵

A year after Sugden had left Teddington his health was no better. Even with Bishop Richardson looking after the Northern part of the country, and with Bower as Coadjutor, Sugden still felt himself unable to bear responsibility. He ended his report with the request: "I shall be glad if the General Council will relieve me from the office of Presiding Bishop in Great Britain, and appoint one of my dear brethren..."

With a leader prematurely enfeebled, and put (probably reluctantly) into office in June 1879, it is not surprising that, by the end of 1880, there was not the same evidence of advance that there was within the Reformed Church of England.

The Denominational Magazine

A particularly evident weakness in the REC was the seeming inability of the denomination to be able to produce a regular denominational magazine.

One of Gregg's successes was the production of a regular monthly denominational magazine. Our Church Record ran from February 1879 to February 1880, and was replaced by The Reformed Church Review, a larger publication. Each edition contained reports of meetings, articles on the denomination, and information from the churches - a considerable influence in binding together the RCE. Yet their quality was in marked contrast to the three lamentable editions of the only journal produced at this time by the REC, The Episcopal Gazette (November 1879, January 1880 and February 1880). Whilst useful now for the information on Gregg, they gave no overall picture of the denomination or the churches. Some information is available from the denominational inserts found in the few remaining copies of the Yeovil REC magazine. But most material from the other churches has disappeared.

REC Churches and Clergy by December 1880

With the division in the REC, the churches and clergy lost by Gregg remained under the jurisdiction of John Sugden. When the Memorial from the REC, with Gregg at its head, had been presented to Bishop Fallows at the close of 1877, the signatories included Sugden at Christ Church FCE, Teddington; A.S. Richardson at Emmanuel Church (CHC), Malvern; Philip Norton at St. Saviour's REC, Littlehampton; Philip Eldridge at St. John's FCE, Spalding; W. Francis E. Ashe at Christ Church, Goldenhill; Gordon Llewellyn at Christ Church, Yeovil; T. Henry Leeson at Holy Trinity, (formerly FCE) Ledbury; and W.H. Simms in Swindon (apparently worshipping at the parish church). In fact when Sugden left Teddington, Christ Church moved out of REC jurisdiction.

There had, however, been some growth through the previous year, and in April 1879 there was news of a new Mission at Preston near Yeovil; Eldridge had begun services at Peterborough; and successful work was being done at a new REC church in Barnstaple. In addition, on Easter Sunday 1879, the new Emmanuel Church had been dedicated by Bishop Sugden at Eastbourne. Its incumbent was the Reverend H. Paddon, former Vicar of High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, and it was in this church that Sugden was assisting in retirement (Sugden's Report,

May 1881). Later that year, in June 1879, services were started at Folkestone; by August, Simms had started services at Hunstanton; and in October there was news that Bishops Sugden and Richardson had recently nominated an incumbent to St. Paul's REC (formerly FCE) in Bermuda. Finally, by December 1879, REC services had been started in Scotland at Macduff.¹⁷⁶

There was further progress in 1880. In May 1881, in his report to the General Council, Sugden wrote that he had in the last year ordained seven new presbyters. Moreover permanent churches had been completed at Yeovil [illustration p. xv], Barnstaple and Peterborough. One church had been taken over from another denomination in Margate, and services had been commenced in Islington.¹⁷⁷

Yet whilst there had been some advance, progress was far slower than it was with the Reformed Church of England. As Sugden admitted at the beginning of his report to the General Council: "It will occasion no surprise to those who have closely watched the course of events here, in England, to be honestly told that our progress during the past year has not been very marked."

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The FCE 1878 - 1880: further division is narrowly averted

Philip Norton's letter to the Rock of 21 September 1877 had identified two opposing elements within the FCE:

"On the one hand there is the "Church" element...whose object has been to make...an Episcopal Church, "free" from Sacerdotalism. On the other hand there is the Dissenting element, headed by Mr. Thoresby, that is bitterly opposed to this aim".

The bad feeling was still present as Price addressed the FCE Convocation on 25 June 1878, and he reminded his listeners of the words of St. Peter: "Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous; not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing..."¹⁷⁸ In fact, far from healing the divisions, the REC secession together with the rancour that had surrounded the opening of St. Saviour's, Littlehampton only stirred up feelings that had formerly been held in check for the sake of a precious unity within the denomination.

The basic problem centred on the nature of the episcopal polity adopted by the FCE. A number of men like Thoresby and Thomas Dodd were presbyterially ordained. Yet they had signed the FCE Declaration of Principles, and consequently their ministries were fully accepted by the FCE. Indeed, technically it was possible that clergy still being ordained in the CHC by the gathered presbyterate, could then minister in an episcopal FCE by signing the Declaration. In his Address, Price outlined the dilemma: "...in upholding the parity of all presbyters, however ordained, we have to guard against a seeming indifference to any order or authority. A medium course is always a difficult one...In avoiding the shoal, we fall on the rocks".¹⁷⁹

The main item for debate at that 1878 Conference was a resolution which was brought up by a "Provisional Council of the (Episcopal) Free Church of England". Amongst proposals made by F.S. Merryweather were:¹⁸⁰

- I. That in setting forth the title of this Church the word "Episcopal" be used as explanatory of its Episcopal Character.
- II. That the Declarations of Principles and Constitution, as set forth in the Circular of the Free (Episcopal) Church of England be adopted...

Firstly, it is evident that there was a specifically organised "Episcopal" Council within the FCE. Secondly, what was being proposed was a distinct change in theological policy in that an alteration in the actual title of the denomination was being proposed illustrating its structural polity.

In the debate itself, Thoresby effectively maintained that the proposed changes took the denomination away from the original Poll Deed lodged in Chancery. He subsequently proposed an amendment "That, inasmuch as the Poll Deed...can neither be set aside nor altered without the authority of the Court of Chancery, the Canons now standing as the bye-laws be revised, so as to bring them into harmony with that Deed".¹⁸¹ The amendment was carried by three votes.

At this point, the seriousness of the change that was being proposed must have been brought home to many present, for after an adjournment, Bishop Price announced that he had consulted with "the Episcopalian members of the Convocation". Together with them he had decided to maintain the position of the denomination as laid down in the new Declarations and Canons. Accordingly he resigned the Presidency of the Convocation.

The complications of this fraught meeting were spelled-out for the readers of the FCE Magazine that August by the editor. The hint of yet further division was shown starkly. As the editor explained, the Convocation of 1876 had issued Declarations and a code of Canon Law which had enabled the FCE to enter into a Federal Agreement with the REC in America, and consequently to have the ancient succession introduced into the denomination through Bishop Cridge's visit. Now, however, some wished to back away from that position (notably Thoresby, although the editor mentioned no names). As he announced, the Presiding Bishop with other officials and a large section of Convocation had resolved to stand by the work so far accomplished. A document had therefore been drawn up on the basis for the future work of the FCE.¹⁸²

The "Jottings" column in that August gave further information that at a meeting on Wednesday 26 June (evidently after the main Convocation meeting) the Principles and Constitution of "the Episcopal Branch of the Free Church of England" were agreed, and an executive Council appointed.¹⁸³ Clearly, as the result of the disagreements which had focussed themselves at the Convocation, a further split within the Free Church of England had taken place.

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It was hardly surprising that Thoresby should have been so protective of the nature of the original Poll Deed, for it had been registered in Chancery as the result of years of his own labour. On the other hand, it was hardly surprising that Price should support those who sought to take the denomination gently

along the road to a more organised episcopacy. Firstly, he himself had been given the ancient succession by Bishop Cridge; and secondly, he had had to deal with the split that had just taken place when his coadjutor bishop, together with a number of clergy, had left the denomination. At that time he had supported the older CHC position. But he could hardly now support any move to reverse what had taken the denomination into the position of strength that it had indeed found by the time of the consecrations of 1876. Accordingly, the work of the new "Episcopal Branch" of the FCE moved forward. At a Council Meeting on 3 September "neccessary steps for the election of two Bishops at the ensuing Convocation were discussed and arranged."¹⁸⁴

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It is clear that the serious nature of this further division prompted an urgent response from the conservative members of the Convocation. The Convocation in June had been adjourned until Tuesday 1 October 1878, when it was held at Spa Fields Chapel. Here, the whole emphasis was now on preserving the unity of the denomination. J.B. Figgis presided, and the Magazine reported that: "The feeling was general, that the points of difference were so unimportant, that anything like separate action would be both unwise and unnecessary". There was a good deal of political "discretion" in the editor's words; for the points of difference had been shown to be very sharp indeed. It is, however, evident that, although many may have wished to forget the fact, a division had actually taken place. A special committee was appointed "with a view to a complete and definite settlement of all questions affecting the harmony of the Church". It was agreed that the Committee would meet at 11 a.m. on 12 November 1878, and then the re-convened Convocation would meet that afternoon.¹⁸⁵

Subsequently, in the December FCE Magazine it was announced that, on 12 November, the Convocation had re-affirmed the unity of the denomination. Certainly the urgent cause of unity helped both sides to "gloss over" the principles that had seemed so important five months before. Indeed, the new FCE resolutions proposed by Merryweather seem to have disappeared in favour of a hope of "clearly, and permanently, placing her truly Scriptural Episcopacy on a more solid basis than ever, and far above the reach of ambiguous interpretation".¹⁸⁶ By the end of 1878, the second breach had been healed - or averted, as many would probably have preferred to think.

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Having secured the internal unity of the denomination in December 1878, the main aims of the FCE during 1879 were directed towards the possibility of unity with the REC (Sugden and Richardson). Evidently the Federative Agreement with the USA had not carried through with the extension of the new denomination to the UK. In any case, the complications with the secession of Sugden and the other FCE clergy, and then the further internal problems for the infant REC in the UK, had made any sort of relationship impossible.

The FCE Quarterly Council Meeting was at Spa Fields on Tuesday morning, 11 March 1879. It ratified the proposals to be made by its appointed representatives for the discussions.¹⁸⁷ Later that morning, members of both the FCE and REC met together at Spa Fields.¹⁸⁸ Convocation had appointed Price, Figgis, Dodd, Thoresby and Merryweather as representatives. The REC had appointed Sugden, Richardson, Ashe, Eldridge and Bower. Strangely, Price and Dodd were absent from both meetings that day; and considering the importance of the occasion, it is tempting to see some sort of political implication.

The Committee of the REC actually proposed a form of federative union similar to that which existed already between the REC in America and the FCE. Amongst other privileges, as with the 1874 agreement, this would make possible an exchange of members between the General Council and the Convocation. In the matter of consecrations or ordinations, clergy of either Church would be entitled to take part. Clergy of either denomination would be able to officiate "transiently" in the other - or subject to regulations, be entitled to take a pastoral charge in either. Further, communicants of either denomination might be received in the other upon presentation of letters of dismissal.

On these points the FCE members were divided. Figgis and Thoresby both "warmly supported" the proposals, but Merryweather objected that the union would not be a "corporate" as opposed to a federative one. He pointed out that this would give them no really special relationship at all. For, as with the REC in America, such "friendly recognition" could apply to many other evangelical bodies. At this point the very tactless side to Richardson showed itself. Perhaps in response to the points put by Merryweather, he pointed out that whereas the members of the REC would be entitled to attend the Convocation, representatives of the FCE would not be entitled to attend the General Synod of the REC in the UK. The actual FCE response to this was not made clear.

However, there was evidently a deal of frank discussion between the members of both denominations. For at 3 p.m. that afternoon, the adjourned Quarterly Meeting of the FCE re-convened and accepted a proposal (made by Thoresby and seconded by Sugden) that members of the REC might be admitted to the FCE upon their signing their agreement to the FCE Declaration.¹⁸⁹ This was, in fact, the same arrangement which had worked well for clergy of the CHC who wished to join the FCE. The Council accepted the resolution and commended it to Convocation.

The 1879 Convocation met on 24 and 25 June 1879, and the resolution from the Quarterly Meeting of 11 March was accepted. Members were reminded of the fact that the 1874 Federative Agreement had conferred no special privileges for the FCE, so that this was seen as a better way forward. There was, however, one addition made, and that was that the word "discipline" should be added to the wording of the last part of the resolution "...and I do sincerely engage to conform to the Doctrines and Worship of the Free Church of England". A practical advantage to this form being used was that it would also enable clergy from other denominations to make the declaration on an individual basis. The Convocation clearly had in mind clergy from the Moravian Church, and also clergy from the Established Church.¹⁹⁰

But the hopes of the Quarterly Meeting and then the Convocation were not to be fulfilled. Evidently Richardson was not happy with what had been discussed the previous March; and as soon as he returned from America, having been consecrated bishop, he showed his newly conferred authority in a letter to the General Secretary of the FCE. This was read at the Council meeting on 12 August 1879.¹⁹¹ The text is not now available, but his proposals were "at once indignantly rejected". They apparently involved an absorption of the FCE and the giving up of both its name and constitution! Indeed, the upset caused by the proposals are clearly shown in the Council's instruction to Thoresby, as Secretary, to inform the Rock that: "The conduct of the few gentlemen forming the branch in this country of the Reformed Episcopal Church of America has been so extraordinary that we do not wish a closer union with them".¹⁹²

Bishop Gregg was jubilant, for the reports of Richardson's astonishingly patronising attitude towards the FCE served only to show the branch of the REC under himself in a better light. In Our Church Record he hinted that there was some letter or document in the hands of the Secretary of the REC in America which might explain matters. But, as he said, "With this, however, we have nothing to do".¹⁹³

Certainly, there was bad blood between Richardson and Price, for Price represented very much the older generation against which both Richardson and Sugden had actually rebelled. This would explain the reason why Price had not attended the discussions the previous March. But why Richardson should then have overturned the unity agreement with such scant respect is a matter of wonder. However, his abrasive unpredictability was to be seen many times through the following years.

The strength of the FCE, and its leadership

By December 1880, there is no doubt that, of the three denominations, the FCE was by far the biggest. Again, it had the strength of a Poll Deed legally registered in Chancery. It had also the advantage of a wide liturgical and theological spectrum. On the one hand Thoresby of Spa Fields, and Figgis of Brighton were very much in the old Calvinist and non-conformist mould. On the other, Merryweather, the Reverend G.H. Jones and a number of others strongly supported Benjamin Price in a firm policy of a "modified" episcopal polity.

Because of its ability to preserve the older Connexional loyalties, in 1880 the FCE was still able to show 35 clergy serving 39 churches on its official list (FCE Magazine, July 1880, pp. 146 ff.). Churches were located at:

Alston, Avebury, Birkenhead, Brighton (CHC), Buxton, Cardiff (St. Paul's), Cleeve, Crowborough, Westcott (near Dorking), Eastbourne, Exeter, Haslingden, Hollinwood, High Wycombe, Ilfracombe, Spa Fields (CHC), Liverpool (Everton), Lynmouth, Leominster, Ludlow, Market Drayton, New Cross (South London), New Malden, Norwich (CHC), Oswaldtwistle, Putney, Shoreham (CHC), Southampton, Spalding, Teddington, Tottington, Tunbridge Wells (CHC), Tyldesley, Ulverston, West Drayton, Wheelton, Wilsden, Willesborough, Worcester (CHC).

There are no details extant of total membership numbers; however, the administration was carried out through six "Districts or Dioceses": London, Northern, Eastern, Western, Midland, and North and South Wales.¹⁹⁴ The organisation was tied to the centre with representatives from each District gathering for the Monthly and Quarterly meetings of the FCE Council. In addition, each June, the Annual Convocation of the FCE met, usually over two days. Here all important matters, especially policy matters, were debated and officially ratified.

Despite the crises of the years 1876 to 1880, it was still a well organised and tightly knit denomination. But it needed clear and careful leadership, and as an "episcopal" structure, the loss of John Sugden as coadjutor was a blow for Benjamin Price. Although still active, on 26 November 1880, Price celebrated his 76th birthday. Moreover his work was still centred at Ilfracombe in North Devon where he had been incumbent of Christ Church since 1845. Travelling over the whole of England (and later a great deal of Wales) was therefore a very considerable burden.

Accordingly, Frederick Newman of Christ Church, Willesborough, Kent, was elected to the episcopate at the Convocation in June 1879.¹⁹⁵ His position was as "Missionary Bishop" - a coadjutor to Price, and he was consecrated at Christ Church, Teddington, on 2 July 1879 [illustration p. xii].¹⁹⁶ Such was the respect in which Sugden was still held that he assisted Price in the consecration, and in his 1881 report to the General Council in America, Sugden explained his attitude to the bad feeling between the Churches, and the reason why he had assisted Price: ¹⁹⁷

"...comparatively little will be achieved in this country by any...of the Reformed and Free Church bodies until they understand one another more fully, and are prepared to throw away petty personal jealousies...keeping the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace."

Price now had a first class assistant; and the years were to show both his energy and his ability at dealing with people, sometimes under very difficult circumstances.

Meanwhile, the communication of general denominational news between the different congregations was helped through the production of the monthly Free Church of England Magazine. Like Gregg's journals, its professional appearance, and the inclusion of general devotional, biblical and doctrinal material made it a useful focus of unity for churches of the different theological "shades" throughout the denomination.

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Some conclusions

There is no doubt that the turmoil which took place in the years immediately following the consecrations of Benjamin Price and John Sugden in 1876 had little to do with the ostensible aim in the denominations of combatting ritualism at local levels in the United Kingdom.

It is important to see that although, in most places, the individual new "Free Church" communities had come out of the parishes of the Established Church, yet, in 1863 the Free Church of England actually came out of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion. This was quite simply because the only way to provide a ministry for the majority of the church communities had been for each community to work under the "umbrella" of the Connexion.

Chapter 2 seeks to show how the new ex-Anglican communities actually changed the nature of the Connexion. To this was added the fact that many, notably T.E. Thoresby, saw the original intention of the Countess Selina as being to found what was truly a Free "Church of England" in her Connexion. Thus a division had grown within the denomination between the old Calvinist and non-conformist element and the new "Church" element - as was later outlined so starkly by Norton at Littlehampton.

The genesis of the new denomination itself had therefore been the result of an effective schism within the old one. But the spur which drove this process on was the realisation that a new "Free" denomination which was virtually identical to the Church of England - yet thoroughly protestant - would not only provide a refuge from the increasing tide of ritualistic worship, but would also act as a strong incentive to those in authority who seemed unwilling to take a really firm stand against it.

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The consecrations of Price and Sugden in 1876 were an important part of this same process of development, for many saw the historic episcopate as conferring an extra authority upon the FCE in the eyes of the average churchman who had been unchurched by the worship in his local parish. Although the traditional concept of "Apostolic Succession" was vigorously denied, nevertheless the gift of the ancient succession by the laying-on of hands undoubtedly gave to the bishops of the FCE what Lord Ebury had cynically called "the electric touch".

Episcopal succession was seen, therefore, by those within the denomination as an "authenticating" mark, and by those both outside the denomination and within as a weapon to be used against an increasingly culpable Establishment.

But, this process once started seemed to find a life of its own. After the registration of the denomination in Chancery in 1863, the FCE had been enabled to include a number of CHC clergy and laity through the simple expedient of getting them to sign the FCE Declaration. Clergy and laity also continued to come into the FCE from the Established Church. Thus, just as the nature of the Connexion had changed in the years before 1863, just so the nature of the FCE changed in the years before 1877.

So, by the middle to late 1870s, the FCE was a denomination which had churches and clergy of different traditions. But many, including some outside the denomination like Lord Ebury, saw this "Church" style as capable of bringing still further influence to bear upon the Established Church; and they fostered it, through people like Bishop John Sugden, and the Reverends A.S. Richardson and Philip Norton.

Yet that resulting internal pressure proved too much for the unity of the FCE. Thus, the foundation of the new REC in 1877 was an extension of the same process which had actually resulted in the foundation of the FCE. It was again an attempt to provide a virtually identical but "protestant-ized" model of the Establishment; and the "Church" party split the FCE in 1877 just as the FCE, as a party, had split the Connexion in 1863.

However, the pressures within the FCE continued even after the schism of 1877, for there is ample evidence that the old Connexional party within the denomination reacted against the development which had taken the FCE "up" as they saw it. On the other hand, during the latter part of 1877, and much of 1878, there was the attempt made by the remaining members of the "Church" party within the FCE to preserve and to continue the process of episcopal development - hence the development of "The Episcopal Branch of the Free Church of England". It was only hard talking and the willingness on both sides to compromise at the special Convocation meeting of 12 November 1878 which prevented a further and disastrous split in the FCE.

Again, just as there was a reaction from the more conservative members within the FCE, there was also a reaction from the more conservative members within the REC. It was, moreover, at the same time - around October 1878: but whereas the Free Church of England had just managed to hold on to its unity, the newer Reformed Episcopal Church actually divided. It is possible to see that the reason for this in both denominations (but especially in the REC) was simply because, to many people who had been involved in the forefront of the "Church" movement, this whole process of episcopal development had simply gone too far.

As a bishop of the REC for the United Kingdom, Gregg was probably acceptable to the majority of those who had supported him. But as "Primate", and as one who clearly sought a "Primatial" authority and independence, he was not acceptable. There was a reaction from those who held the middle ground in the "Church" movement within the REC, and their reaction had provided the impetus for that further split around the October of 1878. This resulted in there now being three Protestant episcopal churches in the United Kingdom - outside the Church of England.

By the end of 1880, by-and-large, the ground was now prepared for the three denominations simply to get on with their work. For in those denominations there was a considerable variety of theology and churchmanship provided, varying from the older Calvinistic FCE on the one hand, through the REC of Sugden and Richardson, to the RCE of Gregg at the other extreme. And the RCE, by Gregg's express design, was in very many respects utterly indistinguishable from the Evangelical wing of the Established Church.

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[A chart-survey of the various new churches and congregations of the three denominations during the years 1877 to 1880 is included in the Appendix, pp. 577 ff.]

CHAPTER 5

"Both progress and consolidation.
Longer cords, stronger stakes".

BISHOP GREGG AND THE REFORMED CHURCH OF ENGLAND: 1881 TO 1894

Introduction

The latter part of the 1870s had witnessed the development of not one but two branches of the REC. The REC itself had grown out of the disillusion and the disagreements within the "Episcopal" party of the FCE. Nevertheless, by 1880, although there are no records of membership figures, it is clear that whilst all three denominations were small, they were precariously enough united within themselves, and were well enough established simply to be able to get on with their work.

Certainly, the white-hot pace of earlier expansion had slowed for all three Churches. Nevertheless, there was progress, and there is no doubt that of the two branches of the REC in Britain, it was Gregg's organisational ability and his highly energetic leadership which continued to keep the RCE by far the stronger of the two newer denominations. As Gregg remarked of his work, it was both progress and consolidation - to use his own phrase - "Longer cords, stronger stakes".¹

During the 1880s and early 90s, it was Gregg's own church, Trinity, Southend, which provided him with a strong power base from which to work - especially with the assistance of a curate for most of the time. He lived there, and he earned his stipend there, so that through the years it remained very much the showpiece for the denomination. Further, not only did the church itself prosper, but Gregg became increasingly involved in the local community. He became a leading figure in the field of state education in the town, and, through his determined and far-seeing work in an inexpensive health care scheme, he was the founder of what ultimately became Southend General Hospital.

So successful was the work at Trinity in fact that the church was once again enlarged in 1881, and the new aisle was opened and dedicated by him on Wednesday 2 February. It is recorded that, at the time, there were only four sittings in one pew in the whole church that were as yet unallotted by rent. Sittings in the pews in the side aisles were let by private treaty with the

Wardens so that even the poorest might afford a seat. It was apparently the largest building in Southend at the time [illustrations pp. xvi & xvii].²

All continued well whilst Gregg retained his health and strength. But the expansion of the denomination, its consequent pressures and problems, and then the breakdown of Gregg's health were to change the fortunes of the RCE completely.

Denominational Expansion: 1881 to 1891

The RCE in Britain

Information from the magazine of the REC at that time (Our Church Record) shows that, by December 1880, there were some 21 churches under Gregg's jurisdiction. In England these were located in: Southend, Prittlewell, Braintree, Kennington, Old Ford (East London), Hemel Hempstead, Wolverhampton, Liscard (Cheshire), Tue Brook (Liverpool), Sidcup (both Christ Church and Christ Church Mission), and Warrington. In Wales Gregg had two congregations in Welshpool (St. John's and the Canal Mission), and another at Groes Llwyd. In Scotland he had jurisdiction over St. John's, Dundee. In Canada, there were churches in Montreal together with extensions of RCE work to Farmersville, Lachine, New Dublin and Washburne.

Between 1881 and 1891, a further 14 or more churches were established by the RCE, or were brought under its wing in Britain alone. [Appendix, pp. 582 ff.]

England: Picotts End (a "Cottage Mission" from Hemel Hempstead nearby - 1881); Emmanuel Church, Chester (1882); Emmanuel Mission, Wolverhampton (from Trinity Church [formerly Emmanuel FCE] nearby - 1882); Bethesda Church, Clapham (for a short while in 1885); Trinity Church, Eccles, Lancs. (1885); St. Jude's, Walsall, Staffs. (1885); St. Saviour's Mission, Spalding, Lincs. (1886); St. Stephen's Mission, Spalding (1887); Nathaniel Church, Brighton (1877); Emmanuel Church, Birkenhead (1888); Emmanuel, Cliff Town, Southend (from Trinity Church - 1889); Christ Church, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex (from Southend nearby - 1889).
Scotland: Christ Church, Paisley (a licensed "English" chapel - 1885); and Glasgow (from Paisley - 1887).

Because of the changing and mercurial nature of the RCE communities themselves it is sometimes difficult to see what the exact numbers and locations of the churches were at any one time during this ten year period. In fact the Reformed Church Record gave a list of churches, with times of services, in February and March 1883. There were at this stage some 12 churches shown in the UK: Southend, Hemel Hempstead, Tuebrook, Warrington, Wolverhampton (Trinity and Emmanuel), Liscard, Dundee, Braintree, Chester, Handbridge (Chester) and Prittlewell.³ But at other stages the picture is more difficult to build up - even more so for the work of the denomination in Canada, where distance and attendant communication problems made for greater difficulties.

But above all, throughout the period 1880 to 1891, the weight of pastoral responsibility was growing continually for Gregg, for each of the church communities needed episcopal oversight. Confirmations, Ordinations, Licensings - all had to be done by Gregg himself, for with the departure of Bishop Sugden in 1878, and then Bishop Toke some time in 1881 or 1882, Gregg had no episcopal assistance whatsoever. He had, moreover, to cover an area which extended from Brighton in the South to Dundee in the North, and from Welshpool in the West to Southend - and for a short while, Spalding in the East.

All in all, in the UK alone, through the years 1880 to 1891, there were 29 known churches and communities that Gregg had to serve and for which he had to find clergy. Each one of these had all its attendant problems of administration, and very often the additional problems of mercurial and abrasive local personalities and tensions. This in itself would have made an intolerable burden for any bishop. But the situation was made even more difficult in that, for much of his time, Gregg also had the jurisdiction of the far-flung RCE communities which were continuing to be founded in both Canada and Newfoundland - moreover, the Canadian branch of the RCE was itself a centre of very considerable political tension.

The RCE in Canada and Newfoundland 1880 - 1891

As in the UK, the expansion of the RCE in mainland Canada slowed greatly from the early 1880s. This was largely due to the fact that in order to foster remaining REC loyalties after the division, a separate REC Synod was created for Canada and Edward Wilson consecrated as its bishop (chapter 4, p. 169).

It was probably in response to this move by the REC that, at the end of 1880, preparations were made by the Canadian RCE to "frame their own constitution and canons..." Moreover, although he had formerly refused the episcopate for fear of being thought an opportunist, the Rev. Dr. Brandram Ussher of St. Bartholomew's, Montreal was now prepared to re-consider that decision.⁴ This was made clear in a contribution to the magazine from Lachine in February 1881.

Yet, the Canadian RCE was clearly fraught with politics, for it was during this same time that their Synod had actually welcomed Bishop Toke as "Missionary Bishop for Canada". However, by the July edition of the magazine, it was stated that the new communities in Newfoundland were hoping soon to be visited by Bishop Gregg. Again, at the British General Synod on 12 July 1881 there was no mention of Nicholas Toke at all. It is tempting to suspect therefore, that Toke's departure from the RCE had something to do with the oversight of the churches in Canada.⁵

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At first, work in the Eastern part of mainland Canada continued to progress. In 1881, there was news of RCE services being extended to new congregations at Sixth Concession, Land's Mills, North Augusta, and Hemlock Corners (with a congregation of 125). Significantly, RCE work also began in Newfoundland at Brigus and Bishop's Cove.⁶

From the middle of 1882 there was little further news of the work on the mainland, other than at Ussher's own church in Montreal. But by contrast, work in Newfoundland progressed considerably with a new church building at Hemlock Corners, and, at the close of the year, a congregation at North River. Just a little later, in Spring 1883, further work had begun at South River; and soon after this further RCE congregations were meeting in Newfoundland at New Harbour, Dildo, Chapel Arm, and Norman's Cove. By the end of 1883, services were also taking place at Witless Bay, Shoal Harbour and Hart's Delight.⁷

The reasons for the surprising growth in Newfoundland, as opposed to the actual decline on the Canadian "mainland", are not hard to find. Following the consecration of Edward Wilson to the episcopate for the new independent Canadian branch of the REC, in 1880 he became Rector of the new Emmanuel Church in Ottawa. It was accordingly possible for him to regain much of the residual loyalty that there had been in the earlier REC centres in the Eastern

Provinces. Even when he moved in 1883, it was to Metuchen in New Jersey. Thus he was within comparatively easy reach of the REC congregations in both Eastern Canada and the North Eastern states of the USA.⁸

By contrast however, when the work of the RCE began in the (then) separate and independent Newfoundland, it was in an area which had never known the American REC. Accordingly, from the first, the work was under Gregg's jurisdiction, and so there was no residual loyalty to the American authorities as there had been on the mainland. In addition, it was marginally easier for Ussher and others to keep in touch with the communities there from Montreal than it was for Wilson to make connections from Ottawa - or later, Metuchen.

The Election and Consecration of Brandram Ussher

Meanwhile, it is evident that episcopal care and oversight from Britain could not be satisfactory because of the distance involved. Accordingly, Brandram Ussher was elected bishop by the Canadian RCE Synod on 15 September 1881.

In many respects his election was inevitable in that he was an obvious and an able leader who had spearheaded the withdrawal of his congregation from the REC, and had subsequently arranged the episcopal oversight of Gregg from England. Again, he was a direct linear descendant of the great Archbishop James Ussher of Armagh - and as such, he held an automatic status in the eyes of those who saw the denomination to which he and Gregg belonged as representing a "purified" Anglicanism. Even so, Ussher was most careful about his position in the denomination. It is fairly evident that his actions were governed by a wish to avoid any appearance of ambition or opportunism, and at first he offered to abandon the consecration if it meant that unity between the two branches of the REC in Canada (i.e. REC and RCE) might be helped.⁹

Clearly there were problems within the Canadian branch of the RCE; but in the event, Ussher and his wife sailed to Britain, and he was consecrated at Trinity Church, Southend on Monday 19 June 1882, by Bishop Gregg, assisted by five presbyters of the RCE.¹⁰ They subsequently returned via Liverpool on the SS Lake Champlain on Thursday 17 August 1882. Certainly, Ussher's consecration was to make episcopal oversight in the Canadian RCE very much easier.¹¹

In August 1884, Ussher paid a visit to Newfoundland. He was received very warmly at St. John's, and not only was a permanent congregation established

there, but during 1885 work also spread to Green's Point and Green's Harbour. There was, in addition, a new congregation on the mainland at Oshawa. Indeed, by the close of 1885 there were some 22 churches in the Canadian branch of the RCE, and all seemed set fair for an expansion of the denomination - certainly in Newfoundland, where, not only were there few Anglican congregations, but, probably a growing number of small communities yet unchurched. At the beginning of 1885, the magazine in Britain had confidently remarked: "The accounts of our church in Canada and Newfoundland are gratifying. There is both progress and consolidation." But the next two years were to provide radical changes for the relationship between Gregg and the new Synod.¹²

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During 1886 there was virtually no news published of the work in Canada - other than that of the new Trinity Church at St. John's, Newfoundland, which was dedicated by Bishop Ussher on 31 October 1886. Again, there was only a very sketchy progress report in the Reformed Church Record for March 1887.¹³

Clearly, a major shift in loyalties had been taking place, and in the magazine for June 1888 there was an account of the return of the Canadian Synod of the RCE back to the jurisdiction of the American REC and its independent Canadian Synod. In one way, this is what Ussher had desired for some time. His original disagreement with Bishop William Nicholson had been the reason why the RCE under Gregg became rooted in Canada: but, once the separate Canadian Synod of the REC had been established, the *raison d'etre* of the movement led by Ussher ceased. Evidently he had looked for the possibility of the uniting of the two Canadian Synods when his own consecration was imminent, and had accepted consecration only when this unity was demonstrably impossible.

Now, however, as the editor of the Reformed Church Record said: "The patient and persevering labours of Bishop Ussher have been so far crowned with abundant success in bringing about a corporate union between the American Reformed Episcopal Church and that branch whose alternative name is the Reformed Church of England in the Dominion". Once again Gregg's claim to represent the true REC in Britain was repeated - together with the clear denial that he had ever actually seceded.¹⁴

Annie Darling Price says that the division was actually healed "by a meeting of both parties" on 26 September 1888 when one General Synod had been formed. The

agreement to avoid the splitting of political loyalties was an interesting one, for, in fact, both Ussher and Wilson consented to resign their episcopal positions. Bishop Samuel Fallows was elected in their places as Bishop over the united synod.¹⁵

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Mrs. Price's work on the history of the REC is both condensed and muddled. However, certain articles and news items which appeared in the denominational magazine in Britain at the time show that the unity scheme was not immediately successful. Although the mainland Canadian RCE churches returned to the REC, the Newfoundland churches were at first intent on remaining under the jurisdiction of the RCE: "Hitherto Bishop Ussher has very kindly acted as the diocesan in Newfoundland, and if the church there should prefer to be ecclesiastically free from the Dominion, they have...the power canonically to seek to come under other jurisdiction".¹⁶ Indeed, there seems to have been considerable confusion at the time; however, by January 1889 it was clear that the congregations in Newfoundland were also to move under the jurisdiction of the Canadian REC Synod. Even so, in September 1889, the church at New Harbour, Trinity Bay was evidently still known as the "Reformed Church of England".¹⁷

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[Although little is known about the early RCE congregations in Canada and Newfoundland, some further details are available in the Appendix, pp. 584 ff.]

The growth of responsibility and pressure for Gregg: 1880-1891

The expansion of the RCE meant that by the late 1880s, not only were there some 29 congregations in the UK to be looked after, but also perhaps 8 churches in Eastern Canada, and 12 or more in Newfoundland. Ussher's consecration in 1882 relieved some of the pressure of confirmations and ordinations: nevertheless, the churches still looked to Gregg as Senior Bishop.

When the Canadian Synod returned to the American REC in 1888, a considerable burden was taken from Gregg. Even so, other problems arose that could be dealt with only by him, for his undoubted success was largely due to his policy of personal involvement: although interestingly, the actual dependence upon Gregg has never been fully understood - even by Vaughan. He curiously understated Gregg's labours for expansion as part of "the stalwart energies of that far-off day".¹⁸ Whilst the burden of responsibility remained manageable, Gregg's system worked. But the growth of the RCE brought problems that simply could not be solved by one man, and in Britain he had no coadjutor.

Administrative responsibility

It is probable that Gregg was the sort of man who could only have worked alone. Significantly, of the three bishops who had come within his jurisdiction, the only one who stayed with him for any length of time was Ussher. Firstly, Ussher, like Gregg, was a man with great leadership qualities. Again, like his senior bishop he was a Doctor of Medicine. Yet again, both men came from old established and high-ranking ecclesiastical families within the Irish Protestant Ascendancy. But above all, Ussher lived and worked over 3000 miles away - and Gregg needed his continuing co-operation!

Gregg envisaged the development of the RCE as a parallel, but "purified" Protestant episcopal denomination, totally in the mould of the Establishment. To this end, his plans for a diocesan system were officially passed by the meeting of the RCE General Synod on 14 July 1881. The 14 sees were designed to provide cover for England, Wales, the Isle of Man and the Channel Isles:¹⁹

- (1) Verulam: Essex, Middlesex, Bedfordshire and Herts. (2) Selsea: Surrey, Kent and Sussex. (3) Dunmoe: Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridge and Huntingdonshire. (4) Caer Mephric: Warwickshire, Northamptonshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire. (5) Caer-Leirion: Lincolnshire, Rutland, Nottinghamshire, and Leicestershire. (6) St. Germans: Somerset,

Devon and Cornwall. (7) Caerleon: Monmouthshire, Herefordshire, Gloucestershire and Worcestershire. (8) Pengwern: Staffordshire, Shropshire and Derbyshire. (9) Wyke: Yorkshire. (10) Hexham: Northumberland, Cumberland, Durham, & Westmorland. (11) Menevia: North Wales. (12) Margam: South Wales. (13) Alaunum: Lancashire, Cheshire and the Isle of Man. (14) Clausentum: Wiltshire, Hampshire, Dorset & Channel Islands.

Here it is interesting to note that Gregg's diocesan plan for the UK made no mention of Ireland. As a product of the Protestant Ascendancy himself, he was evidently in agreement with Merryweather, Price and the others who, in 1873, regarded the "Disestablished Church of Ireland" as a part of the Evangelical partnership in the fight against ritualism and Romanism (see above, pp. 91 f.).

Exactly how long Gregg kept his diocesan plan in mind is unclear. When John Sugden was working as Gregg's coadjutor, he had taken the title of Bishop of Selsea, but this title lapsed when he left the RCE. Again, neither Nicholas Toke nor Brandram Ussher was given a title - nor indeed did the RCE ever grow large enough to merit such a system being set up.

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Nevertheless, by the end of 1882 the matter of assistance for Bishop Gregg had become pressing, and on Monday 18 December a special Conference was held at the Queen's Hotel, Chester. During a discussion on the "Subdivision of Episcopal Work", the Reverend Tudor Rogers suggested that the best way forward was simply to elect two Missionary Bishops, one for the North and one for the South. But this met with opposition "...considering the smallness of our church". Evidently the fact that two bishops had left the RCE already had made members of the denomination wary about making the same mistake again. The subject was dropped at that point;²⁰ but the basic problem remained. Although by comparison with other denominations the RCE was very small, it was effectively being run by one man; and the larger and more complex the organisation grew, the greater was the pressure for Gregg at the centre.

The period of the General Synod in May 1884 provided a graphic illustration of the way in which Gregg was forced to work. The Synod itself took place at Warrington on Tuesday 13 May 1884. Gregg then used the opportunity of being in Warrington to make a general visitation of all the churches in and around Lancashire and Cheshire during that week. In addition, on the evening of the

Synod itself, he ordained the Reverend William Mules as presbyter, and then installed him as Vicar of Emmanuel, Warrington on the following day.

Certainly this timetable demonstrated to the denomination the burden of pressure that their Bishop was bearing. But to be certain that the point was quite clear, in the edition of the magazine which included the report of the Synod, the article "Labour Subdivided" dwelt at some length upon the need of assistance for Gregg. The author (probably Gregg himself) looked at the scriptural example of Moses who selected men to work under him. He also made reference to the selection of "the seven" in Acts 6, 1-7. From this background, reference was then made to the efficient working of the Established Church where the responsibilities of the bishop were partly borne by the Archdeacons and the Rural Deans of the dioceses.

The ground was thus prepared, and in the following October, it was announced in the magazine that the Reverend William Mules of Emmanuel Church, Warrington, had been appointed by the Senior Bishop "to act for him as Representative Deputy...in the North." The writer continued: "The official position of Representative Deputy corresponds with that of Rural Dean in the Established Church".²¹ By January 1885, the principle of delegation had moved further, and Gregg had appointed three of his clergy to act as wardens of ordinands.²²

During the years 1887 to 1890 Gregg suffered from periodic bouts of ill health (see below). When, in the winter of 1889/1890, this grew to worrying proportions it was arranged that Gregg take a holiday in Switzerland and Italy. Further serious steps were then taken to devolve the responsibility borne by him, and it was agreed that his son, the Reverend Frank Gregg, together with the Reverend Dr. T.W. Bowman, and Mr. J.R. Mayfield of Eastbourne were conjointly to act as Bishop's Commissary during his absence."²³

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The pressure of correspondence had caused Gregg concern for some time. At the General Synod on 10 May 1887 it was agreed that the General Standing Committee would pay him £25 per annum to defray "the expense of a weekly journey to London". A notice in the magazine from July 1887 onwards explained:

"...All letters referring, directly or indirectly, to the work of the Reformed Church of England and kindred subjects, should be addressed to him [Gregg] at THE CLUB, Whitehall Place, London, W.C., where he will endeavour to attend once

weekly to give attention to the same."

Clearly this would limit the amount of time he spent to a finite period when he could have the mail sorted, and use a secretary. But by 1890, when he was under yet more pressure, the instructions were still more explicit:

"...He does not undertake to answer or notice letters sent to him to any other address, nor does he undertake to return any enclosures which may be sent unasked..."

As a message it was sensible enough, if somewhat over dramatic. Yet the abiding impression of the request when taken together with the increasing troubles of his health and the general complexities and problems of his ministry (see below), shows a man who was becoming more and more desperate, and beleaguered by his work and his problems.²⁴

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The truth of the matter was that Gregg was attempting to run the RCE with the same sort of vigorous life and centralised control that there was within the Church of England. But the actual situation was that of a small denomination which had neither the men nor the money to staff its new church communities. In addition, many of Gregg's existing clergy were working part-time at their churches because the congregations could not afford to pay them properly (the Reverend W.F. Bentley at Wolverhampton and then Newport, Mon., was one such man). Despite his claim of the "purity" of his Canterbury line and ecclesiastical polity, Gregg was forced to compromise.²⁵

Even more significant was the pressure from churches without presbyters who needed the twice-monthly Communion Service which Gregg insisted upon. As with the Free Church of England, Gregg was forced to issue special Faculties to some of his deacons in order that they might celebrate the sacrament for the community they served. Having ordained Millington Llewellyn Jones to the diaconate on 26 February 1885, Gregg granted him a Faculty to administer the Lord's Supper at Liscard. Again, in April 1887, Frank Gregg and Frank Lake Good were both ordained deacon, and both were, in addition, granted faculties to celebrate Holy Communion. The fact was that it took time to train men for their Presbyter's examinations, yet Gregg needed the manpower.²⁶

Compromise was something with which Gregg was never happy: yet compromise there had to be.

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Financial problems for the RCE: 1880 - 1891

Whilst Gregg was attempting to make the RCE a viable alternative to the Established Church, perhaps the greatest of all problems for him was the simple fact that the entire denomination he had founded had to be run on a shoestring.

Throughout the late 1870s and the 1880s advances were made by the denomination in many new areas. But this was not through the strength of an organisation that was financially sound enough to pour the secure support of both ministry and finance into a missionary work: rather was it at the expense of the already established congregations of the Church of England. The RCE had no financial security of its own, no wealthy landed patrons and no ancient sources of income which would tide the individual communities over the lean times. In addition, the case-studies chapter seeks to demonstrate the inbuilt instability of most of the new "reformed" communities. These new churches tended to reflect the strife out of which they had been born. Again, when a new and evangelical priest was appointed to the local parish church, then often long established family loyalties meant that people tended to return to the church from which they had come.

When Gregg left the living of West Harborne in the diocese of Lichfield, he left any sort of real and actual financial security. The rest of his ministry was to be, in part, a battle to find financial support for the new churches and congregations that were continually growing up - and many of them dying.

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When Gregg was consecrated in 1877, he promised the American authorities that he would start a special "Sustentation Fund" for the British branch of the denomination. The fund was started, and the intention was that it was to form the basis for any new work in the country that could not be immediately funded locally. However, the calls upon the fund were many, and it became a source of continual worry to the RCE throughout Gregg's ministry.

To start with, the denominational magazine, the Reformed Church Record, was at first probably produced at a personal cost to Gregg himself (the matter is not absolutely clear). Yet, good though it was, the magazine never seems to have made any profit.²⁷ Because of what was clearly a personal burden to Gregg, it seems later to have been accepted as the responsibility of the Sustentation

Fund. However, as it had been to Gregg himself, the magazine became yet another major drain upon a fund that was in any case hard pressed.

In April 1881, a strongly worded article reminded members of the RCE that Sunday 3 April was the day appointed for the Quarterly Collection on behalf of the Sustentation Fund. Members were given special collecting boxes, and these were to be sent at the end of each three months to the denominational Treasurer, Mr. George Rolph, Jr., at Hemel Hempstead. There was clearly no systematized method for collecting this money, and the writer (possibly Gregg) suggested that the General Standing Committee make it a rule that each enrolled communicant member of the RCE should be responsible for paying not less than one penny per week to a local treasurer who would in turn pass the collected moneys on quarterly to the denominational treasurer. Earlier, in March, it had been felt that a secure fund would be able to help the work of the RCE greatly by supporting a "Missionary Chaplain" who could help at churches where their ministers were unavoidably absent from services. All this was sound common sense, but it is obvious that such a system was virtually impossible to set up securely through the years to come.

Following the decision of the Standing Committee, it was agreed that all contributions to the Sustentation Fund would be acknowledged in the pages of the Reformed Church Record. In addition to this, it was agreed at the General Synod, held at Westminster on 12 July 1881, that the penny-a-week system would actually be written into the RCE Canons.²⁸

Despite these agreements, during the following months the only regular and proper contributions to the fund that were acknowledged seem to have been from Trinity Church, Southend, where Gregg obviously exercised considerable personal influence. There were contributions acknowledged from other churches - Hemel Hempstead, Liscard, Warrington, Trinity Church, Wolverhampton, and Braintree - but on the other hand it is evident that there were churches either not paying at all or making a minimal contribution.

The worry of the debt being incurred in the running of the RCE was such that, in May 1883, an article spelled out for the readers the responsibilities of the Sustentation Fund, and the reason why there was so much concern. The fund was for "the present support of any Bishop or other Minister of this Church". It was also "...for the assistance of feeble congregations, or for...missionary work where there are no organised congregations".

Once again, the expectation of one penny per week from each enrolled communicant member was stated. But, more significantly, the matter of the debt was explained in greater detail than before. The revised Book of Common Prayer had cost over £250 to print; each edition of the Constitution and Canons had cost between £30 and £40 to print; and, as at May 1883, the total shortfall stood at £600.²⁹

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By the beginning of 1885 there seems to have been little major progress in the matter of the debt. In the February edition of the magazine that year, however, it was decided to adopt the suggestion made by somebody called "English Churchman" for the founding of a "Practical Sympathy Fund". This was a separate fund whose special intention was to raise the sum of £500 by the following Easter. The aim of the fund was stated to be "an expression of practical sympathy for the protestant and evangelical work of the RCE": but it is easy to see that it was actually an attempt to found another Sustentation Fund under a different name. It was stated that sums of £25 and £5 had been promised, subject to the whole amount being raised by the following Easter.³⁰

As a plan it was doomed to failure. Despite the assurance of the editor that the amount sought was "not a large one", in point of fact it was an extremely large one for that time. Moreover, it was an appeal which was announced in February for a very large amount to be collected within just three months. Yet, where appeals for one fund were patently not working, it was hardly likely that appeals for two funds (however entitled) would be any the more successful. Not for the first time there was an unreality in Gregg's hopes.

Even a year later, December 1886, the Practical Sympathy Fund stood at no more than £72-5s-0d.³¹ Meanwhile, month by month, small amounts of £3 and £4 for the Sustentation Fund were being acknowledged by the magazine - but it was usually only Trinity, Southend that continued to make regular and proper contributions.

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In January 1887 an article on the Sustentation Fund in the denominational magazine spoke of a debt still outstanding for £600. The writer seemed to indicate that this was due to one person, who, in the early days of the denomination, had borne many of the expenses single-handedly.³²

But there is no clearer indication of a desperation in the RCE at this time than that provided by the announcement of yet a third special fund. In March 1887, the "Jubilee Fund" was launched, the object being "to liquidate the debt of some £600 on the Sustentation Fund..." As an encouragement to the more wealthy members, news was published of two gifts of £50 to the fund, one by an anonymous member of Trinity, Southend, and the other by Mr. J.R. Mayfield.³³

Yet, in all these troubles, the information provided for readers of the magazine was both selective and muddled. In the June 1887 edition, it was announced that the Sustentation Fund had a balance in hand of £8-12s-11d. But the accounting is strange, for it is clear that the large overall debt had not been wiped out. Again, in the same edition, figures showed that the "Practical Sympathy Fund" still stood at £72-5s-0d. Even stranger was the sudden news published in the August edition that £432-8s-6d. had been received by the "Jubilee Fund" from certain named sources. This was sent towards the Sustentation Fund, and it was announced that there was, from that point on, little more than £100 of debt left. There is no explanation for these strange figures, and members of the denomination who were trying to gain an overall picture of the needs of the RCE from its journal must have been more than a little mystified.³⁴

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In a general study such as this it would be inappropriate to attempt to reconstruct the accounts of the time and their highly complex problems. Withal, it is clear that by the latter part of 1890 the financial situation was fairly obviously a matter of grave concern. Month by month the regular contributions to the Sustentation Fund from Trinity Church, Southend, were published: few of the other churches seemed to be making contributions. In any case, during this year, Gregg's health was very seriously disturbed, so there was little that he could do by way of personal encouragement, or perhaps by a visitation of the churches. In fact, the administrative system of the denomination itself seems to have suffered with these considerable troubles. In January 1891 the Reformed Church Record announced the resignation of the Treasurer of the Sustentation Fund, Mr. Henry Davies. In the meantime, until a new Treasurer was found, all contributions to the Sustentation Fund were to be sent to Bishop Gregg himself - at Trinity Rectory, Southend.³⁵

This was the final edition of the denominational magazine until the publication of Work and Worship in 1897. Evidently, the denomination was no longer in any financial position to bear the cost of publication. But, on the other hand, Gregg was not in any state of health to take on any new projects or appeals whatsoever. Within six months he was a tragically broken man.

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The financial problems of these last days in Gregg's ministry illustrate, perhaps more forcibly than anything else, the essentially congregationalist nature of the denomination he had founded. Whatever were his ambitions for a conventional but reformed church modelled on the Church of England, they were not successful and could not be successful, simply because there was no central authority which could bind or decide financial matters in the churches around the country. Often the buildings were owned, not by a Central Trust of the RCE, but either by individuals or by independent trusts set up within the congregations themselves. Just as they "owned" the buildings, so the Vestries appointed the ministers in old-established non-conformist style.

Certainly Gregg had an advisory function; he could also refuse to license individual clergy. But his actual power in the individual churches was very limited, for the system that had grown up as the only practicable one for the new and impecunious RCE could only be congregationally based. This provided a strange dilemma for Gregg, for the central and powerful episcopal authority of the Established Church together with its long and well founded state connections and patronage ensured a continuing ministerial and financial security for the Church of England.

The paradox was that, although Gregg so desperately sought that same strength and authority for himself and his denomination, yet it was a revulsion against the "prelatical" and erastian aspects of the state church which had given the "Free" liturgical churches their impetus at the very beginning. Again, it was the "prelatical" aspects of the Anglican episcopate that he had taken such delight in attacking in his earlier skirmishes with the bishops of Chichester and St. Albans - and later, the Upper House of the Convocation of Canterbury.

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Gregg's secular work in the community in Southend

There is no doubt that Gregg was a "bête noire" to the authorities of the (then) diocese of St. Albans, and more particularly to the Rector of Prittlewell (the ancient mother church of Southend) for his ecclesiastical standpoint and work at Trinity Church. But within the community generally at Southend he was highly thought of by many of the citizens who saw the breadth of his vision outside the context of Trinity and the RCE. The writer of his obituary in the Southend Standard in April 1896 gave him a distinguished and surprisingly unbiassed commendation: "Without any reflection upon present or past inhabitants of Southend, he was undoubtedly in the foremost rank of the able men who have lived in this district."³⁶

The Southend Christian Medical Mission

As a practising physician, Gregg had a highly practical approach to his work. Amongst his very many pamphlets were simple but useful productions giving advice to ordinary working people on matters of health. The Baby: how to wash it: cloth it: and feed it had been written in 1875 when he was still in the Established Church.³⁷ But whether it was sound common-sense advice in paediatrics or, later, during an outbreak of cholera, an article on basics in hygiene to avoid infection, Gregg's concern seems to have been, above all, to provide information that was both simple and useful. Nor indeed was he concerned with what denomination his patients belonged to: "There is no sectarianism in misery" was one of his sayings.³⁸

On Monday 19 January 1885, Gregg began the work of the Southend Christian Medical Mission in a room in the Mission House, Park Street, Southend. From the first, he had set up a local committee to help with the running of it, and all the workers gave their time free. He himself wrote "It is for the sick poor, no matter who they are, or where they live". The system used tickets, each costing 1/-, and this ticket paid for the medicine and it assisted with the rent for the consultation room.³⁹

News of the development of the Mission was published regularly in the denominational magazine, and it is interesting to see that more than 1600 cases were treated during the first year alone. Indeed, by July 1886, the work had outgrown its accommodation, and a new Mission Home was opened in Clarence Road, Southend on 13 August 1886. At the opening the information was given that, up

to that time, more than 4000 cases had been treated - and this was almost entirely due to the work of Gregg himself at its weekly surgery on Monday evenings. Just one year later, at the Annual Meeting of the Mission on 4 February 1887 proposals were made for the erection of a Cottage Hospital for the town. At the 1888 Annual Meeting reports were given, both of the continuing success of the Mission and of a new town hospital that the committee had so encouraged, and for which it had agitated.⁴⁰

Gregg's part in the history of community health in the town was recognised not only in his own time, but later. In the mid 1980s, a framed photograph of him was requested by the District Hospital for display as one of the founders of the hospital in Southend.

Schools, Temperance, Savings and Housing

Throughout his 15 years as Rector of Trinity Church, Gregg took a considerable interest in education in the town, particularly in the matter of an adequate primary education. After the elections of 1886 he became Chairman of the School Board. After the next elections, in 1889, he was again made Chairman for the next three year period. The progress of the Boys' School was especially marked; and during that year, 1889, for the first time the school obtained the "excellent" merit grant.⁴¹

Perhaps predictably for someone of his traditional evangelical stance, Gregg espoused strongly the cause of temperance in the town. At the services and meetings at which Gregg involved the clergy and church officers from Trinity Church, there was not only "the pledge" as a central factor, but also the distribution of gifts of tea and sugar to those who had attended the meetings. On New Year's Day 1890 the third of the large annual Temperance Dinners was held for the poor of Southend and Prittlewell. Nearly 100 people attended the occasion at the "Coffee Palace" in 1890, and during the afternoon "entertainment" at which Gregg presided the pledge was signed by two men, and a third received a half-guinea for keeping the pledge for 12 months.

The "Jubilee Slate Club" was another of Gregg's social works for the poor of the area. He was president of this local benevolent fund through which people saved money for times of sickness or special need. The local paper reported the proceedings of the Annual Meeting and share-out of the club on 24 December 1889. Gregg's emphasis in so much of his work was very practical.⁴²

The housing of the poor was also one of Gregg's concerns. The writer of his obituary in the local paper recalled the time when "he framed a very severe indictment against the (then) Local Board in connection with the management of town properties". According to the writer, "the Board promptly closed with him".⁴³ But then Gregg seems so often almost to have "courted" battle.

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There is no doubt that Gregg does not look at his best when examined merely in terms of his leadership of the Reformed Church of England, together with the political manoeuvring he seems so frequently to have taken part in. It is important, therefore, to see that there was another side to Gregg that actually had nothing directly to do with the denomination he led. It shows him to be both caring and unselfish. It also shows why the writer of his obituary declared him to be "an able man in many departments of human affairs and a leader of men." Significantly it was an Anglican Archdeacon, and an Anglo-Catholic at that, who thought of him as "an honest man, with the courage of his convictions".⁴⁴

But then, this in turn shows something of the complex personality and the power of the man that enabled him to continue run the denomination he had effectively started in Britain - despite the pressures upon him that increased all the time.

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Gregg and the REC (USA) - moves towards reconciliation, 1884-89, and an attempt to obtain recognition for the RCE and thus leadership of the REC in Britain.

From the earliest days of the "Reformed Church of England", Bishop Gregg was highly sensitive to the suggestions that he had "seceded" from the Reformed Episcopal Church. At one stage he had referred to the "two Jurisdictions" of the REC in Britain. Later however, he claimed increasingly that the RCE actually represented the true REC in the United Kingdom. This had been rendered patently obviously incorrect by the official and published recognition of John Sugden as the Presiding Bishop in Britain. Gregg's name had consequently been erased from the official Clergy List of the REC by order of the General Committee of the REC on 19 May 1880.⁴⁵

From the early 1880s onwards, however, Gregg's consistent claim that he had not seceded from the REC became a matter of some political importance, for by it he left the door open for a reconciliation with the parent branch of the denomination in America. Moreover, in the early Summer of 1888, when the RCE in Canada and Newfoundland returned to the jurisdiction of the American authorities of the REC with Gregg's blessing, his hand was strengthened.

Again, internal strife within Bishop Richardson's branch of the REC became more serious in the latter part of the 1880s (see below). Consequently it became ever more possible for Gregg to represent his own less troubled, more vigorous and better organised RCE as the legitimate successor to the decision by the General Council to found their denomination in the UK.

Particularly, therefore, during 1888 and 1889, Gregg's work at reconciliation with the American authorities of the REC can be seen as an attempt to change their minds - not only with regard to his re-inclusion in the official List of Clergy, but as "Senior Bishop" in an officially recognised branch of the REC in Britain, and thereby the leading member of the REC throughout the United Kingdom. Certainly Bishop Richardson and other members of the "American" branch in Britain interpreted Gregg's moves in this way. And, as was later proved conclusively, Gregg continued to have powerful allies at the highest level within the parent denomination in the USA. When they themselves began to speak of the "two branches of the REC in Britain", then, not for the first time, matters for the REC in both Britain and America were brought to a crisis point.

It was in November 1884 that Gregg first signified a public interest in mending relations with America. In an article in the Reformed Church Record, he asserted that the Richardson branch of the REC in Britain was breaking up. Clearly there was some bad feeling between Richardson and the Presiding Bishop in the USA, but Gregg's powers of exaggeration never failed to help him take advantage of any slight opportunity. Referring to the British branch of the denomination and the troubles within it, Gregg (it was almost certainly he) wrote "...from what we have heard, Bishop Nicholson is ashamed of it. Mr. Richardson and his irregulars are now in the last throes of ecclesiastical dissent and dissolution..." The article continued: "We sincerely trust, if needful, that Bishop Gregg will be able to visit the next General Council of the REC..."⁴⁶

Just under two years later, in August 1886 the battle ground was The English Churchman. In response to letters written by both A.S. Richardson and Philip Eldridge, Gregg repeated the claim that he had never seceded. Further, he stated that he had no intention of seceding in the future. He continued by repeating the point that he had made in earlier years - that there were two jurisdictions of the REC in Britain. However, in making this point he claimed that he represented the original branch in the UK. He admitted that the "English Synod" of the RCE had been "severed" from American jurisdiction, and that this had caused bad feeling. But the basis of his claims on the matter of secession are obviously that this separation had been legal and canonical: "...our English Synod canonically (some years since) severed our English branch, not from the Reformed Episcopal Church, but from all American control, interference and jurisdiction."⁴⁷ To most, the subtlety of the difference between this particular canonical "severance" and "secession" would probably be lost. But to Gregg, with his meticulous (and political) mind, it was a vital distinction. This letter of Gregg was later reprinted in the denominational magazine for October 1886. Together with it, he included a bitter criticism of the senior members Richardson's REC.

Relationships between Gregg and Richardson were particularly bad at this time - but then, as Richardson had had the folly to send to Gregg a postcard in December 1885 containing the Biblical reference "Acts xiii, 10" ("...O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?"), it was hardly surprising. On the other hand it has to be seen that Gregg was continually making references to "Mr. Richardson" as "a Connexional Minister"

who had "some sort of an American degree". In truth, both were men of culture and education, but both had allowed their bitter personal animosity to fall over into personal abuse.⁴⁸

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At this point it is worth seeing, however, that, although relationships between Gregg and Richardson were thoroughly sour, they clearly were not so with certain other senior members of the Reformed Episcopal Church.

In Britain, John Sugden evidently still held some warmth of feeling towards Gregg -- despite past differences. On 30 December 1886, Sugden wrote to Gregg from Woodsome Villa, Kirkburton, near Huddersfield where he was living in retirement from the REC.⁴⁹ In fact he wrote what was evidently a reply to thank Gregg for a "kindly" letter which he had sent. In the reply Sugden explained that he had "for some long time past taken little or no part in the administration" of the REC. He continued by suggesting that in "these days of united prayer" it might be possible for the "Reformed Episcopal Church and the Free Liturgical Churches to combine their work for the King."⁵⁰

Exactly what Gregg had originally written to Sugden is unknown, but quite evidently Sugden identifies the RCE with the REC: he would hardly write to Gregg as somebody who ran one of the "Free Liturgical Churches".

In America, Gregg also had some powerful supporters (as was to become increasingly clear through the next years). But most surprising is it to realise that, despite all that had taken place between Gregg and the American authorities, one of his close friends and supporters there was none other than the most distinguished Charles Edward Cheney, Presiding Bishop of the REC from 1887 to 1889. The Twelfth General Council took place in Boston from 22 to 27 May 1889, and in his report, Cheney referred to a correspondence which had taken place between himself and Gregg. He said openly that there had been "a long personal friendship existing between Bishop Gregg and myself". He also said that, with regard to the dispute over Gregg's right to continue as a member of the REC "...I have never been able to see the question at issue with precisely the same eyes as the majority of my brethren".⁵¹

In fact, the friendship was to make no difference to the resulting decisions of the Council whatsoever (see below). But, even so, it does explain why Gregg

seemed to have had considerable support from certain powerful sources, and that this support encouraged him in continuing his moves towards a reconciliation with the parent denomination.

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In the August 1887 edition of the denominational magazine, a letter was published which had been written to Gregg by one of the American REC Bishops. The letter was dated 16 June 1887, but the name and address were withheld. The writer explained that he was one of those who had voted for Gregg at the time of his election to the episcopate; he further explained that he had not been present at the Council of 1879 when the matter of Gregg's subsequent actions was discussed. His interest was in the matter of re-union suggested by the recent correspondence with Bishop Sugden: he further asked for Gregg's side of the dispute which had led to his removal from the REC clergy list.

This gave the opportunity for Gregg once again to publish his claim that he had never seceded from the REC, and again that he had never set up an independent church. But then, Gregg carried this one stage further by claiming: "there is not today in the United Kingdom, so far as I can ascertain, one bona fide Reformed Episcopal Church (conforming in doctrine, discipline, worship and trust), save and except those under my episcopal supervision."⁵²

This answer was more than a little deliberately disingenuous, for Gregg knew full well that the American branch of the REC in Britain had more than a dozen churches working well in the country. However, none of these churches actually had the reformed prayer books in their pews, but were frequently using the 1662 Book of Common Prayer with alterations and omissions. Again, there were several of them which, for convenience sake, were reported to be using Hymns Ancient and Modern, or other hymnbooks containing what were regarded as ritualistic hymns. Hence his claim was that the only REC churches which truly conformed to the "letter of the law" were those of the RCE. It was a nice point, but one which Gregg could not resist using as foundation for his claim as against that of Richardson's branch of the REC.⁵³

Amongst the reasons given for the justice of his claim Gregg cited the fact that he had been sent an invitation to Westminster Abbey for the special service of thanksgiving for the Jubilee celebrations of Queen Victoria. For some reason, the invitation had been addressed to him using the title that he

used within the denomination - "Bishop of Verulam". This, he claimed, amounted to an official state recognition of both himself and the RCE: "The official recognition thus accorded by the Lord Chamberlain...has thereby established an important state precedent for this church...together with the recognition of our dioceses (of which Verulam is one), and the acknowledged ecclesiastical position of our Bishops". It was nonsense, for there had evidently been a clerical error by somebody in the Lord Chamberlain's Office. Nevertheless, Gregg saw a political chance, and he used this invitation again and again through the pages of the magazine in following editions as some sort of proof of ecclesiastical validity and status.⁵⁴

Gregg-finished his reply to the anonymous bishop by reminding him that he had originally asked for "Letters Dimissory", to enable him to move from one episcopal jurisdiction to another "in the same body".⁵⁵

It was a powerful piece of writing, but it was still one based on a great deal of half truth and verbal manipulation - and, clearly, in the long run, it did not impress the American authorities (see below). However, later, when Bishop Cheney spoke of his friendship with Gregg in the 1889 General Council, he also spoke of a correspondence between Gregg and himself. It is therefore more than possible to see Cheney himself as the author of this anonymous letter.⁵⁶ Yet anonymous or not, the letter allowed and encouraged Gregg to take a further step along to road to reconciliation.

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During 1888, there were other moves towards unity besides those in which Gregg was directly involved. In June, news was published of the successful uniting of the two Synods in Canada (RCE and REC). Then, following this, in September the first news was published of an attempted unity between the Free Church of England and Richardson's REC. Unlike Canada, this failed (see below).

Undoubtedly both these unity efforts will have given yet further encouragement to Gregg's own hopes for reconciliation with America. But, the extent to which Gregg's own moves, later in 1889, towards the American authorities were the cause of bitterness and confusion between the leaders of the REC in both the UK (Richardson) and America has never been realised. However, certain correspondence concerning Gregg's attempts has recently been discovered at the REC Seminary in Chestnut Street, Philadelphia. The contents are very

significant. Clearly feeling was running high in England, and it is not surprising that there was a certain "apologetic" note in Bishop Cheney's Report at the General Council later in that year.

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Perhaps the bitterness and confusion, certainly for the British members of Richardson's REC, was first sown by some startling information published in Gregg's Reformed Church Record in December 1888 and then January 1889.

In the former edition, a member of the General Council, again anonymous, wrote from America. He said that, after studying the details of the dispute between Gregg and the REC in the USA, he had found that firstly there had been no attempt at deposition. Gregg's name had merely been "dropped" from the clergy list. The correspondent then asked if a delegate from the General Council in America would be received with kindness if he came to Britain to try to mend the misunderstanding. "I for one", wrote the correspondent, "am ready to do my best to recognise Bishop Gregg as the real Senior Bishop in England".⁵⁷

Exactly what authority the writer had for this letter is unclear. Even if the writer was Bishop Cheney as Presiding Bishop (and that is unlikely), he simply did not have the right to act unilaterally in such a way. Certainly, news of the attempted unity between the FCE and the REC in Britain in 1888 had been received badly by the American authorities. The move had been widely seen as unlawful in terms of REC Canon Law - especially in that it involved a proposed change of denominational title for the new united denomination (see below). Even so, the correspondent clearly did not have the right to make such statements without the full and proper support of the General Committee - at least. It is perhaps in the light of this also that the evident bad feeling at the meeting of the General Council later in 1889 should be seen.

Naturally enough, Gregg made the most of this communication. His reply to the writer (published in January 1889) said that it would be a pleasure to receive a delegate from the General Council in America. Once again, the justification for his own legitimacy claims were brought out - including the Invitation to the Jubilee Service. Sometimes Gregg's departures from reality were astonishing: this time, his wording seemed to imply that the Queen herself had acknowledged him.⁵⁸ But, even more strange was the information published in the same edition of the magazine, that the names of Bishop A.S. Richardson

together with his colleagues in the British branch of the REC were to be omitted from the official clergy list of the REC, in America.⁵⁹

This statement brought a swift denial in the pages of the American denominational magazine, the Episcopal Recorder, on 24 January 1889. But Gregg returned to his own defence in the Reformed Church Record for March 1889; and his words were most revealing: "What we have said, and what we repeat, upon the highest official (REC) authority in America, by letter to Bishop Gregg is that 'In view of recent events, the names of Richardson and those associated with him in England will hereafter be omitted from our Clergy List'."⁶⁰

Whether or not Gregg's information about the names of Richardson and the others was published with deliberately mischievous intent is unknown. That it was tactless, however, is certain. The letter that he quoted was once more (as far as the public was concerned) anonymous; and even if it did come from the "highest official authority" in America, he was publishing a private opinion as if it were an authorised decision, agreed, at least, by the General Committee in America. Once again, it is possible that he was actually quoting Bishop Cheney. But the reprehensible fact was that Gregg was actually playing a dangerous game of politics, for what he said can only have caused pain to his most honourable friend in America. It certainly caused great ill feeling and confusion amongst the members of Richardson's REC in Britain.

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From this stage on, matters were to become still more complicated, for Gregg can be seen very definitely "forcing the pace" for the American authorities.

On 28 February 1889, Gregg had already published an open letter to Bishop Cheney. In this he claimed that there was the evidence of certain minutes from a meeting of the REC authorities in America which showed that, in 1880, Bishop William Nicholson, the Presiding Bishop at the time, had caused Gregg's name to be removed from the official Clergy List himself. This, claimed Gregg (incorrectly), was done without proper constitutional authority, and was therefore an act "ultra vires". Once again, he claimed that the matter had never been brought to a proper trial, and that he had never either seceded from the parent denomination, nor had he established an independent church.

In his final paragraph, Gregg announced his intention of being present in Boston, Mass., at the time of the next General Council on 22 May 1889. His words are diffuse, but in essence he was asking for the possibility of being allowed officially to join in with the Council: "I trust...that I shall still be recognised as a partner in the work of evangelical and protestant church reform".⁶¹ Later, in the magazine for April 1889, he repeated his intention to be in Boston publicly.⁶² Clearly Gregg had high hopes for the meeting.

Yet, he had overplayed his hand; he had also made a serious political blunder. In his open letter and subsequent writing in the denominational magazine, not only had he accused Bishop Nicholson (a greatly revered leader in America) of an illegal act, but he had presumed upon his friendship with Bishop Cheney, and can only have caused him embarrassment by his actions. Again, he had also presented the American authorities with what was virtually a "fait accompli". He had announced to all that he was to be present in Boston at the time of the General Council, and he had used emotional leverage to try to gain admittance once more to its membership.

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For Richardson and the other members of the REC in the UK, the situation was most serious. They saw Gregg as a powerful man who would not scruple to use his highly placed connexions within the American REC for the sake of usurping (as they must have seen it) their correct and legal position as the official branch of the denomination in Britain. Part of their fear was well founded, for, at the turn of that same year, there had been a major quarrel within the REC in Britain. The worst side of Richardson's mercurial personality had showed itself, and a number of his clergy had simply left him - some to go to the RCE, some to go to the FCE (see below). Even so, the results of Gregg's ambitions was a flurry of American diplomatic activity in the new year of 1889, not only to and from the REC in Britain, but within the REC in America; and the letters, recently discovered, are astonishingly frank.

In brief, on 24 January 1889, Mr. Charles D. Kellogg (Secretary of the General Council of the REC in America, 1881-1894) wrote to the Presiding Bishop, Charles Edward Cheney, enclosing correspondence between himself and, on the one hand, Bishop Gregg, and on the other, the Reverend J. Anderson (General Secretary of the REC in the United Kingdom). This was an attempt to try to

find the facts in the morass of accusations and ill feeling between the two denominations in Britain.

Gregg's letter is no longer extant, but Anderson's letter, dated 10 January 1889, spoke of the indignation caused by Gregg's published statement that the names of the REC clergy in Britain were to be omitted from the official list in America. Some of the names mentioned by Gregg, said Anderson, were not those of REC clergy at all. Other named people who were said to have applied for ordination to Gregg were those who had originally applied unsuccessfully to the REC. Anderson ended his letter "...it is...obvious that a determined effort is being made to bring about our separation..." (i.e. between the REC in Britain and the parent denomination in America).⁶³

Bishop Cheney replied to Kellogg on 28 January 1889 to thank him for his letter and enclosures. But he was very doubtful about Richardson and his motives:

"I am more and more convinced that the majority of our General Committee made one of the most fearful blunders ever committed when they turned the cold shoulder to Bishop Gregg, and subsequently put Bishop Richardson in the position which he now occupies. All I learn from England convinces me more and more that Richardson is an exceedingly dangerous man; that he is not a Reformed Episcopalian at heart, but a scheming fellow ready to take up anything which will advance his personal interest".

The best way forward, advised Cheney, was to look, not at the matter of the personal characters of either Gregg or Richardson, but to examine the worship of the two bodies they represented. He pointed out that Gregg had provided a thoroughly revised Prayer Book, largely at his own cost, and one which was consistent with the teachings of the REC. On the other hand, Richardson's churches continued to use the old Books of Common Prayer, unrevised and full of the teaching that the REC considered to be dangerous and Romanistic. He concluded by telling Kellogg that he had written to the Reverend William Simms, Bishop Sugden and Bishop Richardson to find out more about their usage of the old and unrevised Prayer Book.⁶⁴

Meanwhile, Bishop William Nicholson, the former Presiding Bishop who had originally ordered the removal of Gregg's name from the clergy list, wrote to Kellogg. He advised strongly that Gregg be not allowed to attend the General Council meeting. He argued simply that Gregg was not a minister of the REC, and that his name had been removed from the list properly and legally. There was no particular Canon involved; it was a decision of the highest authority of

the denomination. If Gregg were allowed to attend, then, Nicholson warned, "the exciting discussion would entail a calamity upon the church".⁶⁵

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Cheney indeed wrote to England for information on the matter of the dispute - as he had told Kellogg.

Cheney's letter to Sugden was a gentle and kind one, written on 31 January 1889. He referred to "the ceaseless controversy which seems to be carried on in Great Britain", and asked three questions:

- i. Was a revised Prayer Book used in the REC churches which conformed to the Declaration of Principles?
- ii. If so, when was the revision made, and by whom was it published?
- iii. Was it true, as had been frequently alleged, that most of the churches of the so-called "American Branch" of the REC in England used the unrevised Liturgy of the Established Church?

Certainly suspecting that Cheney favoured Gregg in the dispute, Sugden wrote two letters. The first was his reply to Cheney, dated 22 February 1889: the second letter, marked "Private and Confidential" and dated 23 February, was to the Reverend W.T Sabine, a distinguished ex-Rector of the Protestant Episcopal Church - and also a powerful member of the General Council of the REC.

In his letter to Cheney, Sugden pointed out that the copyright of the revised Prayer Book had been taken out of their hands at the very first by Gregg. It was their intention to produce a revised Prayer Book of their own "as soon as our circumstances permit". However, in the meantime, the Synod had authorised the use of the Prayer Book which had been produced by the Prayer Book Revision Society. Concerning the use of the Prayer Book by the clergy, Sugden answered that any minister using an unreformed book was liable to discipline, but that for necessity sake ordinary Books of Common Prayer had been altered by hand. Finally, Sugden declared that the accusation of the use of an unrevised Liturgy was utterly false - any minister would use this "at his peril". Interestingly, Sugden's reply was colder in tone than the letter it answered, despite his habitually gentle personality. Certainly there had been a resentment over the long relationship between Cheney and Gregg, and thereby the element of duplicity about it all.

Sugden's letter to Sabine was more open and less formal, and he wrote from Bournemouth where he was spending the winter by doctor's orders. He asked: "Am I right in my apprehension that Bishop Gregg is coquetting with some of our American Brethren?" The letter continued: "It appears to me that Bishop Gregg has made advances, and those advances are encouraged by some of our American Brethren". He has sent copies of the correspondence to Sabine in the hope that "there shall be a fair and truthful statement of our case instead of a wily perversion of it".

Evidently Sabine took Sugden's plea to heart, for he wrote to Sugden on 4 March 1889 for more information, especially concerning the use of Hymns Ancient and Modern in the British REC. Sugden made his reply on 26 March. The usual book was Bickersteth's Hymnal Companion, and although the Reformed Church at Harlesden had used Hymns A & M, as soon as the church joined the REC the use of this book had been discontinued. But, at the same time, Sugden admitted: "you might have seen copies of the Hymns A & M...here and there in the pews. We cannot prevent this without infringing on personal liberty".⁶⁶

Cheney's letter had been written to Bishop Richardson on 31 January 1889, but there was evidently bad feeling between the two men, for the correspondence from Richardson to America was returned, not to Cheney, but to Kellogg as the Secretary of the General Council. On 16 February, Richardson wrote, clearly angry that the General Council was intending to define "'its position with regard to the two organisations each claiming to be the true Reformed Episcopal Church on that side of the sea'. Until now I supposed that the Gen. Council had decided that question." He was also angry that Gregg's denomination was referred to as "the other branch" of the REC or that there was a mention of "the so-called American branch in England". As had so often happened in the past, Richardson allowed his displeasure to overcome both his courtesy and his tact. He referred in detail to some of Gregg's less pleasant references to himself as "a Dissenting Minister at Malvern", but then made the mistake of issuing the threat that if Gregg was re-admitted "we shall at once resign to a man". The letter is both aggressive and foolish.

On 13 March 1889, Richardson followed this with a (badly) typed letter, again to Kellogg, from his address at 27 Belgrave Road in St. John's Wood, London, N.W. It is a curiously bitter communication stating that he had been handed "many letters to persons in this country, from Bishop Cheney". From these he

learned that Cheney "has been in 'constant & friendly' correspondence with our bitter, mendacious, & unscrupulous, enemy, Dr. Gregg".⁶⁷

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At this stage, there must have been much confidential "negotiation" amongst the senior members of the REC in America, for both Gregg and Richardson had shown themselves in a very disagreeable and foolish light. In fact Cheney's advice, as Presiding Bishop, had been that either Gregg be re-instated, or that, failing that, both branches of the denomination in Britain be simply "cut loose" altogether from the parent REC. In the event, neither piece of Cheney's advice was taken.

A brief letter from Richardson to Kellogg, dated 27 March, made it plain that the General Council had decided to call a representative from the British branch of the REC, and that if Sugden could not go, then Phillip Eldridge would be sent. Later, on 9 May 1889, a letter was sent by Richardson, again to Kellogg, to explain some severe internal problems of the REC in Britain over a newly consecrated bishop, Thomas Greenland (see below). However, in the letter he began by commending Eldridge who had just that day sailed for America. Again, the curious and militant nature of the writer was displayed: "He is a match for Gregg! Don't ask him to preach one of your great sermons, for he is not one of our best preachers - but he will smite Gregg hip and thigh".

In the meanwhile, Cheney had been trying to prevent possible trouble at the meeting of the General Council. On 28 February he had written to Kellogg to tell him of a letter that he had written to Gregg "some weeks ago". He had told Gregg that there was no question whatever that he was not a member of the General Council, and that, whatever "my sentiment with regard to the matter", he had no right to expect to be received as such. Again, on 2 April, in a communication with Charles Kellogg, Cheney tells of an official reply to a recent letter from Bishop Gregg to himself..."taking the ground that it will be exceedingly unwise for him to attempt to attend the General Council, and that I myself should be as opposed to any reopening of that old controversy as anyone else, whatever my views in regard to the original merits of the question".⁶⁸

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But Cheney's warnings to Gregg were in vain. According to the Reformed Church Record, on Thursday morning 9 May, he sailed for America for a "change and rest". Annie Darling Price says that he actually attended the Council, "but was by the previous action of the General Council, of course, not entitled to a seat in that body, and was not permitted to address the House." However, Phillip Eldridge was formally welcomed by the Council and given a seat. His Report on the state of the REC in Britain was both skilfully constructed and fluent. It avoided any mention of great controversy, and in referring to the slow but steady progress that there had been, he made the clear point that one of the main problems for them in the UK was simply poverty. It was this, said Eldridge, which had prevented the production of both a revised prayer book and a denominational magazine, as well as much else.

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Gregg's chance to take over the recognised leadership of an officially accredited REC in Britain had passed. Despite his clear influence with senior members of the denomination in America he had overplayed his hand. He had greatly embarrassed his trusted friend, Bishop Cheney - so much so that, in fact, in the opening business session of the Council, Cheney declined Bishop Latane's nomination of him as Presiding Bishop for a further term. Again, Gregg had questioned the legality of the actions of the greatly revered Bishop Nicholson; and, withall, he had appeared highly politically manipulative.⁶⁹

In view of the extraordinary letters of Richardson and his general behaviour (see below), the decision of the Council to reinforce the relationship with his branch of the REC was surprising. On the other hand, there was more to gain for the REC as a whole by maintaining the status quo in Britain for the moment. But, to all intents and purposes, Richardson's days were numbered. The new star was clearly to be Philip Xenophon Eldridge - a man of both ability and industry. He was also a man of utter integrity - and the strength of this combination was to show itself dramatically in the following years.

From this point on Gregg was largely a broken reed. His long-term project towards the leadership of the whole denomination in the United Kingdom had failed utterly. He was impossibly burdened by the demands of his work, and his health was swiftly and seriously breaking down.

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Gregg's last years: illness, insanity, and the near collapse of the RCE

Gregg had set himself an impossible task. By his formation of a denomination which was virtually identical with the Church of England, the burden of long-term policy, episcopal ministration and care, ecclesiastical discipline and the whole matter of physically moving around an ever increasing number of locations in England, Wales, Scotland, Eastern Canada and Newfoundland - all fell to him personally as Senior (and only) Bishop. Again, at Trinity, Southend, he was at the centre of his own very active and demanding ministry which covered ecclesiastical, civic, social and medical functions. But there was additionally the continual and insoluble problem of a financial insecurity which reached nearly every part of the denomination.

The very public failure of his hopes to gain leadership of an official British branch of the REC in 1889 must have made a significant contribution towards his final breakdown. Gregg had invested much hope and much effort in this aim, for he had been working towards it since 1884. In 1889, despite advice to the contrary, he travelled to Boston for the General Council; yet, as he had been warned, he had not been permitted membership, nor had he been allowed to speak. On the other hand, Philip Eldridge, who had been at one time one of his own clergy, was officially greeted, invited to present a formal report to the Council, and treated with the honour that he had himself so much sought.

While Gregg's health remained secure, problems could be "eclipsed" by his own vision and outstanding energy. This meant that he, personally, was able to travel around the countries, encouraging clergy, congregations or perhaps "well placed" patrons to greater effort towards the goal of making the RCE a strong and traditional "Anglican" church, yet thoroughly purged of the ritualism that had caused so much controversy from the mid-1840s onwards. But for most of his episcopate he had no coadjutor; and because his administrative method was one essentially centred on himself, the strain, both physical and mental, became intolerable.

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In looking at the serious breakdown of Gregg's health, the writer of his obituary in the Southend Standard in 1896 states: "a severe fall on board an Atlantic liner during one of his numerous visits to the United States... probably started the mischief". In the denominational magazine for October

1885, there was news that Gregg had been confined to bed for some time as the result of "an accident".⁷⁰ Certainly the accident had been serious, for in the November edition, it was reported that, after being confined to his bed for five weeks, Gregg was at last able "to leave home for rest and change". But his incapacity continued, for in December 1885 there was a report that his health was still "far from satisfactory, and he is still lame from the effects of the accident". Although Gregg had returned to work, it was anticipated that he would need to take further leave to aid recovery.

By March 1886 Gregg had been successfully involved in the School Board elections, so it is likely that he was well on the way to regaining his health.⁷¹ Even so, during those times he faced considerable personal hostility from many in Southend because of the militant stance he took over so many issues. On the night of 1 February 1888, there was an extraordinary scene when Gregg's effigy was publicly burned ... "through the agency and promotion of that party identified with publicans, priests, jerry-builders et hoc genus omne..." The local press was scandalized by such disgraceful behaviour. Nevertheless, it is easy to see that the psychological pressures upon Gregg in his own home town were hardly likely to help the increasing burden of work, responsibility and financial worry for the denomination as a whole.⁷²

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By the beginning of 1890, it was evident that Gregg's health troubles had returned once more. It is also clear that these problems were not merely physical.

During February and March, Gregg took a touring holiday in Italy and Switzerland. But there was an ominous note in the magazine that, although it was his intention to return to Southend for a short period at Easter, it was necessary for him to take "more prolonged rest". Apparently, whilst in the Vaudois, he was so ill that "he himself abandoned all expectation of recovery (and his nervous system is not yet equal to any strain)..."

There was also at this time the report of a strange scene on the Swiss/Italian border when Gregg had been stopped on an isolated part of a mountain near Salvadonica by the border guards. He was travelling on foot and alone when he was stopped and searched for contraband. The Reformed Church Record made much of his unjust detention "in a cold and fireless room". Such an incident had

also taken place previously, on 3 March, near Pontresina. Nevertheless, however unjustified the editor may have felt the action of the "Doganieri" to be on both occasions, there was evidently something in Gregg's general behaviour which drew the attention of the guards to him especially.⁷³

More than six weeks later he was still too unwell to undertake his normal work. The meeting of the General Synod had to be postponed by a notice, signed by him on 17 April 1890. Later, on 30 May, he undertook a Confirmation service at Southend, but his collapse during the service on Sunday morning, 4 June, gave great cause for concern. The Southend Standard reported that "on arrival home he lay for hours without movement".⁷⁴

In August 1890, Bishop Gregg's health was reported to be "much improved"; but in the meanwhile, the pressures upon him had in no way diminished. In August there was an editorial comment in the magazine on the hopes of the Northern churches to see Gregg soon. There were said to be "numerous candidates" waiting for confirmation. Personal pressures further compounded the problems, and on the evening of Thursday, 24 July 1890, Gregg's father, Francis Thornton Gregg, Rector of Ardagh, died at the age of 85. Despite his own precarious state of health Bishop Gregg journeyed to Ireland for the funeral.

By October, not surprisingly, Gregg's health had failed once more.⁷⁵ But this time there was to be no recovery.

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The final straw for Gregg was, however, in all probability, neither the pressure of denominational work on top of his constant illness nor the burden of his father's death. The sad fact was that, in the small RCE chapel at Prittlewell, there had allegedly occurred an incident between Gregg and a young lady who was the daughter of one of his church officers. In June 1891, the (by that time) husband of the lady concerned wrote a letter which made a most serious accusation which was considered to be libellous. Gregg instantly resorted to law in the case, *Gregg v. Rowe*. But whatever the truth, the pressure of the accusation played on a mind already overwrought, and resulted in the complete collapse of his sanity.

Although the denominational magazine failed after the edition of January 1891, considerable information is available from the pages of the local paper, the

Southend Standard. Gregg was very much a leader in the life of the town and the surrounding area. His consistently high profile meant that the local press kept a constant and watchful eye on him - and especially on the dramatic events of his last months at Trinity Church.

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"Gregg v. Rowe" was commenced at the Rochford Petty Session, and the edition of the Standard for 16 July 1891 set the affair firmly into its local context:

"At the Rochford Petty Session on Wednesday (15 July 1891) the first scene was enacted of a cause celebre which for sensation we venture to assert has never before been equalled in Southend."

In brief, George Rowe, aged 22 years, living at "Gwynfe", The Park, Southend, sent a letter to the Wardens of Trinity Church, dated 26 June 1891. In it, he accused Gregg of "seducing Gertrude Alice Rowe, then known as Gertrude Alice Webb, of Prittlewell, at or about the age of seventeen years, in the Vestry of Christ Church Mission Hall, Prittlewell...before the holding of services". But the matter had not finished there, for Rowe further continued: "...and I also charge him with systematic immoral conduct extending over a period of several years, and of which I hold abundant proof..."

The matter could not possibly be dealt with discretely, for in addition to sending the letter to the Wardens, Rowe also subsequently sent a signed copy of this accusation to the Solicitor acting on behalf of Bishop Gregg. The Chairman of the Bench committed Rowe to appear at the next Assizes, and released him upon bail of £100. Significantly, however, Gregg himself was not present at that Court Session.

Clearly, the affair had done great damage to the church community already. A newspaper article published on 9 July 1891, just one week previously, was headed: "Low Water at Trinity Church, Southend". It spoke of a major dispute between the Churchwardens and Gregg over pew rents, and continued with the information that "There is evidently a great commotion among the remnant membership of Trinity Church..."⁷⁶

The tragedy of this whole affair for both Gregg, Trinity Church and the denomination was highlighted in the most dramatic manner by Gregg himself in what turned out to be his final sermon at Trinity Church. At the morning

service (Mattins, Litany and Ante-Communion) on Sunday 12 July, Gregg had taken his text from the second chapter of the Song of Solomon: "Until the day break and the shadows flee away..." The reporter was said to have been sitting close to the pulpit, but even so, he was unable to hear some of what Gregg said to the "sparse congregation" because of his indistinct speech.

Gregg began: "You cannot stop the rising of the sun...." Some of his words at this point could not be heard, but he continued: "But light comes after the greatest darkness. 'Shadows!' Is not that a beautiful idea? Everything an everlasting shadow". Here Gregg made some sort of reference to his place at the Jubilee Service at Westminster Abbey. "I was at one little place - I got into the beautiful Westminster Abbey. They called me names by telling me I was somebody I was not". The subtitle of the sermon was "Tom's Mark: how he made it." "I am Tom", claimed Gregg; and he told a story of Tom who would fight to defend the Queen's name, or that of his mother, or that of God. There was, somewhere, a logic to the sermon, but that logic was hopelessly twisted and fragmented. It must have been evident to all present that Gregg's genuinely distinguished intellect had completely failed him.⁷⁷ It is hardly surprising that he was not present at the Rochford Assizes just three days afterwards.⁷⁸

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The case continued for a while, but plainly any sort of proper legal process was impossible. In the Southend Standard for 4 December 1891, a headline read "Bishop Gregg still insane". In the account of the case, Gregg v. Rowe, it was recorded that on Monday that same week, the jury had returned a formal verdict upon Rowe of "not guilty", and he was acquitted. However, it is interesting to see that this did not mean that it was automatically assumed that Gregg was guilty of the accusations made. In the same edition of the Standard the writer "Rambler" commented: "without his (Gregg's) presence in the witness box, the family could not make a fair fight against the accusation...there was no guarantee that the cause of truth must have triumphed."⁷⁹

Gregg was resident, first at a private asylum near Hawkhurst in Kent, and later at another asylum at Camberwell in London.⁸⁰ The legal difficulty of his Rectorship at Southend was resolved when an "Order-in-Lunacy" was made, dated 17 March 1892, and the Rectorship was, by this, formally terminated.⁸¹ Although he lived on until 1896 he never recovered his sanity, and latterly his physical health also began to cause trouble. He seems to have recovered from congestion

of the lungs in the Spring of 1896, but on 31 March 1896 he died at the asylum in Camberwell. Gregg was just 56 years of age.⁸²

This is not the place for any enquiry as to his innocence or guilt in the matter of the accusations which ended his career in 1891. "Rambler" for one was not convinced of his guilt. Moreover, he, like many, saw Gregg as a powerful man with outstanding gifts. At the end of the Gregg v. Rowe case, he had written: "We part with Bishop Gregg...for ever. Not, alas! with a Good-bye or a Farewell, but with sad memories of a golden opportunity thrown away, and the wreck of startling abilities".⁸³

The judgement on Gregg made by the Anglo-catholic Anglican Archdeacon Theodore Wirgman (1911) is significant: "...he gave the impression of being an honest man, with the courage of his convictions." Even more significantly he continued: "His position, from a moral standpoint (as a priest who seceded from the Church of England over the ritualist controversy) was infinitely more logical than that of the late Bishop Ryle (Liverpool) and other Bishops of similar views, who remain within the Church of England whilst their theology and beliefs are really those of Bishop Cummins and 'Bishop' Gregg."⁸⁴

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The Reformed Church of England: 1892 - May 1894

Detailed information on the denomination at this time is difficult to obtain, and this is compounded by the fact that the Reformed Church Record failed in the early part of 1891. It is however clear that the damage suffered by the denomination as the result of the legal case of December 1891, and Gregg's insanity, was great. In fact no fewer than eight, or nine, or even more church communities were lost to the RCE: this represented something like half the churches which were functioning in the RCE at the opening of the 1890s.

It would be inappropriate within the scope of the present study to make a detailed examination of the histories of the many individual churches founded - or even of the various reasons for their failure. But certainly the failures included: Christ Church, Prittlewell; Christ Church, Braintree; Emmanuel, Cliff Town, Southend; Emmanuel, Chester; Christ Church, Paisley; Glasgow RCE; St. Jude's, Walsall (left the RCE, but later joined the FCE in 1909). Again, it is possible that one or both of the two small RCE missions in Spalding finally failed during this period of just over two years. [See the chart-surveys of churches, in the Appendix, pp. 582 ff. Further details are available in many cases from the author.]

However, churches which remained secure included: Nathaniel, Brighton; Christ Church, Hemel Hempstead; Emmanuel, Warrington; Christ Church, Liscard, Wirral; Christ Church, Eccles; Christ Church, Tue Brook, Liverpool; Christ Church, Leigh-on-Sea; Emmanuel, Birkenhead; and Trinity Church, Southend.

The surviving community which probably suffered most was Gregg's own Trinity Church, Southend.⁸⁵ It is a complex and unpleasant story, not for this present study. However, after great internal turmoil, Charles Snosswell, AKC, from Christ Church RCE, Braintree was installed as Rector. Although a much less dynamic man than his predecessor, he maintained a steady and successful ministry at Trinity from 1892 until he retired through ill health in 1905.

As the principal executive body, the General Synod remained intact. Nevertheless the RCE as a denomination was left with no bishop and no obviously outstanding leader. Gregg himself had not "groomed" anyone to take over from him, and, other than the provision of a group of three people to act jointly as Commissary in emergency, all ultimate "ecclesiastical" authority had been centralised in himself. Again, much of Gregg's effectiveness had been in his

ability to travel amongst the congregations as the central authority of the denomination. He was the vital focus who, in so many ways, touched the life of each one of the churches and communities in the RCE.

Although there was no episcopal oversight from within the denomination itself, the need for confirmations could be met by the assistance of other bishops - either from the FCE, or even from the REC. The matter of ordinations was, however, different, for the giving of orders (together with the attendant legal matters such as the licensing of clergy) implied an episcopal authority and jurisdiction rather than merely pastoral assistance and informal oversight.

The fact was that the constant claim of Gregg had been that the RCE was a protestant episcopal church on the Anglican model. The denomination simply could not function properly without its own episcopal authority at the centre. There was, therefore, no question of continuing the RCE with a presbyterial ministry and succession - as the FCE had worked in its earlier days.

By the end of 1893, the situation in the RCE had reached a crisis point. However, for different reasons, by the end of 1893, the REC of the UK had also reached a crisis point. It was at this time, therefore, that the situation for both denominations was solved - on the one hand, by the determined efforts of the Reverend Frank Gregg (Gregg's son) for the RCE, and, on the other, by the hard work and ability of the Reverend Philip Eldridge for the REC. The result of their work was the uniting of both General Synods; and from 15 May 1894, the new united denomination - "The Reformed Episcopal Church, otherwise known as the Reformed Church of England" - became a reality. (See below)

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CHAPTER 6

THE REFORMED EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN THE UK: 1880 - 1900

Denominational expansion: 1881 - 1894

It is far more difficult to obtain information on the work of the REC in Britain than for Bishop Gregg's RCE. From 1880 until 1897, there was no lasting denominational magazine, and thus, no central source of information to the denomination or to the public in general. Again, not only were Gregg and the RCE better organised, but, by reason of his militant personality and his particular aim to rival the Established Church, he held a consistently higher profile in the public eye than did the leaders of the REC.

Useful sources of information about the REC in Britain are the official reports made to the General Council meetings in America. However, not only were these undetailed, but in any case they were made only when the Council met every two or three years. Sometimes reports were not made even then.

Other information does appear from time to time in the pages of both the FCE Magazine and Gregg's Reformed Church Record. Press reports are, again, a useful source of information on the individual church communities. Other sources include letters found in the Reformed Episcopal Seminary in Philadelphia, town directories, published Visitors' Lists for places like Malvern and Bournemouth, and occasionally, local topographical books. But there is no easy way of establishing any detailed plan of the work and expansion of the denomination during these years.

New church communities, 1881 - 1891

In May 1881, John Sugden made his report to the Eighth General Council on "the condition of this church in Great Britain at this present time". But even then he admitted that "it has not been possible for us to obtain the statistical returns of our churches, after the model of your schedule recently sent to us". This was because there were a number of independent churches where Sugden and Richardson, together with their clergy, merely provided some sort of occasional Pastoral care. However, from the churches that he does mention, and from information available in the remaining copies of the Yeovil REC magazine from

1879 and 1880, it is possible to see that there were some 16 churches within actual REC jurisdiction:

Emmanuel, Barnstaple; Emmanuel, Eastbourne; Christ Church, Golden Hill, Staffs.; Holy Trinity, Ledbury; St. Saviour's, Littlehampton; Emmanuel, Malvern (CHC Trust); Christ Church, Peterborough; Margate; Christ Church, Yeovil; and Christ Church Mission, Preston, near Yeovil. In Bermuda the REC at St. Paul's was still working. In addition to these, regular services were taking place in public halls at Bournemouth, Folkestone, Hunstanton, Islington (London), and Macduff, in Scotland. However, after the 1881 Report to Council nothing more was heard of them.¹

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Between the latter part of 1881 and 1891 a further 12 churches or congregations entered the jurisdiction of the REC:

Lewisham (South London - 1881);² Cheddar (1882); Weymouth (at the Assembly Rooms - 1883);³ Emmanuel, Gunnersbury (North London - 1883);⁴ Christ Church, Carlton Hill (London, W.C. - 1886);⁵ St. Jude's, Balham (1887);⁶ Christ Church, West Kensington (London, W. - 1888);⁷ Christ Church, Harlesden (London, N.W. - 1888);⁸ St. Paul's, Skegness (1889) [illustrations p. xv];⁹ St. John's, Upton Manor (London, E. - 1889);¹⁰ Emmanuel, Farnham, Surrey (1889);¹¹ St. John's Mariners', Dover (c. 1890).¹² See Appendix, pp. 587 ff.

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There is no doubt that a great deal of effort was put into the attempt to make the denomination grow. Leading clergy included Eldridge, Richardson, Frank Lake Good, Philip Norton and Gordon Llewellyn - all being able men, and men who had experience in the building of new church communities.

But although the growth potential may have appeared to be there up to the early 1880s, it was simply not to be realised - as the following years were to show. Eldridge continued to do fine work wherever he was, but Richardson's judgement became increasingly less sound and he himself more and more difficult to work with (see below). Good continued his steady ministry at Warrington for a number of years, but Norton left the REC and was re-ordained by the Bishop of Worcester in 1879. Gordon Llewellyn left Yeovil in 1887 to be re-ordained by

the Bishop of Bath and Wells.¹³ And, over them all, at the opening of the 1880s, there was the godly, but increasingly frail senior Bishop, John Sugden. The truth was that there was neither any strong leadership nor any effective administration as there was in the RCE under Gregg.

From 1880 to 1889, there had been some 28, and quite possibly more, centres for REC services. But by the time of Eldridge's address to the General Council in May 1889, there were just 13 congregations left. These were: Balham, Barnstaple, Carlton Hill, Farnham, Gunnersbury, Harlesden, Littlehampton, Peterborough, Skegness, Upton Manor (the foundation stone was laid whilst Eldridge was in America), West Kensington, Wolverhampton and Yeovil. In his report Eldridge gave some further figures: "In our Sunday schools we have nearly 100 teachers and 1000 scholars". But this sounds impressive only until it is realised that these figures were divided between the 12 churches working at the beginning of that year. By contrast, in his very early days at Southend, Gregg had had a Sunday School of over 300 children. Again, by 1889 Gregg not only had some 20 churches in Britain under his care, but a further 20 or so in Canada and Newfoundland had just been transferred to the jurisdiction of the American parent REC.

Perhaps by way of explanation, Eldridge admitted: "...our poverty has hindered us from doing as much as we would. It has prevented us from publishing a revised Prayer Book, from maintaining a church news-paper organ, and from doing many other things."¹⁴ Yet however poor a state the denomination may have been in at mid-Summer 1889, the situation was to deteriorate further. There had been a major division amongst the REC clergy in 1888. There was clearly a serious disagreement between the REC in Britain and the American authorities in 1888/90. And worse than this, the increasingly unreliable behaviour of Richardson was to result in his resignation from the REC in 1892. (see below).

It is in the light of these factors that the virtual halt in the growth of the denomination must be seen in 1889. In fact there was just one new congregation added to the REC between 1889 and 1896, and that was in 1890 at the privately owned St. John's Mariners' Church in Dover.

The changing structure of the REC (UK), 1880 - 1888: its
leadership, its administration and its problems.

Leadership and administration in the 1880s

In Bishop Sugden's report to the Eighth General Council of the REC in May 1881, he gave details of the way in which the British General Synod had divided the country into two areas of episcopal responsibility: " By the arrangement of the Synod the country has been divided into two Jurisdictions: the one embracing the counties north of the Severn and the Thames, and the other the counties south of those rivers. The southern district falls to me, and the northern to Bishop Richardson." In addition, Bishop Hubert Bower had been consecrated at Littlehampton in August 1879 - but it was to assist them as a coadjutor. As Sugden further explained: "Bishop Bower has, at present, no Jurisdiction."¹⁵

Yet despite the clear statement of the areas of episcopal responsibility, the actual executive authority in Britain seems to have been vested very firmly in the General Synod. Certainly Sugden credits the jurisdictional division of the country to its decision.

The creation of the Synod itself was the result of the appeal by the clergy and laity of the REC in the UK to the Sixth General Council which had met in Newark, New Jersey, from 8 to 13 May 1878: "That for the more immediate government of the Reformed Episcopal Church in the United Kingdom, a truly Reformed Church of England, a General Synod may be elected there, upon a basis similar to that of the General Council..." This had been signed by Gregg, Sugden and the other clergy and laity, and was mainly, at that time, concerned with the revision of the Prayer Book for use of the English congregations. It was agreed to by the General Council.¹⁶

Precise details of the new synodical structure are not now traceable, and documentation of the REC during the 1880s is difficult to find. But by examining the documents available at the end of the 1870s and at the beginning of the 1880s, it is possible to see the way in which the administration of the denomination must have worked during the following years.

In fact the General Synod remained largely as it had been created before Gregg had separated from American jurisdiction. The meetings generally took place once a year in July; and, as before, the more pressing needs were dealt with by

a Standing Committee which met as needed. Once again, the Standing Committee had remained faithful to the American jurisdiction; and when Richardson had written to the The Rock in November 1878, he announced, "The Standing Committee and the General Synod...remain as before, with the exception of Bishop Gregg's retirement, none of the officials having joined his movement."¹⁷

In the year 1879/1880, the Standing Committee stood as it had been elected at the Synod of 22 July 1879: The Bishops together with the Honorary Secretary (the Reverend T.H. Leeson, incumbent of Holy Trinity REC, Ledbury) were ex-officio members. The other members were: "the Reverends F.W. Ashe, Goldenhill; H. Bower, Ventnor; P.X. Eldridge, Spalding; G.J.H. Llewellyn, Yeovil; and P. Norton, Littlehampton. Messrs. J.C. Gregg, Ledbury; J.R. Hemmans, Southend; J.C. Moore, Yeovil; H.T. Sugden, London; and T.L. Wilson, Brighton."

To assist the denomination in specialist areas four committees were appointed: Doctrine and Worship, Constitution and Canons, Finance, and "Trustees of the Sustentation Fund".¹⁸ Again, the considerable authority vested in the General Synod together with the Standing Committee was demonstrated by the proceedings of both bodies on 22 July 1879. The Standing Committee actually "considered a number of applications to enter the ministry of the REC. Mr. H. Day of Margate, and Mr. William Warder were accepted for Ordination as Deacons... Mr. C.S. Walter, of Bayswater, was licensed as a Lay-Deacon."¹⁹

Changes in administration

Even between 1881 and 1883, there was a slight change in the areas of episcopal jurisdiction in Britain. In May 1883, John Sugden's report to the General Council Meeting at Baltimore indicated that the former North/South division of the country had been altered: "the country has, for present convenient working, been divided into two jurisdictions, the Eastern and the Western. The Eastern is under my charge; the Western under that of Bishop Richardson...."²⁰ But the most significant change for the administration of the REC in Britain took place on 24 May 1883 at the morning meeting of the General Council of the REC.

In the previous year, on 4 October 1882, an adjourned meeting of the General Synod had re-convened at Westminster. The Revision Committee for Constitution and Canons had produced a resolution which affected vitally the relationship between the denomination in Britain and the authorities in America:

"...That, in view of the peculiar difficulties of the work of the Reformed Episcopal Church in Great Britain, and the great distance and

consequent difficulty of communication between this country and America, this General Synod feels the imperative necessity of an immediate independent existence, with full communion with the General Council..."

At Baltimore in the following year, the petition was granted, and from that point onwards the REC in Britain held a position which corresponded very much to the example that it had given to the Council - that of the relationship of PECUSA to the Established Church of England - one Church and Communion, but absolute autonomy and total administrative independence.²¹

Perhaps the degree of willingness with which this radical proposal was accepted by the General Council gives an indication of some of the difficulties and barriers that had grown up both within the REC in the UK, and between the British and the American authorities.

To start with, the American authorities were clearly embarrassed at the amount of open disunity and bad feeling which had been seen in Britain. Even after the division of the denomination had taken place, and Gregg had formed the RCE on a separate basis, there was fairly evidently quarrelling and bad feeling amongst the REC members who remained faithful to American jurisdiction. In June 1879, at the Seventh General Council meeting at Chicago, Bishop Cheney had framed a resolution which called on the Synod in the UK "to conform to REC canon law and to stop quarrelling".

Again, when the actual separation proposal was officially accepted by the Ninth General Council in 1883, there was a curious resolution which accompanied the enactment: "...in granting this request, we hereby most emphatically affirm that any Church calling itself the Reformed Episcopal Church, would be acting in opposition to the fundamental principles of the Church, if any duly accredited minister from another Evangelical Church were to be reordained by any of its Bishops." There is no doubt that the attempts by Gregg (in particular), and probably Sugden and Richardson also, to bring both the RCE and the REC closely into line with the Anglican model had met with disapproval in America. From the start, Gregg had insisted upon episcopal ordination to the presbyterate for ministers accepted into the RCE from other non-conformist denominations (see above). And even though neither Sugden nor Richardson was prepared to take the "imitation" of the Established Church as far as Gregg, yet nevertheless, this addition to the official statement by General Council makes it clear that re-ordinations had actually taken place.²²

Leadership: changes, ambitions, pressures and problems

In May 1883 Sugden signed his report to the General Council as Presiding Bishop of the REC in the UK, but as in his previous report of 1881, his reluctance to continue the leadership was quite obvious: "I hope after June next to take up my residence in London, and may possibly be free from the due discharge of my duties, in connection with the churches generally".²³

As has been indicated already, Sugden had given long service in India, and this had been followed by his difficult and busy ministry at Teddington. Latterly he had also had the duties of Presiding Bishop to contend with. Moreover, together with this, however small the denomination was, he had had to cope with all the bad feeling and political interaction that the troubled times of the late 1870s and early 1880s had caused. His health and strength were spent. But another significant factor at this time is the distinct possibility that he found it very difficult to work with Richardson.

In fact, it was not for another two years that Sugden retired, for Annie Darling Price says that "in 1885 (Richardson) was chosen Presiding Bishop of the Synod of Great Britain and Ireland". This would indicate that he was elected at the General Synod that July. But, having retired, Sugden seems to have made a very determined break with both Richardson and the denomination. Some eighteen months later, on 30 December 1886, he wrote to Bishop Gregg with suggestions that it might be possible to consider a process of re-union between the two REC denominations in the UK (see above). Significantly, he wrote not from an address in London, as he had earlier indicated might be the case, for he had moved to "Woodsome Villa", Kirkburton, near Huddersfield. In his letter to Gregg, Sugden stated "I still feel deeply interested in the Reformed Episcopal Church, though I have for some long time past taken little or no part in the administration of our section of it."

These words do not seem to be those of the man who had actually left the jurisdiction of the FCE from a clear conviction that the correct way forward was that of the "Established Church" pattern of the REC. But they are the words of someone who had possibly had more than enough of the temperament and personality of a an episcopal colleague later described by Bishop Cheney as "an exceedingly dangerous man...a scheming fellow..." (see above).²⁴

The two men were utterly different, and in a way most unlikely colleagues. Sugden was quiet, slightly withdrawn, and disliked the cut-and-thrust of the politics of both Teddington and the denomination. Richardson, on the other hand, was mercurial in temperament, very politically aware, and as former official correspondent between the church in Britain and the General Council, one who was able to take every advantage of the position he held (including the elevation of both Gregg, and, later, himself, to the episcopate).

Certainly Richardson had little time for his former senior colleague. In writing to Professor Kellogg in May 1889 concerning Gregg's ambitions for official recognition, he outlined the burden of responsibility that lay upon him alone. Referring to Sugden his words were both harsh and dismissive: "Bp. Sugden is old & does nothing" (text heavily underlined).²⁵

Richardson's move to London, 1885/1886

At the end of 1885 Richardson left his CHC church at Malvern in order to move to the more prestigious area of St. John's Wood in North London. When Sugden had made his report to the General Council in 1883, he had said "We have long needed, and been on the look-out for a location for the Reformed Episcopal Church in London itself..." Clearly Richardson was in agreement with this, but despite his fine work at Malvern,²⁶ the folly of his move, and of the setting up, firstly of Christ Church, Carlton Hill, and then Christ Church, West Kensington, was considerable. For in moving to London, he exchanged the security of his position at one of the long-established churches of the Connexion for the extreme uncertainty of a yet ungathered congregation.

Christ Church, Carlton Hill was a "neat building" according to Bishop Gregg, and capable of seating some 250 to 300 people. The property belonged to the Presbyterian Church, but it is likely that Richardson had taken the tenancy at the end of 1885, and so began services in the new year of 1886.

Yet the area was a wealthy one which was well provided with Protestant places of worship. Whilst Anglican churches in St. John's Wood and Maida Vale were ritualist, there were many non-conformist churches, and the Anglican Proprietary Chapel of St. John's, Downshire Hill, within easy reach. These provided a variety of evangelical styles in worship. But there was no obvious local "issue" into which Richardson could fit his worship as an appropriate

panacea. Hardly surprisingly, Christ Church failed in March 1892 when Bishop Richardson's financial affairs forced him into bankruptcy (see below).²⁷

The only possible advantage was that, as Presiding Bishop of the REC in Britain, he was now more centrally located for the whole country. He and his family had taken the house at 27 Belgrave Road, St. John's Wood,²⁸ and therefore he was within easy reach of all the London railway termini. Even so, the more practical Gregg knew the value of his own secure community at Southend. His only concessions to the problems of mail, and probably some committee work, were his arrangements to be at the Liberal Club in Whitehall Place for one day each week.

But whatever Richardson's hopes, the overall result of his work in London was to be disaster - for him and the denomination. The failure of his churches together with his own bad business sense resulted in his bankruptcy and resignation in March 1892. In the meantime, by the close of 1888, Richardson's poor man-management precipitated a leadership crisis more serious than the "parting of the ways" with Bishop Gregg just ten years before. However, this time, not one, but two bishops were to leave the denomination (see below).

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1888/1889: the burden of work for Richardson, changes in the leadership of the REC (UK), and a crisis for the denomination

By the end of the 1880s the REC was suffering much internal strain - particularly within its leadership. Certainly relations between the leaders were hopelessly flawed - at the least from the time of Bishop Sugden's retirement when Richardson was elected Presiding Bishop in his place. Indeed, it is more than likely that it was Richardson's style of leadership which was the source of most of the problems.

Bishop Hubert Bower

Hubert Bower had been consecrated by both Sugden and Richardson in 1879. But judging by Sugden's reports to General Council in 1881 and 1883, he had remained a coadjutor with no effective authority whatsoever. Again, the lack of documentary evidence makes it impossible to find why this was so. Certainly he was still functioning as an REC Bishop in the Summer of 1888, for on 11 June, at Christ Church, Carlton Hill, he assisted Richardson in the consecration of the Reverend Thomas Greenland as a co-adjutor bishop for the UK. But this was the last time he seems to have functioned as bishop at a major REC service.

In January 1889 Gregg published his assertion that the names of REC clergy working with Richardson were to be omitted from the official Clergy List in America (the matter has already been discussed). But what is significant is the list of clergy given by Gregg - despite the fact that Anderson cast doubts on the accuracy of some of the names - for Bower's name was not amongst them. But if Bower had not actually left, then as a bishop of the denomination, a denial would swiftly have been issued. Yet no such denial was forthcoming. Therefore, it would appear that Bower had left Richardson and the denomination some time between June 1888 and December that same year when the copy for the January edition following would have been prepared.

Certainly a letter from Richardson to Professor Kellogg, dated 9 May 1889, makes it clear that, by then, Richardson was bearing the whole burden of episcopal responsibility for the denomination. It further gave clear indication that there had been a major dispute, for it attempted to explain something of the problems which had led to the resignation of Bishop Greenland from the denomination. Its shrill and complaining tone shows a man evidently under great strain - only part of which was due to the fact that he was determindly

fighting Gregg's "territorial" ambitions for the recognised leadership of the REC in the United Kingdom. But, concerning the burden of his work, he wrote: "Bp. Sugden is old & does nothing. The whole burden of the chs. with all abuse, suffering & responsibility rests upon me. I have no stipend. I am a martyr."²⁹

However, Richardson's letter to Kellogg also indicates that even though Bower might have taken part in the consecration service on 11 June 1888, he had almost certainly taken little or no part in the work of the denomination for some time before that. The election and then the consecration of Greenland was a direct response to the work-load which was being borne by Richardson. His letter continued: "When Greenland joined us, I implored our brethren to elect him, to share with me the crushing burden...."³⁰ At this point it is worth noting that, as in Gregg's RCE, the small size of denomination did not lessen the severity of personal strain for a single bishop. In Richardson's case the weight of responsibility can only have placed still more of a strain upon what was a poor managerial ability anyway.

Bishop Thomas Greenland

Born in London in 1826, Greenland graduated at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge and was ordained in the Church of England. In 1864 he became Rector of Raithby-by-Spilsby in Lincolnshire, and from here he resigned over the ritualist controversy, moving to Harlesden, London. Here he became identified with the anti-ritualist congregation which had first met in 1886 at the local High School.³¹ However, as he was a priest of the Church of England, the Bishop of London inhibited him from working there. Nevertheless, according to Greenland himself, he defied the Bishop and continued to take REC services, both at the new Christ Church, Harlesden, and elsewhere. Consequently he became associated with the denomination.³²

According to Greenland himself, it was soon after his work at Harlesden that he was "requested and chosen to be a Bishop of the REC..." - and on 11 June 1888, he was consecrated. But the process was precipitate, and Richardson did not know Greenland well enough to be able to judge whether or not they could work together. In his letter to Kellogg of 9 May 1889, Richardson actually asserted that "had he (Greenland) proved a true man, I shd. have retired altogether". Yet the truth of the matter is simply that Richardson, being overworked and overwrought, had clutched at a straw. Greenland was a caring man and an able one - as his obituary notices make clear. But, from the first, it was a serious

mismatch both for denomination and Presiding Bishop, as was made evident by Greenland's letter of resignation of 1 January 1889, and the letter from Richardson to Kellogg of 9 May 1889. Both are full of recrimination.

In brief, Richardson's accusation (somewhat unreasonably) was that "...Having been in the Establishment, he showed himself full of pride". Richardson's writing is not easy to read, but he continued: "The clergy unanimously refused to serve (indistinct) under him - The congregations begged that he might not be sent again - & finally he tendered his resignation wh. was unanimously accepted by the General Synod."

For his part, Greenland had evidently "cut across" some of the influential clergy of the denomination in his earliest days. He asked Eldridge to be his chaplain, but there were serious differences between them, and Eldridge stated frankly "Our views do not agree as to methods by which the movement should be extended, or what should be expected from the clergy..." At Littlehampton, Greenland and the Reverend W.H. Simms had a sharp disagreement both over the finances of the church and in the matter of finding an assistant for St. Saviour's. Again, at Harlesden he had a sharp disagreement with the minister of Christ Church. As a convinced low-churchman, Greenland strongly disapproved of the "semi-choral" services that Anderson was conducting. Finally, he had found himself at serious odds with Bishop Richardson over the refusal by Richardson to grant a licence to the Reverend W.G. Tyler, the former curate at Carlton Hill. Disagreement between the two bishops reached a very sharp level with Richardson accusing his episcopal colleague of "arrogance and insolence". Indeed, it has to be said that, in several cases, relationships had sunk to the level of personal abuse. Simms had reportedly told Greenland that he was "greedy of fees and a wet blanket". Richardson himself had most ill-advisedly written: "The most fatal error I committed was in consecrating a bad-tempered domineering man like you...."

Greenland felt himself assailed on all sides, and not surprisingly he felt that, without the support of his senior colleague, it was simply not worth continuing in the denomination. He drew his letter of resignation to a close with the sad statement "I have striven to the best of my power to act up to the letter and spirit of the Canons. I have met with insult while striving to do my duty to the Reformed Church and my Master..."³³

There is no point in apportioning blame for this lamentable incident. But it is important to see why the events turned out as they did, because the reasons throw light on the nature of the denomination itself - and on those who led it.

Firstly, there is no doubt that, not only should Richardson have known Greenland better, but Greenland should have known the style and life of the denomination better than he did when he consented to accept the episcopate.

Without going into great detail, Eldridge resigned largely over a clash of ideas on denominational expansion. Greenland clashed with Simms over the financial insecurity of the Littlehampton church, and over the appointment of an assistant minister. He clashed with Anderson over the matter of a type of worship which he considered inappropriate to a truly evangelical tradition. Finally he clashed with Richardson over the matter of the licensing of a clergyman. But, in all these matters, he was acting as he would have expected an Anglican bishop to act within his own diocese - normally through his archdeacon. Yet the fact was that he had no archdeacon to "absorb" the hostility involved in such rigid governance. Moreover, in most of these matters, he gave clear indications of having a typically "Establishment" understanding of the rule of Canon Law.

But what Greenland patently did not understand (because he did not really understand the REC) was that the position of the REC bishops was far less defined, and far less that of a legal "watchdog". The REC churches were, like those of Gregg in the RCE, necessarily congregational in both nature and constitution. Whereas the Canons agreed by Synod prevailed as a technical boundary-wall, yet, nevertheless, there had to be a great deal of pragmatism in the exercise of episcopal authority. Many of the churches were virtually independent, except that they employed an REC minister, and therefore might have members elected to the Synod. It is precisely this reason which meant that Sugden had been unable to give accurate church statistics in his reports to the General Council in 1881 and 1883. It is worth noting that Gregg's hold over his RCE was not as strong as he might have wished (see above) simply because of this "congregationalist" factor. But, Gregg's centralised control within his denomination was considerably more powerful than that of Richardson in his churches, which were even more "congregationalist" in style.

In short, Richardson did not know the man, and Greenland did not understand the job. But the result for the denomination was most serious. There can have been

no lessening of the pressure of work for Richardson; and from 1889 to the time of his fall in 1892, his behaviour was to become more and more erratic.

Secession of other clergy from the REC, 1888/1889

In the Reformed Church Record for January 1889, Gregg implied (not for the first time) that Richardson's REC was fragmenting. Once more, this was a part of his claim to the General Council in America that he and his RCE represented more properly the true REC in Britain as opposed to the disunited denomination led by Richardson. Hence, his claim that the names of Richardson's clergy were to be omitted from the official Clergy Lists in America.

In a letter of explanation to the Secretary of the General Council, Professor Kellogg, the Secretary of the UK General Synod, the Reverend J. Anderson assured him that Gregg's article was both mischievous in intent and inaccurate. But, in fact, Anderson's letter simply does not answer properly the issues raised by Gregg's article, however unworthy Gregg's ambitions might have been.

In his magazine, Gregg had given the following names "ministerially associated" with Richardson as at the beginning of 1889: " J. Anderson, W.F. Bentley, P.X. Eldridge, T. Foster, T. Greenland, C Johnson, G. Paul, A. Poulton, J. Renny, B.G. Richardson, J.C.B. Sanders, W.H. Simms, E. Slater, C. Stevens, J. Sugden, W.G. Tyler, - Wace, H. Whittaker, and E.C.L. Wilson".

Of these 19 men, Gregg claimed that several (unnamed) had applied to him for work with the RCE - but Anderson's letter to Kellogg stated that these were just two young men who had already "made application unsuccessfully to ourselves; the Church of England; and the Free Church of England". According to Anderson, some of the names mentioned by Gregg were not REC clergy at all - though he did not say which. Further, Anderson claimed that "the names of some of our leading presbyters are not mentioned at all"; but once again he gave no names and no further details to Kellogg.

Withall, Anderson's letter is most unsatisfactory. He enclosed the cutting from the Reformed Church Record, but he gave no clear and substantiated statement of the numbers of clergy who actually were recognised by the General Synod of the REC - in fact, his letter is defensive in tone. There is, at this present time, no way of constructing an accurate list of the officially recognised clergy without proper records. But it is nevertheless quite evident that

Anderson was erring very much on the side of optimism.³⁴ Indeed, of the 19 names which Gregg did publish, Greenland had already resigned on 1 January, John Sugden had had virtually nothing to do with Richardson for a long while, and B.G. Richardson was the minister who had formerly worked at Christ Church, Harlesden but had then broken away to form an independent church of St. James, Harlesden some two years before. Again, W.G. Tyler had followed Greenland out of the REC, and by April 1889 had opened a church in Ealing.³⁵

Whilst there is no way of stating accurate numbers and figures, it is quite clear that at some stage during 1888 there had indeed been a major division within the REC in Britain. A number of men, including two bishops, had resigned. This would certainly explain the dramatic nature of Richardson's letter to Kellogg: "The whole burden of the chs. with all abuse, suffering & responsibility rests upon me... I am a martyr."

However much Anderson may have tried to minimise the seriousness of all this, for such a small denomination, the situation was most grave. Yet exactly why the division took place is not easy to find, for there is virtually no source of detailed information. That much of it had to do with the disputes within the leadership is reasonable, for a number of the clergy had "taken sides". But another possibility lies in the fact that much of 1888 had been taken up with an attempt to unite the REC with the FCE. By the close of the year this attempt was clearly a failure. But it is again possible that such a failure had put serious strains upon the internal unity of the denomination (see below).

Bishop Thomas Greenland (conclusion)

After Bishop Greenland had resigned from the REC, according to Richardson's letter to Kellogg of 9 May 1889, "He has set up a little venture of his own - & his whole following consists of our rejected clergy or of those who have displaced themselves. His movement will live at the longest 3 months."

In fact Richardson was wrong, for the movement with which Greenland became associated was later to become part of a complicated and long lasting pattern of independent episcopal successions (not for here). But, in brief, in June 1889 there was a report by Gregg of a new congregation at Castle Hill, Ealing started by the Reverend W.G. Tyler, formerly of the REC. On Sunday evening 28 April 1889, the sermon was preached there by "Right Rev. Thos. Greenland, MA...of the Free Protestant Church of England Mission." ³⁶

But whatever the part played by Greenland in founding the FPCE,³⁷ it is clear that, within little more than a year, he had retired from it - and in June 1889, Gregg reported that Greenland was to retire to Bournemouth".³⁸ In fact Greenland and his wife took up residence in "Raithby", Crescent Road, Upper Parkstone. But although retired, he did take the temporary incumbency, for about a year, of the independent evangelical Nathaniel Church (later Christ Church), in Westbourne. For a while this was actually attached informally to the REC. Again, also in retirement, John Sugden frequently worshipped there.³⁹

The evidence indicates that Greenland was liked and respected by many - even by some in the REC he had left. He had certainly preserved good relations with Philip Eldridge, for following the resignation of Richardson in 1892, when Eldridge and James Renney were both elected to the episcopate, Greenland took part in their consecration on 24 June 1892.⁴⁰ As the local Dorset press said in his obituary after his death on 9 May 1904, he "had gained the respect and esteem of a large circle of friends and acquaintances". He was 77 years old.⁴¹

1888 and 1891: attempts at re-union between the REC and the FCE

There is no doubt that the senior members of the REC in Britain were strongly committed to the attempts to unite the FCE and the REC in 1888 and 1891. Firstly, it offered the opportunity to reverse what many must have seen as a continuing decline in the church - for it is clear that the development of the denomination in Britain had not realised the potential that many had seen at the time of its formation in 1877. But secondly, it offered the hope that the stronger and more settled administration of the FCE might be able to bring strength to the REC which had not only had the effects of the original "secession" of Gregg to deal with, but also a Presiding Bishop who had seemed to be unable to find the help of an episcopal colleague he so much needed.

In fact, a form of federative union had earlier been in force from the time of the foundation of the REC in 1877. These, however, had been difficult days for all three denominations, and in 1883, the Convocation of the FCE had formally nullified the federative union with the statement that it had been the source of "much mischief". However, because it is more appropriate to see the unity attempts in the light of that 1883 decision by the FCE, the negotiations of 1888 and 1891 are examined in the next chapter, which deals with the FCE.

The unauthorised consecrations by Bishop Richardson: 1890

Exactly why Richardson involved himself in the consecration of bishops outside the usual denominations is not at all clear. Unfortunately, the older authorities on independent lines of consecration, Brandreth and Anson, allowed a laconic tone to pervade their work. The result was that the actual reasons why some of the consecrations were performed, and the circumstances surrounding the more *recherché* successions, were not properly considered. Again, primary sources in this field are very scarce, and works by Anson, Pruter and Melton, and Alan Bain have often quoted Brandreth.

James Martin, and the "Nazarene Episcopal Ecclesia"

Each of the authorities states that, at some time in 1890 or before, Bishop Richardson consecrated James Martin for the work of the sect called the "Nazarene Episcopal Ecclesia".⁴² Later, Bishop C.D. Boltwood stated that this had been founded by Martin in 1873.⁴³ According to Anson, the sect had a British Israelite ethos, and its first headquarters were in Flaxman Road, South London, alongside Loughborough Junction Station. In 1890, this moved to Kent House Road, Sydenham, near the Crystal Palace; and here Martin first opened his Seminary, known as the Nazarene College.⁴⁴

Exactly when Richardson consecrated Martin is unknown. But there is an indication that Richardson was under some form of censure by the American authorities in 1888. In the Reformed Church Record for December 1888, a letter to Gregg from "Canadian REC" was published. Dated 15 October 1888, the anonymous writer says: "As for the follies of one individual in England, Canadians have no more respect for them than you have". Firstly, it is clear that this refers to Richardson. Secondly, it is unlikely that this refers to the attempted union between the REC and the FCE (see below), for this was not announced to the press until 11 October 1888, and then the news not published by the Episcopal Recorder in North America until 25 October 1888. But it is possible that it refers to an unauthorised consecration - in 1887, or earlier in 1888. If this is so, it would certainly explain why Bishop Cheney was so utterly condemnatory about Richardson in his correspondence with Professor Kellogg in the negotiations over Gregg's attempt to gain the recognition of the General Council. His letter of 28 January 1889 referred to "a scheming fellow ready to take up anything that will advance his personal interest".⁴⁵

At some stage, Martin subsequently received a second form of consecration from the Armenian, Bishop Leon Chechemian. Bain says that this took place on 2 November 1890.⁴⁶ However, the sect founded by James Martin, and indeed Martin himself, soon became associated with Leon Chechemian. Yet, Chechemian was also consecrated by Richardson.

Leon Chechemian, and the Free Protestant Episcopal Church of England

Brandreth, Anson and Bain all state that, in 1890, Richardson assisted Bishop Charles Isaac Stevens in the consecration, sub-conditione, of Leon Chechemian - Bain gives the date as 4 May 1890.⁴⁷ In fact, the principal intention seems to have been to introduce Chechemian into the line of succession of the "Ancient British Church". That sect itself was the creation of Stevens' consecrator, Richard Williams Morgan. (Morgan, together with F.G. Lee and J.T. Seccombe had consecrated Stevens for the Ancient British Church in 1879).

A Lampeter graduate, an antiquarian and novelist, Morgan was also sometime assistant curate of Marholm in Northamptonshire. According to Brandreth: "Morgan is stated to have been a fanatic obsessed with the vision of a British Church which should restore the doctrine and discipline of the days before St. Augustine". To this end, Morgan was consecrated at Marholm in 1874 by Julius Ferrette. Ferrette had in turn been consecrated on 2 June 1866 (Old Style), as "Bishop of Iona" by Mgr. Bedros, Bishop of Emesa (Homs) of the Syrian Antiochene Church. Later Bedros was actually to become Patriarch of Antioch, under the title Ignatius Peter III.⁴⁸ The line of succession is therefore:
 Ignatius Peter III = Ferrette = Morgan = Stevens (+ ASR) = Chechemian.

In defence of Richardson, he himself seems to have had no part in the sect, other than to be a second bishop in a conditional consecration. Nevertheless, this was all a far cry from the sternly "correct" and protestant Reformed Episcopal Church. There will certainly have been great disquiet for the authorities in America, for the spirit of the "Declaration of Principles", strongly rejected the notion of the Apostolic Succession as conferring any special status whatsoever.

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Here, it is necessary to examine briefly the background and ecclesiastical ambitions of Leon Chechemian, for it was his episcopal "enterprises" which

later helped to bring Richardson's name into some question for his part in the two irregular consecrations.

In brief, Chechemian was born in Armenia in 1848. He was ordained priest in the Orthodox Armenian Uniate Church at Malatia in 1866, subsequently being appointed to several parishes in Armenia. There is little doubt of his ability, for he was admitted to the rank of "Vartapet" in 1878.

In the light of subsequent claims made by Chechemian it is important to understand the nature of the Vartapet as an ecclesiastical dignitary. The position of Vartapet is, according to Anson, unique to the Armenian Church, and is conferred by a ceremony which is not unlike an ordination. Like Orthodox bishops Vartapets are celibate, their chief responsibilities being preaching and teaching. A point of possible confusion to those in the Western Churches is that they are permitted to carry the "gavazan" - a pastoral staff similar to the crozier of a Byzantine bishop.

The details of Chechemian's career would be inappropriate in this study. However, he moved to the West, and in 1890 the Archbishop of Dublin, Lord Plunket, officially received him into the Church of Ireland, and licensed him to the diocese of Dublin.⁴⁹ His position evidently caused some interest, for Anson quotes a newspaper article from Ireland (unspecified) which referred to the fact that the Bishop of London had recommended Chechemian as "a bishop of a church other than the established church".⁵⁰ It would appear to be more than possible that in an earlier contact with Temple, Chechemian had represented himself as possessing episcopal status. Anson is clear that the rank did not confer episcopal orders. Yet the public claim which was carried forward by Chechemian and his supporters was later voiced by Bishop Boltwood. In Boltwood's pamphlet he states plainly: "On April 23rd, 1878, the Rev. Leon Checkemian (sic) was consecrated Bishop of Malatia (in the great Cathedral of Malatia) by Archbishop Chorchorunian..." But then, the reason for the certainty of Boltwood's statement, and the inflated status he accorded to Chechemian become obvious in the light of what was to take place in 1897 (see below).

Certainly, according to information passed on by Mar Georgius (Hugh George de Willmott Newman) and some other bishops of the Ferrette line, on 15 August 1890 Chechemian founded the "United Armenian Catholic Church in the British Isles", with himself as its first Primate. This would have been very close to the time when Plunket had licensed him to his Diocese, and presumably whilst Chechemian

was still being paid for his services as an Anglican priest.⁵¹ In the light of the many doubts that there are now about the episcopal nature of Chechemian's orders as Vartapet (and presumably that there were then within Chechemian's own mind), it is therefore probable that his conditional consecration in 1890 at the hands of Stevens and Richardson was an attempt to make regular in his orders that which had been formerly lacking.

According to Anson, little or nothing more is heard of Chechemian's movements or of his work in Dublin until the next stage in his career, which would appear to take place in the year 1897. In this year, according to Pruter and Melton, Chechemian was "the leading force" in the uniting of three older sects to form the new "Free Protestant Episcopal Church of England." The three older sects were: "The Ancient British Church" under Morgan, "The Nazarene Episcopal Ecclesia" under Martin, and the "Free Protestant Church of England" which had been created by Bishop Greenland (although he subsequently left soon after its foundation). Whether or not these churches actually had many members is not clear. In the light of Greenland's retirement, it is likely that he considered the movement he had headed to have failed. The probability is therefore that the three sects existed mainly on paper.⁵²

According to Anson, the new Church was legally constituted in 1897. However, within a very short time Chechemian seems to have been the victim of his own insecurity. According to Alan Bain, following election as Archbishop of the FPEC in 1897, he was once again consecrated, but this time by six bishops. No details survive of either consecration or consecrators.⁵³

The detail of the subsequent history of Chechemian and the new FPEC⁵⁴ is not germane to the present study. However, the strangely insubstantial nature of the FPEC through the years (until its apparent virtual failure during the 1970s) have inevitably brought the bona-fides of that denomination into question. Again, although there is no record of Richardson having been involved in any further consecrations, yet both James Martin and Chechemian were themselves the consecrators of other bishops in "irregular" successions, and because of this, Richardson himself has been seen in a critical light as the originator of their orders. Inevitably, if unfairly, this has reflected upon the denomination into which he was originally himself consecrated.

Richardson was compelled to resign from the REC following his bankruptcy in 1892 (see below). Nevertheless, his two unauthorised consecrations have

provided critical ammunition for those who perhaps have not had the opportunity to sift through facts and dates.⁵⁵

A possible reason why the consecrations took place

In the minds of many in the latter part of the 19th century (and since), the giving or receiving of the ancient apostolic succession was seen variously as a test or guarantee of the legality of the authority of a Church or denomination. This is to state the matter too briefly; nevertheless, it was this search for an unquestionable "sign" of legality which enabled the FCE to change from a presbyterially ordered denomination in 1863 to being a conventionally ordered protestant episcopal church with the consecrations of both Sugden and Price in 1876. Certainly the "purity" of the ancient "Canterbury" succession was always the aim of Gregg in his work with the RCE. But even though Richardson did not attempt to model the REC on the Established Church in the same way that Gregg had modelled the RCE, nevertheless the acceptability and validity of the orders which he conferred were an urgent and constant concern of his (see below).

It is impossible for us now to see the late 19th century ecclesiastical world through Richardson's eyes. Nevertheless, in consecrating Martin for the "Nazarene Episcopal Ecclesia", he was, in all probability, attempting to further the "legal" validation of a Protestant cause which was ostensibly moulded in the image of the ancient New Testament church - something that the REC in America had attempted to do from the start.

In the case of his assistance in the conditional consecration of Chechemian in 1890, he may well have seen himself as materially assisting a distinguished Armenian dignitary to obtain unquestionable and "legal" recognition in the eyes of the Western churches. Certainly in his move to the Church of Ireland, Chechemian appeared to have embraced the Protestant cause wholeheartedly. It is possible therefore that Richardson felt his own assistance justified to a "newsworthy" and unusual fellow protestant.

The fact of the matter is that Chechemian's protestantism seems to have been a somewhat variable conviction. It is justifiable therefore to assert that Richardson was actually deluded by Chechemian's claims. But then, if he had been deluded, so had the Archbishop of Dublin, the Fourth Baron Plunket.

Bishop Richardson's bankruptcy and resignation, 1892

From the time of its formation in the UK in 1877, the REC had been the centre of continual troubles. Secession, finance, poor relationships between the bishops, failure of the FCE/REC unity plan of 1888, division amongst the clergy in 1888/89, Gregg's attempt to gain leadership of the REC cause in the UK during 1888/89 - all showed that the high hopes for the founders of the REC in 1877 were probably unachievable while existing leaders remained in office.

Firstly, the personality "mix" of the denomination simply did not work. But more serious than this was the abiding poverty which had been emphasised by Sugden in his report to the General Council of 1883 and Eldridge in his report of 1889. In 1889 Eldridge said frankly: "Financially, we are very poor. We have no wealthy members to endow an Extension Fund, and each of our congregations has as much as it can do to maintain itself." Later in his report, he gave further detail: "We have had no money with which to extend our work...our poverty has hindered us from doing as much as we would. It has prevented us from publishing a revised Prayer Book, from maintaining a church newspaper organ, and from doing many other things."⁵⁶

It is possibly this overriding financial insecurity which led Richardson to attempt make his own London ministry more assured by making certain financial deals which simply did not work. As was to become all too obvious, Richardson had little business sense, and his resulting bankruptcy in 1892 succeeded only in bringing the fortunes of an already poor and disunited denomination to their lowest ebb since the foundation of the REC in Britain in 1877.

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It is clear that Richardson had actually been under grave financial pressure at the time when he left his church in Malvern at the close of 1885. According to the Times for 27 February 1892 it was in about 1885 that "he made an arrangement with certain of his creditors, under which a composition of 12/6d in the £1 was paid on liabilities amounting to about £200".⁵⁷ Yet not only was the debt from that time never discharged, but, in addition, it is clear that Richardson was incidentally involved in business proceedings which had become the source of a legal case, and public censure. In August 1887, Gregg published information in the Reformed Church Record concerning a financial scandal which had surrounded "The London and Globe Drug Company".

The detail of the case is not for this study. Indeed, that Richardson was not materially implicated in the suspected financial deal was evident. Yet, at the same time, when the defendant in the case was subsequently sentenced to five years "penal servitude", the fact that Richardson was a director of the company, and that his name was printed as such within the prospectus was damaging.⁵⁸ However unfair, there will inevitably have been the problem of "guilt by association" both for Richardson, and for the denomination which he led. In some ways he was a naive man, and at the mercy of those who were prepared to use his name and title to further their own unsavoury gain.

But there is no clearer indication of his poor business sense than the eventual financial negotiations which were to cost him his position with the denomination.

When Richardson had moved to London, he had rented the church at Carlton Hill (pp. 233 f.). He had also, later in 1887/88, rented the large ex-Anglican Christ Church, Blythe Road, West Kensington for services of the REC (p. 588). But at some stage, he had evidently felt it more advantageous to purchase the church at Carlton Hill. The Times, of 4 June 1892, stated: "He became the owner of this church, with the fittings and organ, about two years ago".⁵⁹

However, Richardson was clearly worried at the financial burden of Christ Church, Carlton Hill, and he decided to relieve himself of the second church at West Kensington. Accordingly, at the beginning of 1891, he "assigned the lease" of the church to another person. Yet his financial position did not improve, for towards the end of that same year, Richardson had agreed to sell the Carlton Hill church to the same man to whom he had assigned the West Kensington lease.⁶⁰

According to reports in both the Times and the local Marylebone Independent, the contract selling the church had been completed in November 1891. The amount agreed was £1400.⁶¹ But what Richardson was probably not prepared for was the fact that his purchaser, being an undischarged bankrupt, was unable to complete the agreement. Moreover, because Richardson's arrangements for both churches had been made with the same man, the total liability for Carlton Hill and West Kensington REC churches fell once more to himself. In addition, he was declared unable to meet the costs of "an accommodation bill".⁶²

Richardson's liabilities stood at no less than £1361, "with an estimated surplus in assets of £79" - these to be met by the sale of the church at Carlton Hill for £1400. However no purchaser seems to have been found during the case;⁶³ and proceedings having begun by a receiving order made on 10 February 1892, the full bankruptcy adjudication was completed by the middle of June. The Times for Saturday 18 June 1892 announced: "The Bankruptcy Acts 1883 and 1890, In London, Adjudications: Richardson, Alfred Spencer, Knockholt, late Belgrave road, St. John's Wood, N.W., of no present occupation, a Bishop of the Reformed Episcopal Church."⁶⁴

As far as his bankruptcy is concerned, in the final event, there is no doubt that Richardson was "more sinned-against than sinning". But there is equally no doubt that his naivety in business affairs amounted to a serious culpability.

Resignation

Both the REC and the FCE were then, and remain today, rigidly and utterly "correct" in the expectations placed upon the conduct of life and business affairs of their clergy. As an undischarged bankrupt, Richardson could not continue in office with the REC. But it is interesting that his final and irrevocable "fall" as far as the denomination was concerned was not only the bankruptcy case, but also the fact that it had been discovered that he had "acted episcopally" outside the denomination in the two consecrations.

In his Memories and Reflections, Bishop Vaughan stated bleakly:⁶⁵

"In London, at Carlton Hill, Finchley, there was a congregation....presided over by a Bishop... The congregation used a building belonging to the Presbyterian Church, either on rent or mortgage...at any rate the Bishop was held responsible. Congregational troubles arose and the Bishop was reported to have acted without any authority, in an episcopal manner, for or with another Body in London. He was called to account by the Ref. Epis. Church, but before he could be dealt with canonically he was declared bankrupt, and left the country never to return."

In fact, both Fr. H.R.T. Brandreth and Alan Bain say that Bishop Richardson died in France, in 1907, at Boulogne-sur-Mer. Prior to the First World War there was a considerable sized English colony at Boulogne. Not only was it cheaper to live there than in many parts of England, but it was also beyond the reach of his creditors.⁶⁶

The REC, 1892 - 1894: the consecration of two new bishops and
the uniting of the REC and the RCE

The events of 1892 were potentially disastrous for the REC in Britain. Like the RCE, there was no longer any working bishop in an essentially episcopally ordered denomination. Confirmations might be done by the courtesy of the FCE. But the REC suffered all the problems that the RCE had had to face earlier; for ordinations, licensing of clergy, and the many other functions needing "the bishop" to visit and encourage the churches and congregations simply could not be carried out.

Yet the situations within the REC and the RCE were not the same, for whereas the RCE had been left with no bishop at all, the REC still had its retired bishop, John Sugden. Although he was just 72 years of age, his health had been seriously impaired for some time. Nevertheless, when Richardson resigned in 1892, Sugden stepped once more into the office of Presiding Bishop,⁶⁷ and however infirm, his continuing presence at this time of difficulty was to make a great deal of difference to the future.

To start with, it was vital that the REC should not be seen as leaderless, for this would have been demoralising for the clergy and laity alike. By becoming the titular leader once more, Sugden, as a "figure-head", provided a steadying influence for a denomination still shocked and alarmed by the court proceedings involving their former Presiding Bishop. Again, as one of the founders of the REC in Britain and himself a former Presiding Bishop, he provided continuity within the denomination. Thus, when two younger men were consecrated for the REC in 1892 (see below), with Sugden back in the leading role, it was possible to see the service, not as part of a crisis management "package", but as the episcopate of the denomination simply renewing itself in the age-old way.

But also, Sugden's honour and deep religious conviction was clearly perceived by all who knew him and who worked with him. Even though he had left the FCE he had still maintained friendly relations with them. As he had explained in his report to the General Council of 1881, he was determined that there should be no petty jealousies between the denominations. To this end he had actually taken part in the consecration of Frederick Newman for the FCE in 1879, together with Bishop Benjamin Price.⁶⁸

It is evident that Richardson's resignation had been officially ratified by the time of the meeting of the General Synod of the REC in the UK which took place in May 1892 - some four weeks before the bankruptcy judgement was made. The leadership of the REC was certainly seen as a priority, for at the Synod meeting of 10 May 1892 both Philip Eldridge and James Renney were elected as co-adjutor bishops for the denomination.⁶⁹

Just two weeks later, on 24 June 1892, Eldridge and Renney were consecrated together in Emmanuel (REC), Gunnersbury. Bishop Sugden had managed to travel to London to be the main consecrator; but significantly, together with him, Bishop Thomas Greenland and Bishop William Baker of the FCE took part in the laying-on of hands.⁷⁰ Again, the timing was interesting, for Richardson's final bankruptcy adjudication had been published in the Times the previous Saturday, just six days earlier. At no time therefore was it possible for the denomination to be perceived as "rudderless"; for the REC had just been strengthened by the appointment to senior office of two men who were both able and honourable. Whilst Renney's health was soon to fail, Eldridge's long and distinguished career was to provide a model for many.

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There was another factor which had assisted in the preservation of a stronger REC. The RCE under Bishop Gregg had had a highly centralised administration in which virtually all major decisions involved a personal input from him. He saw the episcopal authority of the Established Church very much as the "type" around which a new and purified Episcopalianism was to be built. However, there were within these ideas a number of inconsistencies. Firstly, he had been unable to reconcile the authority he sought with the nature of the episcopacy that he had inherited from the parent REC in America. Secondly, the denomination itself depended for its existence upon the essentially congregationalist nature of its church communities. Thirdly, the experience of Bishop Toke had demonstrated clearly that his style of leadership was a difficult one for another bishop to work with. Thus, when his health broke and he was removed from office, there had been no other outstanding leader capable of "picking up the pieces".

Conversely, however, the actual structural composition of the REC had been different. Following Gregg's "secession" in 1879, Sugden had taken the reins as Presiding Bishop, and because of this initial period of seven years with a

godly but enfeebled leader, the intense centralisation of authority that Gregg had encouraged in the RCE could not have taken place in the REC. Moreover, for some years at least there were three bishops (Sugden, Richardson and Bower) to share the "focus" of authority within the denomination. Thus, even though both Sugden and Bower were inactive by 1885, in those important early years, in terms of leadership style, the die was cast.

Furthermore, because of these factors the REC churches had become even more congregationally focussed than those of the RCE. Indeed, it was precisely because of this independence of mind that Bishop Greenland had found his work intolerable. He had exercised an "Anglican" style of episcopate, and as the strong reaction of leading ministers had shown, it simply would not work.

Finally, in contrasting the REC and the RCE, it is important to see that, despite the disorganisation in both Churches by 1891, there had remained within the REC senior clergy who had distinct leadership qualities. The fact was that the whole crisis of Richardson's disciplinary proceeding, the timing of his resignation, the holding of the General Synod in May 1892 and then the consecrations of June 1892 - all showed clearly that the REC was in capable and skilful hands. And those were the hands of both Eldridge and Renney. The result was that whereas the RCE lost just under half of its churches and congregations between 1891 and 1894, following the fall of Richardson in 1892, the REC was to lose virtually none of those churches which had actually remained to that date. With its administration, episcopate and churches all intact, although smaller, the REC was far more secure than the RCE.

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Meanwhile, not surprisingly, John Sugden's health made it impossible for him to exercise any practical form of leadership. Indeed he was too unwell to perform the dedication of the new building of St. Jude's Church, Balham, on 28 October 1892. Consequently, as soon as both Eldridge and Renney had had a year to settle into their new positions, for the second time Sugden bowed graciously out of the position of Presiding Bishop.⁷¹ At the meeting of the General Synod on 9 May 1893, Philip Eldridge was elected Presiding Bishop in his place.⁷²

But, at this stage, although there is no documentary proof, it is almost certain that Eldridge was already in contact with Gregg's son, with a view to uniting the two damaged branches of the Reformed Episcopal Church. Whilst his

record shows him to be a dedicated and able minister, Frank Gregg had none of his father's leadership or intellect. Nevertheless, he had been one of the three RCE Commissaries during the former troubled times, and his family position inevitably made him an obvious spokesman for the shattered remains of the denomination.

Just one year later, therefore, on Tuesday 15 May 1894, both the Synod of the REC and the Synod of the RCE met together at Balham. According to a report by Eldridge, the agreement to unite the two Churches was unanimous, and later that same day, the General Synod of the newly united Church was organised. In fact, because of the legal problems surrounding the different existing denominational trusts the decision was made that the new denomination be called "The Reformed Episcopal Church in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, otherwise called the Reformed Church of England". Thus, both names were incorporated into the new title.⁷³

Greatly to Frank Gregg's credit he sought no position of personal advantage. In fact Eldridge recorded that "On the motion of Bishop Gregg's son, the Rev. F.T. Gregg, B.A., seconded by one of our own ministers, the Rev. J. Anderson, I had the honor (sic) of being elected, by the unanimous and rising vote of the Synod, the Presiding Bishop of the United Church" [illustration p. xi].⁷⁴

Some sensitivity remained, however, as the result of the great play continually made by Bishop Gregg over various differences in customs of worship between the two denominations, and it was as well that such differences were officially recognised. The fifth resolution of the new Synod was, therefore, "That in the manner of performing public worship, the customs and use at present prevailing in the several congregations in union with this Church, shall be allowed..." Interestingly, especially as Bishop Gregg had so frequently and bitterly criticised the hymnbooks which he considered to be insufficiently protestant, the Synod carried its eighth resolution "That the 'Hymnal Companion to the Book of Common Prayer', and 'Hymns for the Service of the King' be sanctioned for use in this Church..."

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The successful act of Unity of 1894 was a significant milepost for both denominations, for it healed a serious and a continually festering wound which had troubled both the REC and the RCE for nearly 16 years. Now, the

denomination was united under the distinguished leadership of Philip Eldridge, who, although he might not have had the education or the imagination of T.H. Gregg, was certainly both more realistic, and - as the following years were to show - more pragmatic. As the writer of his obituary in the Brighton Gazette wrote much later, "A sincere belief in his cause, and a strong and kindly personality brought him great success in the organization of the Church all over the country."⁷⁵

In his Report to the Fourteenth General Council, Eldridge wrote: "It is impossible to over-estimate the importance of this re-union. Numerically, our churches and clergy are almost doubled." Evidently the General Council agreed with Eldridge as to the importance of the union, for on receiving his report, the members of the Council rose to sing the Doxology.⁷⁶

As in Summer 1894, the united denomination now consisted of some 17 churches: St. Jude's, Balham; Christ Church, Harlesden; St. John's, Upton Manor; Nathaniel, Brighton; Emmanuel, Barnstaple; Emmanuel, Farnham; Christ Church, Hemel Hempstead; Emmanuel, Warrington; Trinity Church, Southend; Emmanuel, Gunnersbury; Christ Church, Liscard (Cheshire); Christ Church, Eccles; Christ Church, Yeovil; Christ Church, Tue Brook, Liverpool; Christ Church, Leigh-on-Sea; Emmanuel, Birkenhead; and St. John's Mariners' Church, Dover.

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The united REC: 1895 - 1900

There was a strongly personal note for the denomination in the somewhat fulsome "Christmas and New Century Message" which Eldridge wrote for Work and Worship in January 1901:⁷⁷

How shall we meet the time that is coming....Shall it not be in the spirit of penitence and trust? Every new year furnishes us with a fresh opportunity of amendment, and enables us to "turn over a new leaf" in the volume of our lives. We cannot erase the past; what we have written we have written; but we need not write again the same sad story of failure and sin....What is to prevent the New Century from being to us the best and the brightest that earth has known?"

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After the Union of 1894, the final six years of the century were not marked by any great expansion of the work of the REC. Even though the breach of 16 years had been healed, it was still a very small denomination. Nevertheless, the good will that had been engendered in the successful union negotiations was clearly considerable.

Above all it was a period of healing, which enabled the members of both former denominations to regain their self esteem after the public failures of both Gregg and Richardson. As Eldridge wrote in his Report to the General Council of the REC in May 1900: "The confidence of the Christian public, so rudely shaken by our former divisions, is gradually becoming restored..."

But it was also a time of necessary reconciliation, for the truth of the matter was that both denominations had been so badly damaged by the events of the early 1890s that the only real alternative to re-union was, in the long run, extinction. In fact, the process of internal reconciliation had been a success; for in his 1900 Report to America Eldridge also wrote: "During the six years which have elapsed, and in which I have had the honor to preside over the the United Church, no disagreement of any kind has existed amongst us, to weaken our councils and hinder our work. Every trace of past estrangement has long since faded from view, and to-day no one could tell that we had ever been so sadly divided."⁷⁸

New churches and congregations

Although any time of great countrywide expansion for the denominations had passed, nevertheless there were certain developments. To start with, between 1894 and 1900 five or more new churches were established. These were:

Christ Church, Exmouth (1896);⁷⁹ Christ Church, St. Helier, Jersey (1896-7);⁸⁰ St. Andrew's, East Ham (1898);⁸¹ Christ Church, Aldershot (1899-1900);⁸² and St. Saviour's, Manor Park, London, N.E. (1899-1900).⁸³ (See further, pp. 588 f.)

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Again, there were important changes within the leadership structure of the new denomination, for during the years 1894 to 1900 two of the senior figures in the REC had died - Bishops James Renney and John Sugden. In addition, at the end of his distressing illness, Bishop Gregg also died.

The death of Bishop James Renney - 26 July 1894

Renney's place in the denomination was an important one. Having built St. John's Church in Plashet Road, Upton Manor, in 1889, he also started the St. John's Theological College for the REC in Plaistow. As a former schoolmaster he was able to carry his teaching experience into the work of the denomination, and according to Frank Vaughan, at one time there were 8 students in residence at the college.

Unfortunately for the newly united REC, soon after he was consecrated, Renney's health broke down. Having suffered "a long and painful sickness" he died at his home, Portway House, Plashet Road, on 26 July 1894 at the age of 55. He was buried in West Ham Cemetery. With his death, the work at the theological college also finished.⁸⁴

The death of Bishop John Sugden - 20 June 1897

At the time of his resignation from the office of Presiding Bishop of the REC in 1893, Sugden was still living in the house which he had built at Kirkburton, near Huddersfield. However, with the continued deterioration of his health, in August 1895, he and his wife moved down to Bournemouth where they took the

house "Brooklyn" in Burnaby Road. The Bournemouth Visitors' Directory showed their names at this address for the first time in the edition of Saturday 25 August 1895.⁸⁵

He stayed there in Westbourne for the remainder of his life; and although physically weak was able to be a regular attender at Nathaniel Church, in Seamoor Road in Westbourne. It was, in fact, to this church that Bishop Greenland went as a temporary incumbent in 1896.⁸⁶

Finally, on the evening of Sunday 20 June 1897, Sugden died at home in "Brooklyn" in Burnaby Road. The family took his body back to Yorkshire, and according to the Huddersfield Daily Examiner, he was buried in the churchyard of Kirkburton Parish Church at 3 p.m. on Thursday 24 June, the cortege leaving his house, Woodsome Villa, at 2.30 p.m. He was 77 years of age.⁸⁷

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Although members of the denomination cannot have been surprised by his death, nevertheless there was great sadness at the news. His obituary in the next edition of Work and Worship was clearly emotional in tone. "No more unselfish man ever lived... As a comforter in times of sorrow he had few equals, and as a counsellor in times of perplexity none could manifest more sympathy and helpfulness. Whether as missionary, or pastor, or bishop, he won the affections of all who were brought into contact with him." The writer later hinted at the part Sugden had played in the difficult times past: "What our Church in this country has lost...will be difficult to tell. What some of us have personally lost no words can express."

Sugden was evidently perceived within the denomination as a "constant" by which the denomination had been steered, particularly in the crisis of the early 1890s. It was interesting to see that, almost as a family might share precise details of the death of one of its members, the original obituary notice gave the exact time of Sugden's death on that Sunday evening as 5.40 p.m.

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In the meanwhile, on 31 March 1896, Bishop T.H. Gregg also died (for brief details of his last years, see above, chapter 5, pp. 219 ff.). But the

contrast between the reactions of the denomination to the news of his death as opposed to that of John Sugden was startling.

Significantly, there was no mention of his death in the denominational magazine at all. His final years in office had resulted in both turmoil and public embarrassment for the RCE, and it is clear that, in the "mind" of the denomination, both former Presiding Bishops were to be discretely forgotten. In fact there was no public funeral or memorial service for Gregg. The Southend Standard alone carried a warm and a supportive obituary in its edition of 2 April 1896. Otherwise, the bleak announcement of his death in the Times for 6 April 1896 reflected the feeling that many in the denomination must have had:

"GREGG - On the 31st. March at Camberwell, the RIGHT REVEREND THOMAS HUBAND GREGG, D.D. and M.D., Bishop of Verulam, aged 56 years. Friends will please accept this intimation."⁸⁸

The REC at the turn of the century - a summing up

It is Eldridge's Report to the Sixteenth General Council, in May 1900, which gives the clearest indication of the state of the united REC at the turn of the century.⁸⁹ The former breach of 16 years had evidently healed well, and the annual meetings of the General Synod had continued to show an abundance of good will from both sides (see above). In fact, according to Bishop Eldridge, although the numerical increase was small, in nearly every case, work had been strengthened and consolidated.

As at 4 May 1900, when he signed and dated his Report, there were stated to be 21 congregations, of which 5 were in London. In all probability these were:

LONDON: St. Jude's, Balham; Christ Church, Harlesden; St. John's, Upton Manor; and Emmanuel, Gunnersbury. If Eldridge is correct about there being five congregations, the fifth would have been St. Saviour's Manor Park, which was still sending reports to Work and Worship by January 1901. The likelihood is that St. Andrew's, East Ham had just left the REC for the FCE.

COUNTRY: Nathaniel, Brighton; Emmanuel, Barnstaple; Christ Church, Exmouth; Emmanuel, Farnham; Christ Church, Hemel Hempstead; Christ Church, St. Helier, Jersey; Emmanuel, Warrington; Trinity, Southend; Christ Church, Liscard; Christ Church, Eccles; Christ Church, Yeovil; Christ Church, Tue Brook; Christ Church,

Leigh on Sea; Emmanuel, Birkenhead; and Christ Church, Aldershot. Almost certainly, by this time the congregation at St. John's Mariners' Church in Dover was failing - but it seems that Eldridge had probably included it.

The ministry of the REC in May 1900 consisted of: 1 bishop, 24 presbyters, 1 deacon, and 3 licensed Lay Readers.

Other figures for 1900 were not available at the time of writing. Eldridge explained that the annual Easter Reports from the churches had not yet arrived. However, he estimated that the figures from the previous Easter would not be very different, and he gave these as: 1500 communicants; 2580 Sunday School scholars; 256 teachers.

In addition, the total amount of money raised by the churches "for all purposes" was stated to be \$32,190. Working on an approximate rate of exchange of 4 dollars to the pound, this would have totalled some £8,047.

Raison d'être of the REC: 1900/1901

In virtually every case, the accounts of the setting up of the most recent congregations had mentioned the local presence of ritualistic worship at the local parish churches. In mentioning the fact that the actual numerical increase for the REC had been small, Eldridge added significantly "especially when compared with the alarming growth of sacerdotalism in the country".

Thus the issues of ritualism and "sacerdotalism" were still very much alive in the minds of Eldridge and his clergy. In the magazine for April 1900, the leading article entitled "A Fresh Start" referred to a possible change in magazine format. This, it was felt, would make the publication more suitable to be put into the hands of the many who were in great need: "Our mission, as a Church, was never more greatly demanded than it is today. On every hand sacerdotalism is advancing by leaps and bounds, and it is becoming more and more manifest that no relief is to be looked for from within the national Church...In the meantime, thousands of earnest and spiritually minded church-people are in distress". The same edition of Work and Worship carried another vigorously critical article on "Confession and Prayers for the Dead".⁹⁰

It is in the light of these strong words that it is worth noting once again the absence of any attempt to establish REC congregations in Ireland during these years. E.V. Bligh's open letter of support for the FCE in 1873 (above, p. 91) had made it clear that the Church of Ireland was identified by many Evangelicals as being at one with the anti-ritualist and anti-Papal stand taken by the FCE. This was also quite evidently the stance taken by the united REC at the turn of the century and beyond. Certainly, great disquiet was expressed in the pages of the denominational magazine about the constitutional dangers in Ireland posed by the movement for Home Rule, and by the violence engendered by such organisations as the United Irish League, and, later, Sinn Fein. These things were strongly identified with Roman Catholicism, and the Anglican Church of Ireland was seen as a bastion against the spectre of Papal supremacy.⁹¹

The future aims and direction of the Church

It is interesting and significant to see that Eldridge was in so many ways far more flexible and pragmatic a leader than Gregg or Richardson had ever been. Gregg had delighted in challenging the episcopal authority of the Established Church, especially in the dioceses of Chichester and St. Albans. Richardson had, for his part, actually threatened disruptive action at the ordination services where those who had been ministers of the REC were being re-ordained. Eldridge seems to have seen no such need for such combat or abrasive controversy (see below: "Bishops Gregg and Richardson, and the reactions of Archbishop Benson, etc.). Again, Eldridge saw clearly the the limited appeal and "marketability" of the REC as it stood in the country. Furthermore, he was utterly realistic as to what the future aims of the denomination ought to be.

In this respect, he noted in the 1900 Report that the recent agitation by Kensit and other militant Protestants throughout the country had not had the hoped-for effect of leading numbers of Protestant churchmen to the REC. He commented: "As a matter of fact, it has had, I believe, a contrary effect". He noted that the agitations had inspired a hope that there might be reformation from within the church - through the bishops, or parliament, or legislation: "This hope of reformation in the church, through the increased influence of the Protestant party, causes many dissatisfied churchmen to cling to the Establishment". Eldridge felt that hope for the REC actually lay in the future when the present ritualistic crisis had passed, "and churchmen learn...that the only guarantee for the maintenance of Protestant teaching and practice is to be found in such a Church as our own".

He put the future aims of the denomination quite clearly: firstly and foremost that the REC must in the future concentrate its efforts on work in the cities and larger towns of the land. He pointed out that, in these places, there were many areas of fast growing population. Very often, these actually had "no adequate provision for spiritual work" at all. This he urged as a priority "apart altogether from the question of ritualism". He pointed out that once these projected REC communities were established, then was the time when aggrieved churchmen might find a ready home for themselves. In achieving this main aim, he asserted that the overriding needs before this could be achieved were: (i) able and dedicated men for the ministry, (ii) a theological college to train them in, (iii) money to found such an institution, and finally, (iv) a co-adjutor bishop without specific pastoral cure who might assist with the necessary episcopal work.

In essence, Eldridge's analysis of the situation was correct. Militant agitation did not automatically send people to the REC, for, as he later sadly admitted in his 1903 Report to the General Council, an important issue was "the strong conservatism of English Churchmen"⁹² - a lesson learned often by the FCE in earlier years (see chapters 3 and 4). He was also correct in seeing opportunities for expansion in the many areas as yet unchurched by any denomination. BUT, in this aim, as in others - notably the finding of more able men, and a theological college to train them - the problem was always to be that of financial insecurity.

But what Eldridge did not see was a factor which the future was to prove for both the REC and the FCE. This was that, however important the question of baptismal regeneration might have been in the past, or however important the disputes over ritualism and "sacerdotalism" might have been at that time, yet public interest and concern were to turn away from theology and liturgy. The spectre of the re-imposition of Roman Catholicism which so lit the early pages of Bishop Benjamin Price's Organisation of the Free Church of England, was to lose its public appeal. Above all, within a very few years, many of the priorities of a Victorian public were to be changed or lost altogether - as were the lives of vast numbers of men in the 17 to 45 age range - in the bitterness and carnage of the Great War.

CHAPTER 7

THE RCE AND THE REC (UK) 1880 TO 1900: FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Bishops Gregg and Richardson, and the reactions of Archbishop Benson and the bishops of the Anglican Church - 1880 to 1892

Setting the scene

In chapter 4 ("Spring and early Summer 1878: Establishment reaction to the new REC in Britain", pp. 155 ff.), an examination was made of the way in which the aggressive feelings of T.H. Gregg towards the bishops of the Established Church were perceived as an actual threat.

The work of the REC in many parts of the country was the subject of a considerable discussion by the bishops at the meeting of the Upper House of the Convocation of Canterbury in May 1878. The Archbishop attempted to play down the importance of the problems caused by REC confirmations, ordinations, and those problems caused by the confusion in the minds of many laity over the very similar "Establishment" style of the denomination. Nevertheless, the discussions in the Upper House made it clear that Gregg in particular, with his particularly "Church of England" style and his clear place in the ancient "tactile" Apostolic succession, was a source of worry for them all.

Later, a particular problem for a number of the Church of England bishops was the fact that, from time to time, an obviously good and capable REC/RCE minister would wish to move to the Established Church together with his congregation. The Anglican Bishop might indeed wish to accept him; but the difficult matter then had to be answered as to whether the man should be simply received as a clergyman, or ordained, or conditionally ordained. For all of them, the thought of simply re-ordaining a man was out of the question.

This was a generation of Anglican bishops whose representatives were soon to be involved in the discussions with Rome over the matter of the "validity" of Anglican Orders, the outcome of which was to be the startling pronouncement "Apostolicae Curae" of 1896. To this generation, the notion of a tactile succession of the laying-on of hands was the all important legal safeguard of the validity of Holy Orders. The Convocation of 1878 had therefore set up a working party to consider the orders of the REC. However, in October 1879,

Gregg had announced in Our Church Record that the bishops had actually sought Counsel's advice, and that the reply was "The orders conferred by Bishops Gregg and Toke are as undoubtedly valid as any conferred by your Grace".

This was the uncomfortable situation for the Established Church at the opening of the 1880s. But the legal Opinion given to the episcopal committee was not to stand unchallenged, for the American Bishops were not at all satisfied for the REC to have their orders recognised - evidently the legal Opinion had been something of an embarrassment to them. For although their eventual statement was to be published at the next Lambeth Conference in 1888, a preliminary Memorandum was put together by a committee of American bishops and sent to Archbishop Tait in the Summer of 1878.

Even so, the Memorandum does not seem to have been used by Tait, or indeed by Benson in the early part of his time as Archbishop. It was only when the matter of REC clergy and their orders became pressing in 1885 that a copy of the Memorandum was loaned to several of the English bishops in an attempt to settle some of the confusion that was being caused by the work of the REC in Britain. Indeed, this resulting confusion had been well illustrated in the papers of Archbishop A.C. Tait (see above). Yet from 1884 onwards, it was also to be shown in the papers of Archbishop Benson. However, in the Benson papers, a new dimension was to be added by the openly aggressive militancy of Richardson over the matter of the ordination (or re-ordination) of REC clergy. This was to become the source of considerable concern to the Archbishop.

Significantly, the "temporary" Memorandum from the American bishops, and then the official statement at Lambeth in 1888, were both to form an important element in the way in which relations between the Established Church and the REC/RCE were subsequently to develop in Britain. But it was a statement which was almost totally political in motive; and it resulted from the simple determination of the American bishops not to be "bested" by the REC.

REC orders and the Anglican bishops: 1880-1886

The Benson correspondence books of 1884 show clearly the great resentment that had built up in the mind of Bishop Richardson over the whole matter of the orders conferred by him, and over the attitude of the Anglican bishops towards the REC.

Whereas there was a clear defensiveness at times in the Tait correspondence, at first the Benson papers show a more "robust" attitude. A letter, dated 21 January 1884, had been received at Lambeth from a former REC deacon, the Reverend H. Galloway Gill (?) of Shepherd's Bush. Having left the REC, Gill asked for admission to Anglican Orders. Notes were made on the letter in crayon and pencil by both Benson himself and his chaplain (the Reverend Montague Fowler). Fowler's reaction in his notes was clear: "Surely hardly a man whom the Abp. would accept..." But most significant of all is the comment made in brackets which probably came from Benson himself: "Bishop Gregg's Deacons must lie on the bed wh. their folly has made".¹

Richardson's protests began with a letter written from Malvern, and dated 6 March 1884. The letter was brief to the point of discourtesy, and complained about the re-ordination of clergy formerly of the REC: "they are already ordained Deacons and Priests in the direct line of the Apostolic Succession". Benson's note on the top of the letter merely read "No reply... Bp's meeting". Just 7 days later, Richardson wrote again. This time, although the letter was more courteous, he threatened to bring to the next REC Synod the need for an REC bishop to attend every re-ordination of an REC clergyman. The bishop concerned would protest at the correct place in the service "lawfully and quietly". Richardson continued by saying that REC clergy would wish to "work alongside your clergy were that possible..." It warned Benson: "...do not make enemies of those who would gladly be friends..." The notes made on this letter ordered no more than a basic acknowledgement together with a reference to the bishops' meeting.²

It is fairly evident that, at this stage, Richardson was intent upon "making his presence felt" with the Archbishop. On 31 March 1884, he wrote assuring Benson that Cummins was not officially deposed when he consecrated Edward Cheney in America. He also cautioned care in the matter of re-ordination in that it might affect "other episcopal questions beyond our borders", and as an example, he instanced recognition of Old Catholic orders. To this communication Benson commented "I do not know that I wish to make any observations on the subject". Again, on 5 April 1884 Richardson wrote, asserting that the validity of REC orders had been acknowledged by both Pusey and the Reverend Dr. Nicholson of Christ Church, Leamington. This was not acknowledged. He then wrote to Benson in mid-May to complain about the report in the Guardian that the Reverend Mr. Leeson was about to be re-ordained in the Established Church. No acknowledgement was given.³

It was, however, in the House of Bishops in the meeting of Convocation at the beginning of June that considerable mischief was caused by the bishops themselves. Benson had brought up the matter of the correspondence from Richardson, and at some stage there was apparently laughter at Richardson's expense. Although this was not publicly reported, Richardson evidently had a contact who had recounted the facts to him. In a strong letter of remonstrance to Benson of 12 June 1884, Richardson stated that the threat to interrupt services at which re-ordination of REC clergy was taking place would now proceed: "...we mean to arouse the whole country in this matter, if it cannot be otherwise settled".⁴

This time, the reply to Richardson from Montague Fowler was much more careful - and uneasy in tone. The "bullish" note that had been evident in the earlier correspondence (and that indeed had typified much of Benson's fine work earlier as Bishop of Truro) was not to prevail in his dealings with the REC or the RCE. It was evident that the threat had been viewed seriously: Fowler wrote: "The Archbishop does not understand your allusions to what has taken place during a recent session of Convocation." He asked for a copy of the report where this event had been recounted. In his reply, Richardson stated that his information had come from a private source which he was unwilling to reveal. He gave a number of details, including the fact that the discussion of his letters had produced "a roar of laughter" from the bishops.

It was evident that Richardson did indeed have an important contact. It was equally evident that Benson was embarrassed by this, and indeed by that with which he had been roundly challenged. The pencilled comment of Benson at the foot of Richardson's reply says, enigmatically, "not ans?"⁵ In fact, Richardson's threat seems to have been avoided - although there is no further correspondence on the matter.

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In 1885, however, the confusion over the matter of validity or non-validity of REC orders came once more to the fore.

In a letter to the Archbishop from the Bishop of Exeter (probably late May 1885), reference was made to the parish of Countisbury and a Reverend Mr. Hockley who had been ordained in the "American Free Church" by Bishop...(the writing is unclear). Hockley wished to be re-ordained in the Church of England,

and this, said Exeter, would solve a very difficult problem. In fact the Rector of Lynton was shortly to resign, and it was possible that (by using Hockley to replace him?), the unhappy divisions in the neighbourhood might be healed.⁶

Evidently the letter from Exeter posed difficult problems for the Archbishop. In a set of carefully pencilled notes on the complexity of the problem, Benson referred to "The late 'Richardson' correspondence". He then made a much altered draft of a reply. Further to this, the copy of the eventual reply was dated 10 June 1885, and in it, Benson sat firmly "on the fence". Basically, he stated that if the man was validly ordained, then he could not be re-ordained. He pointed out that certain schismatic orders had been accepted in the past, but, he pointed out, the American church "in strong terms repudiates the idea of their validity".

Together with his letter, Benson enclosed a copy of the American Memorandum on the REC which had been sent to Tait in 1878. He asked that it be returned in due course.⁷ But it is interesting to see that he actually made no decision whatsoever - and this unwillingness to commit himself over the matter of REC orders was to be repeated a number of times in the future.

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At this stage it is worth a brief examination of the American Memorandum itself, for it certainly came to a different conclusion from the legal Opinion which had been sought by the committee of English bishops at approximately the same time.⁸ Yet as an official Memorandum communicated to the bishops of the Church of England from the bishops of PECUSA, the document was an astonishingly poor one. The total length was no more than some 800 words, and it therefore made no attempt to deal authoritatively with the multitude of legal and theological problems which had emerged, and would continue to emerge from a major schism within the American Church.

The first 200 or so words were an introduction to the subject and an address to the bishops of the English episcopal committee. The facts were then set out in seven paragraphs:

- (i) Cummins had not been a Diocesan bishop, but an Assistant or Co-adjutor who could only exercise episcopal function under other authority.

- (ii) Cummins' resignation was never legally consummated by official acceptance.
- (iii) Following his resignation, he therefore had no canonical authority to act in America.
- (iv) On 1 December 1873, the Bishop of Kentucky (his ordinary) announced a presentment for trial to follow; he also stated that any resulting episcopal act would be "null and void".
- (v) In defiance of the prohibition, Cummins consecrated "a Canonically degraded presbyter" (Cheney) on 14 December 1873.
- (vi) Cummins' subsequent "sentence of deposition and degradation" took place on 24 June 1874.
- (vii) A bishop under prohibition attempting to confer episcopal orders upon a degraded and unrestored presbyter, "renders the whole transaction...not only uncanonical but invalid and void of authority from the beginning".

The document was signed by A. Cleveland Coxe, Bishop of Western New York, on behalf of the American bishops who had attended the Lambeth Conference.

As a statement setting out the legal steps that had been taken by the ecclesiastical authorities of PECUSA to deprive Cummins of authority to act within the Anglican communion the document was probably perfectly satisfactory. But it was nothing more than this. Yet the real fact of the matter had been made quite clear by Cummins at the time - and later by Col. Benjamin Aycrigg in great detail. In his letter of resignation to the Bishop of Kentucky on 10 November 1873 (see chapter 3) he stated that this was in order to "transfer my work and office to another sphere of labour". There was never any question of Cummins acting as a bishop in PECUSA.

The point that had exercised the bishops in the Church of England was as to the legality of the orders which had proceeded from Cummins OUTSIDE the Anglican Church. Whilst the American bishops had every right to dispute the legality of his consecration of Cheney as an Anglican, the fact is that neither the consecrator nor the one consecrated was, at the time, a member of the Anglican Church. What is more, the actions proceeding from Cummins resulted in an actual and vigorous (if small) ecclesial community. But this point was simply not dealt with by the American bishops: the American opinion of "null and void" was therefore at best an expression of loyalty and Anglican episcopal solidarity. But it was hardly an authoritative Canonical judgement.

Certainly the poverty of the American document together with the contrary expert legal Opinion in England of "valid but irregular" must have cast doubts on the value of the Memorandum for Benson and his brother bishops. Moreover, a second Opinion in Summer 1886 by none other than Sir William Phillimore was to give another judgement of "valid but irregular" (below). And this can only have made their doubts even stronger.

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From the latter part of 1885, the confusion in the minds of the Anglican bishops was to become still more acute.

On 23 November 1885, the Bishop of Bath and Wells wrote to Benson on the matter of the REC church at Yeovil. This, said Bath and Wells, had been "set up principally by a rich glovemaking who had some quarrel or complaint against the clergy..." But now he wished to ordain the minister (Gordon Llewellyn) for the diocese, and indeed, the Vicar of Yeovil was willing to have him as his curate, and so end the schism.⁹

Benson had evidently sent a copy of the Memorandum from the American bishops with his reply, for on Advent Sunday 1885 Bath and Wells thanked Benson for his letter and returned the Memorandum. He clearly disagreed with their conclusions however. Although it is obvious from his original letter that he wished to have Llewellyn in the diocese, yet he expressed the opinion that REC ordinations were probably valid. Thus, unfortunately for himself, he could neither re-ordain nor merely receive Llewellyn, and every door appeared closed.

Apart from a brief letter to Bath and Wells on 4 December 1885, Benson appears to have had nothing more to say on the matter at that stage. It may be that they both discussed the matter in greater detail privately - perhaps at the House of Lords. However, the matter was to be resolved the following year, and its resolution was to involve further complication for both Benson and the American Memorandum.¹⁰

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As the year 1886 proceeded, confusion over REC orders increased still more. As the denominations grew, so more clergy seemed to have seen it as a "backdoor" way of entrance to the ministry of the Established Church. Amongst these were

clergy of considerable ability, whom the Anglican bishops wished to employ. Volume 37 of Benson's papers illustrates the many problems that were involved. Folios 298 to 305 contain letters and details about clergy with REC orders who had already been re-ordained into the Church of England. Folio 304 contains handwritten details of four men: Philip Norton (see Chapter 4), re-ordained by the Bishop of Worcester in 1879; R.H. Taylor, re-ordained by the Bishop of Lincoln in 1883; J.E. Guntrip, re-ordained by the Bishop of Manchester in 1884; and T.H. Leeson, re-ordained by the Bishop of Liverpool in 1885.

However, the real confusion over the matter of the validity of REC orders took place with the continued attempts of the Bishop of Bath and Wells to find a way to employ Gordon Llewellyn of Yeovil. The facts of the matter were that Llewellyn had offered to bring both his congregation and the substantial church building at Yeovil with him into the Established Church. Consequently, the Bishop of the diocese was determined to find a legal way through the apparent impasse. In a "Statement of Facts" dated June 1886, the case was laid out together with a set of biographical details of Llewellyn himself. This was then sent for Opinion to the most distinguished Dean of the Court of Arches, Sir Walter Phillimore.¹¹

Phillimore's Opinion was signed at Paper Buildings, Temple, on 20 July 1886. It served only to complicate the whole matter further, for he stated that, having examined the "case" together with the notes on the REC succession and the REC Prayer Book, he was of the opinion that the orders of the REC were valid "though irregularly and improperly conferred". He said that, when the Bishop of Bath and Wells was satisfied, he could admit Llewellyn to the Church of England.¹²

Here, however, both the Bishop of Bath and Wells and Benson himself seemed to be caught up in a "web" of indecision. Bath and Wells clearly wished to employ Llewellyn; but, in spite of the favourable Opinion, he feared to act independently, thereby creating a precedent. He therefore wrote on 3 August 1886 to ask Benson's consent to "receive" Llewellyn. But Benson was simply not willing to accept responsibility for such a permission. In his reply to Bath and Wells of 7 August 1886, he said that, whilst Phillimore's Opinion was understandable, the American Bishops had given a very different picture. Benson clearly wished Bath and Wells to make up his own mind: "I do not think that I could advise this (re-ordination), but I should not feel at liberty to declare it to be improper..."

However, Bath and Wells was still unable to make a decision. On 17 August 1886 he wrote to Benson to tell him that he had advised Llewellyn to go to PECUSA, because, as they had no doubt as to the nullity of REC orders, therefore they would have no problem in (re-)ordaining him. Then, after this, Llewellyn might legally function in the Church of England.¹³ However, although there are no further papers on Llewellyn, it is almost certain that Benson subsequently advised Bath and Wells simply to "get on with it", for Llewellyn was ordained deacon at Wells Cathedral on 21 September 1887 and licensed to the curacy of Yeovil-cum-Preston. It says much for the quality of Llewellyn himself that, in the event, he did not bring his congregation or church building with him.¹⁴

The significance of the whole matter of the ordination of Llewellyn, however, was that the Opinion obtained from Sir Walter Phillimore was the second Opinion which clearly advised that REC orders were "valid but irregular". On the other hand, the committee of American bishops had produced their Memorandum which stated quite categorically that REC orders were "null and void". The situation was profoundly unsatisfactory for Benson and his brother bishops in England.

Such a serious difference was an obvious source of embarrassment for Benson. During the remaining part of 1886, he wrote to a number of bishops, including Winchester, Worcester, Liverpool and Lincoln. He wished to find out whether or not they knew that the men they had ordained had had REC orders. The replies tended to be defensive, for the bishops almost certainly had known, but had pragmatically decided to ignore the fact because of the obvious complications. Most said that they were aware that the men concerned were "nonconformists". It is interesting to see in the letters from the bishops to Benson, that most stated that the men concerned were doing well.¹⁵

The lack of detailed information at Lambeth on the new denominations - the evidence of the Benson Papers

During these years of the 1880s, it is interesting to see that there appears to have been a genuine ignorance on the part of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and his advisers, about the details of the REC and the RCE as denominations - or even, for that matter, about the FCE. Certainly it is evident that there were no special files on the denominations which might be easily consulted.

In his letter of 4 December 1885 to Bath and Wells, Benson had spoken about Bishop Price of the FCE. But it is quite clear that he knew virtually nothing

about Price - despite the fact that the FCE had been registered in Chancery in 1863, and that Price himself had been consecrated nine years before.

Earlier that year, on 3 March 1885, a letter from a J. Barnes Breasley of Barton-on-Irwell near Manchester asked for information about Bishop Gregg who had recently visited Eccles. Evidently there was no adequate information to hand, for on 5 March 1885, a letter to Montague Fowler from the office of the Vicar General at Doctors' Commons enclosed some Convocation minutes from 14 May 1878 concerning Gregg. But there was very little actual useful information. Fowler had then sought further information from the lawyers at 2 The Sanctuary, Westminster. The reply, dated 9 March 1885 admitted that the writer knew too little about Gregg to be able to help properly.

Fowler then made his reply to J. Barnes Breasley on 10 March 1885. But his lack of real information, and the inaccuracy of that which he had, was most surprising. Gregg, he said, had nothing to do with the Church of England and was also not recognised by PECUSA. He explained further that nobody ordained by the REC was entitled to officiate here (?); furthermore, said Fowler, Gregg "belongs to the USA"¹⁶

This lack of care in gathering information was to cause Fowler embarrassment, for the substance of his letter to Breasley was sent to the press in the Manchester area. On 20 March 1885 Gregg wrote to Benson explaining that he had heard through press comment about Fowler's statement. He refuted the statement that that he was American, and, somewhat sarcastically, asked that Fowler be told. The correspondence book then contains a number of leaflets and pamphlets on the RCE (probably sent by Gregg himself).¹⁷

The attempt to build bridges with Benson by both Richardson and Gregg: 1887

During 1887, the "tone" of the communications on the denominations is less fraught. Certainly, both Richardson and Gregg, independently, seem to have wished to build bridges with Benson, and with the Lambeth Conference of 1888 on the horizon, the time was right for this to be done.

To this end, on 10 February 1887, Richardson wrote to Benson offering to loan him the report of the consecration of Cheney by Cummins together with any information required "with a view to assisting in an honest enquiry". He stated that he had read in the Church papers a report that a discussion was to take

place at the Pan-Anglican Synod on the subject of REC orders. Benson wished to avoid any involvement, and he pencilled the note "Ack. Nothing settled abt. subjects at P.A. Synod". But it is significant to note that, although Benson may not have wished that such bridges be built, yet he was not simply ignoring the letters sent, or brushing them brusquely aside. The whole matter of the REC and the RCE and their orders had very definitely become "an issue".¹⁸

However, it is evident that Bishop Gregg also had hopes for some sort of recognition at the Pan-Anglican Synod to come. There is little doubt that Gregg's hopes and ambitions led him from time to time beyond the boundaries of reasonable logic. Certainly he had been greatly encouraged by a letter he had received from E.B. Pusey on 8 February 1882. In this, Pusey had clearly indicated that whilst the Book of Common Prayer remained unaltered, then the doctrines upon which "Tractarianism" were based remained unshakable. But, in his reply he had addressed Gregg as "My Lord", and moreover, before his signature, he had ended the letter "I beg to remain, your Lordship's humble servant". Gregg had taken this as an authoritative opinion as to the validity of REC orders. Probably at some time in November 1886, he had taken this letter to a "very able ecclesiastical Canonist whose name is well known in the Church Times and in the English Church Union". This authority also felt that REC orders were valid, and in the edition of the Reformed Church Record for December 1886, Gregg took the opportunity to use these facts in an article on the orders of the Reformed Church of England.¹⁹

However, his overactive "optimism" in this matter led him into a serious miscalculation early in the new year. On 4 January 1887, as part of a continuing correspondence in the Lancashire newspaper, the Eccles Advertiser, Frank Gregg had written a long letter on the subject of the orders of the RCE. He explained that he was writing at the instruction of Bishop Gregg, and then continued by stating that: "He (Bishop Gregg) was elected a Bishop of that Church (the REC) in May, 1877, and was duly, validly, and canonically consecrated a Bishop in that Church in the Anglican communion, on June 20th of the same year, by the Right Rev. Bishops Cheney, Nicholson, and Fallows". The statement was utterly incorrect, and moreover, it would inevitably mislead those who might well not realise that "the Anglican communion" was a legal entity rather than merely an ecclesiastical tradition. If the letter was by Bishop Gregg, writing through the person and name of his son, then, as a public statement, it represented a very considerable departure from reality.²⁰

The Lambeth Conference of 1888, and the official Statement on REC orders by the bishops of PECUSA

1888 was the year of the Lambeth Conference - but more important for the REC, the RCE and, to a lesser extent, the FCE, was the fact that it was at this Conference that the American bishops officially presented their Statement in Regard to Ordinations and Consecrations performed by Dr. Cummins etc.

Despite the two distinguished legal Opinions which had been obtained, and which had pronounced the orders of and from the REC as "valid but irregular", the American bishops persisted in their conclusion of "null and void". Whilst the Statement had remained unpublished in the semi-confidential Memorandum form in which it had been sent to Tait in 1878, there was much room for individual interpretation or doubt on the part of the bishops of the Church of England. But once this had been officially presented to the Lambeth Conference as the "Statement", there was little that the English bishops could do to overturn their conclusions without demonstrating a palpable lack of unity within the Anglican episcopate.

The Statement - a brief survey²¹

Firstly, the facts of the case were set out - as seen by the committee of the three bishops of PECUSA, A. Cleveland Coxe, William Croswell Doane and George F. Seymour. Four things were considered: (i) the condition of the consecrator; (ii) the act itself; (iii) the service used; and (iv) "the condition of the person said to be consecrated".

- (i) It was pointed out that, at the time of the consecration of William Cheney, Cummins had not been deposed. Thus, although he was acting in the face of canonical obligations, his act could not be said to have had no force.
- (ii) The consecration was thus uncanonical - though not invalid.
- (iii) It was admitted that the committee did not know what form the Ordinal had taken. It was, however, asserted that there was an avowed defect of intention in ordaining a bishop as set forth in the Ordinal of PECUSA: therefore, the bishops asserted, if the traditional Ordinal had been used, then "the use of it was nothing short of a mockery".
- (iv) Concerning Dr. Cheney, it was asserted that he was, at the time, under sentence of deposition (certain references were made to the early church and the case of Timothy Aelurus).

The final summing up was very definite. It considered:

the condition of the consecrator; the irregularity of his act and the fact that there was just one consecrator instead of the canonical three; the fact that presbyters also laid on hands; that the committee did not know what service was used; that if the old Ordinal was used "it was still used not only with the secret intention, but with the avowed purpose, of not doing what it intended should be done": therefore - "the act of Consecration, so called, of Dr. Cheney, was ipso facto, null and void".

As a theological document presenting legal advice (if not possessing legal force), it was both muddled and profoundly unsatisfactory. Certainly it contrasts particularly badly with the meticulously detailed and extensive Memoirs of the Reformed Episcopal Church of Col. Benjamin Aycrigg (op. cit.). In essence, although far more extensive and detailed than this survey given, it was unwise to make the sweeping judgement "null and void", especially in view of the legal opinion which had been sought and given by the original English episcopal committee - and the further distinguished Opinion given by Sir Walter Phillimore in 1886.

Again, at the end of the Memorandum, the bishops made the clear point that, because both Cheney and the other senior REC bishop, William Nicholson, had both actually been deposed before their consecration, and because of "probabilities of an insufficient service" in the case of both consecrations, therefore: "the Bishops in the United States always ordain those who apply to be received from...the 'Cummins Schism' into the Church".²²

The committee of American bishops had clearly and officially declared that a precedent had been set. There was, therefore, little more that could be done by any English bishop at that stage, even though powerful legal Opinions had been obtained which did not concur with the American statement (see further in the conclusion).

What the American declaration did do however was to remove any sort of doubt as to what course of action was possible as opposed to what course of action was theologically correct or even desirable. From that point onwards it meant that any man with REC orders would be simply "ordained" (or perhaps more correctly "re-ordained"). Such was the theory and the hope within the American Church. However, the Archbishop's correspondence in several subsequent years showed

clearly that, although they might have abided by the wish expressed by the American bishops, yet neither Benson nor a number of other bishops of the Established Church was in full agreement.

Benson and the FCE - 1888

There is a surprising feature of the Benson papers for 1888 regarding the FCE, for it is clear that, despite the earlier reference in 1885 to the FCE and Bishop Price in the matter of the orders of Gordon Llewellyn, yet, even by 1888 neither Benson nor his chaplain Montague Fowler seem to have known any more about the FCE whatsoever. At the time of the Conference, a printed letter was sent by Bishops Price and Meyers to the Archbishops and Bishops assembled. This included an "indenture" which set out the consecration of Price at Teddington by Bishop Cridge in 1876. They continued by stating that they had heard that the orders of Bishop Cummins were to be discussed, and they pointed out that their orders were conferred before the REC was "planted" in Britain. Quite evidently, the FCE bishops were fearful of Gregg's reputation and were trying to distance themselves from him without actually mentioning him. Benson's comment in pencil at the bottom of the left hand page is most surprising: "Where is Bp. Gregg? (This is another affair)".²³

In fact, it is interesting to note that there are virtually no references to the FCE in the Benson catalogue, other than to the work of the "Free Church of England chapel" in Willesborough in 1896 (Volume 147 ff. 87 - 105).

Benson and REC ordination matters: 1888-1892

After 1888, there are just a few more references to the REC or the RCE in the Benson papers.

Of these, in 1891, Benson refused to accept the application of an REC deacon, the Reverend Alexander McGovern, to be received into the ministry of the Church of England. But the significant fact is that, in the final letter of refusal, Benson's chaplain gave as one of the reasons that the Archbishop was unable to take it upon himself to decide whether or not McGovern was in orders. Evidently the American Statement of 1888 did not weigh very heavily with Benson.²⁴

Also in 1891, the Bishop of Ripon wished to accept a man who had formerly been a nonconformist and who then had accepted REC orders not realising that this

would put him "at odds" with the Established Church. Clearly Ripon wanted Benson's advice; but Benson would not accept the responsibility. His comment noted on the letter reads: "...it is of course a matter on which each Bp. exercises his own discretion".²⁵

In 1892, Benson received a letter from the Bishop of Lincoln who wished to accept the minister (and congregation) of Skegness FCE. He referred to the Reverend G.S. Lee as "a presbyter of the Reformed Episcopal Church". But once more Benson refused to give the guidance asked. In his subsequent letter responding to Benson's reply, Lincoln actually stated that, in his opinion, the orders of the minister concerned were "valid but irregular". Indeed, he noted the Resolution of the American bishops and "the varying opinion amongst ourselves." However, he told the Archbishop that he had decided to go ahead and to re-ordain the man concerned.²⁶

Through the succeeding years, there have been a considerable number of men who have been ordained in the three denominations, and who have wished to transfer their ministry to the Established Church. In particular, Bishop Vaughan was to express his great sadness about this. But the problem of accepting Cummins' orders does not seem to have caused the confusion of the earlier years, especially the years 1885 to 1891; for the men were simply (re)-ordained.

A concluding thought

It is fairly clear that, for both Gregg and Richardson, the Lambeth Conference of 1888 was a watershed as regards their hopes for some sort of relationship with the Anglican Church. Whatever may have been felt privately within the English episcopate about the technical state of REC orders, the American Statement was effectual in ensuring a continuing marginalisation of the denominations thereafter.

However, it must be said that the marginalisation that had been ensured by the American bishops in 1888 had actually been started nearly ten years previously by the militant opposition to the Established Church, and, frankly, by the unpleasant treatment meted out to its bishops by both Gregg and Richardson.

The RCE and the REC, 1880 - 1900: some general conclusions

For both the REC and the RCE, this period showed growth until 1890, but thereafter near failure because of the circumstances surrounding the two bishops, Richardson and Gregg. Chapters 5 and 6 aim to show the great complexity of the lives of the denominations during the period. Indeed, the complexity was such - and the unfortunate circumstances were such - that no one has ever set out an accurate account of those years. Certainly Annie Darling Price was probably not even aware of many of the complications in the UK; and though Bishop Vaughan knew something of the times, he did not see fit to write frankly about it - other than superficially in his Memories and Reflections.

A number of conclusions have been drawn out in the text of the chapters themselves as they deal with the events and developments of the time. But it is worth pointing out separately some of the features and experiences of those years that were common to both denominations.

The failure of hopes for church expansion

Neither denomination reached anything like the potential that had been hoped for. In the early years Gregg had set out a plan of dioceses to cover the whole of England and Wales. Richardson had no such plan; nevertheless, he clearly had ambitions for a leading role in a united denomination consisting of the REC with the FCE. It was this ambition which had revealed itself to the FCE in the late 1870s, and which was the reason for the widening division between the two denominations (see below, Chapter 8).

Both leaders over-reached themselves in their ambitious plans for their denominations. For all his exceptional ability in a number of fields, Gregg simply could not look after the needs of the RCE that had spread through England and into Wales and Scotland, and that was also extending in Eastern Canada and Newfoundland. Richardson had not managed to expand the work of the REC nearly as far; nevertheless, it was clear from his impassioned words to Professor Kellogg in his letter in May 1889 that he was genuinely unable to cope with the work required of him as bishop.

The likely reasons for the lack of the hoped-for expansion are particularly interesting in that they are remarkably similar to those observed earlier in the FCE in the 1870s (see chapter 3). Briefly:

(i) Neither the REC nor the RCE had the security of a large organisational "umbrella" together with a competent administration at the centre.

(ii) Neither had the security of a constant and powerful aristocratic patronage like that which had supported the Church of England for many centuries. The earlier support of Earl Sidney for the RCE, and Lord Ebury for the REC was simply not enough. In any case, it is clear that neither of these distinguished men was "convinced" enough actually to leave the Established Church to join the denomination he championed.

(iii) Neither denomination had a really long lasting "marketable commodity". Neither Gregg nor Richardson could actually provide what a good evangelical church could not provide within the security of "the Establishment" (see more below).

(iv) Both the REC and the RCE lacked a well educated and properly trained clergy. Unless they managed to attract clergy who had already been trained for other denominations, their men were simply "promoted" from within the church communities. Often they could not provide the authoritative teaching that congregations required. Again, they frequently did not have the even moderate leadership qualities that the selected and educated clergy of the Established Church were usually able to provide.

(v) Whereas both Gregg and Richardson were well educated and trained for the ministry, neither was able to provide a strong, balanced and mature leadership. Both were unpredictable and mercurial.

(vi) Above all, the lack of financial security was an abiding weakness for both the REC and the RCE. It meant that neither could pay clergy or support struggling churches from a central fund. The attempts to found a secure Sustentation Fund failed. Consequently the only way that either denomination could actually function was on a "congregational" model.

These factors need also to be seen together with:

The nature of the REC and RCE church communities

There was undoubtedly (and paradoxically) a strength in the congregational nature of the individual church communities of the denominations. Both Gregg

and Richardson worked for a strong central authority which was vested in them as bishops on the "Anglican" model. However, the prevailing "force" provided by the churches within each denomination tended to be centrifugal rather than centripetal.

This may have appeared to be a negative feature to both Bishops when they were involved in the usual episcopal functions of providing or licensing clergy - or perhaps accepting candidates for ordination. But, in the long run, the innate congregationalism of those individual communities was to be their strength. For, when both Gregg and Richardson failed so publicly in their leadership, a secure core of churches which were virtually self governing meant that their denominations were able to continue.

Nevertheless, the congregations and churches of the REC and the RCE still lacked a significant and entirely individual contribution to make to the people of Britain. It is worth considering that, ironically, if these six points above were to have appeared as a set of positive attributes (rather than the negatives as they do), then the closest ecclesial equivalent to what they aimed to provide would have appeared as the evangelical wing of the Established Church anyway.

Thus, the most that the REC or the RCE could actually do in the long run was to "plug the gaps" that were left by the ritualistic extremes within the Church of England. But, the moment that the local parish had a new and "moderate" incumbent, or perhaps the moment that the Anglican bishop licensed a new evangelical church in the area, then people returned to the Church of England. The natural loyalties and innate conservatism of most English people was something remarked upon by Eldridge in his Report to the General Council in 1903. Certainly this happened especially when a minister (or perhaps a "suitable" and strong minister) could not be found by the newer congregations. Both churches at Peterborough and Spalding ultimately failed after the strong and able leadership of Eldridge had ceased - there were many other examples. Again failure frequently happened when there was trouble over money or the Trusts involved. Welshpool and Braintree were both examples of such failure.

The communities of both denominations seemed very often to possess an inherent instability. Often created by powerful people within an environment of strife, the fact was that these tended to carry their intolerance with them into the

new denominations. This instability therefore remained with the communities as long as they themselves remained as members.

Common personality problems and instability in leadership

Both Gregg and Richardson were left, effectively, as the sole bishops in each of their denominations. But as was fairly evident through the years, neither was actually capable of working in a collegial situation. Just as Toke left Gregg, and later, Ussher probably found Gregg difficult to work with, so also Sugden, Bower and then Greenland were similarly unable to work with Richardson.

Both Gregg and Richardson had strong and militant personalities. Both were wilful, and both found various ways to attack or threaten the Established Church. Both were mercurial, and both exhibited varying degrees of instability. Moreover in both there was a marked lack of realism - Gregg in his claim to be a prelate in "Anglican orders", and Richardson in his business ambitions. Ultimately both were destroyed by their personality problems - Gregg by the serious alleged "pastoral" lapse and then his insanity, Richardson not only by his financial dealings, but by his seeming inability to see the need for a far greater loyalty to the parent REC - and also an episcopal "self control".

There is, however, a paradox in the case of both men, for the problems and pressures that beset the REC and the RCE from the earliest days meant that it was only such a pair of headstrong and, in many ways insensitive, personalities that could actually have successfully founded and maintained their denominations in some sort of working order. Indeed, for most of the period 1880 to 1890, both denominations were actually expanding. It is moreover equally clear that neither Toke, nor Sugden, nor Bower, nor Greenland could have built-up or sustained the work that both Gregg and Richardson did.

By the same token of "frankness", whilst this picture may seem uniformly unflattering to the two men involved, it is only fair to point out that both had excellent previous records as sound pastoral workers. Richardson had a reputation as a builder of churches, and Gregg was a convinced worker for the poor and their housing, the sick, and the cause of temperance.

The controversy over orders derived from Bishop Cummins

The controversy lasted effectively from the time of the May Convocation of Canterbury in 1878 until the Lambeth Conference of 1888. But the controversy itself, and the frequent confusion involved, serves to highlight a number of other matters.

The first matter was the continuing theological uncertainty of the English bench over REC orders during those years; for, in fact, this uncertainty provided a clear demonstration of the considerable gulf that existed between the bishops of PECUSA on the one hand, and the bishops of the Church of England on the other. Although different Provinces, both groups belonged to the same Anglican Communion. Yet the traditional independence in mind of the American bishops from England had been well established for over a century. This independence of mind dated from 1784 when, because of the unwillingness of the Archbishop of Canterbury to consecrate a bishop for the American colonies, the American church had sent Samuel Seabury to Scotland for consecration. But although this had taken place more than a century before, the suspicions remained, and there was a marked unwillingness on the part of the bishops of the Church of England to be bound by the feelings and advice of their brother bishops in America.

Most significant of all, even after 1888, Benson could not bring himself to decide on the matter of validity or invalidity. Indeed, the Bishop of Lincoln was fairly clear in his own mind that the orders were technically valid.

But the problem for the bishops of PECUSA was a political one. If they had recognised the validity of the orders that proceeded from Dr. Cummins, then they would have had to recognise the bonae-fides of a growing denomination that had proceeded FROM PECUSA, but that itself stood in absolute opposition to the often ritualistic stance (as the REC perceived it) of its parent denomination. Whereas some form of recognition might have been possible in dealing with a denomination existing solely in another country, it was too uncomfortable for PECUSA, as a small province of the Anglican Communion, to be living cheek by jowl with the REC. The REC in the UK consequently fell under the same condemnation for the American bishops.

However unhappy the English bench may have been (especially with the remarkably poor Memorandum and then the equally poor Statement), they were ultimately

obliged to support the findings of the American bishops. The "solidarity" of the Lambeth Conferences was somewhat precarious, and very important to a Communion that had at its heart such a breadth of toleration and church practice already.

Discussions over Anglican orders in the 1890s

But what is also worth noting is the fact that at the turn of the 1890s confidential preparations were already being considered on the matter of some form of Anglican/Roman Catholic "understanding". The personal friendship between Lord Halifax and the distinguished French priest, Abbé Fernand Portal, of the Congregation of St. Vincent de Paul led to an indication of a possible way forward for the mending of Anglican/Roman Catholic relations. It was felt that discussions might profitably be started which might in turn lead to an official recognition of Anglican orders by the Roman Church. (Edward Carpenter, Cantuar, (London 1971) pp. 384 f.)

Benson felt that Halifax's experience of the breadth of Anglicanism was deficient. Again, he had many misgivings because of his conviction as to the continuity in the authority of "Ecclesia Anglicana". Nevertheless the work of Halifax continued. It resulted in his visit to the Pope in 1894 - a thing which shocked many Protestants. In the end, however, the attempt was to come to nothing. Amongst other problems was the fact that negotiation had been taking place at high level without any reference to the Roman Catholic hierarchy in England whatsoever. To the surprise of many, in his Bull "Apostolicae Curae" in 1896, Leo XIII declared Anglican Orders "null and void". (Owen Chadwick, The Victorian Church, Pt. II, (London 1970), pp. 354 & 407).

However, at the turn of the 1890s, the matter of Anglican orders was very much "in the air", and the Archbishop of Canterbury, who stood at the "diplomatic" centre of the Church of England, was automatically caught up in the process.

But despite his reticence over Halifax's enthusiasm, Benson was an historian. He had spent many years in studying the works of Cyprian - the result of which was to be the publication in 1892 of Cyprian, his Life, his Times, his Work. His view of episcopate was consequently a "high" one. Again, it was in 1889 that the "Lincoln Judgement" upheld the godly Edward King, Bishop of Lincoln, who was under trial for so-called "ritualistic practices" at the Holy Communion. Even though Benson may have disagreed in many ways with Edward King,

he had much sympathy for his episcopal position: indeed, it was evidently under the eye of Benson that the judgement took the direction it did. Benson was not, therefore, one to jeopardise any decisions which might take place in the future with regard to the position of the Anglican Church as a whole with the Church of Rome. After all, the matter involved the affirmation of an historical standpoint, and also one concerning the ancient authority and continuity of Ecclesia Anglicana.

But, just as for the bishops of PECUSA, there was a certain embarrassment for Benson and others as the process of Halifax's work progressed. Here, in the REC and the RCE, were two very small denominations, both vigorously opposed to the Established Church, both vociferously condemning the Catholicism of its Prayer Book, and both highly critical of the authority and power of its episcopate, and YET possessing orders and a ministry which were possibly to be officially recognised as "valid" by the Established Church. Such a situation would have appeared very strange to those within the Roman Church whose work it was to correlate information for the Pope.

From the Anglican side, such a situation would have weakened the authority of the Church of England position very greatly. From the Roman Catholic point of view, however uncomfortable may have been the thought of two "catholic altars" side by side, the thought of three such altars - one of which would have been violently antagonistic - was an absurdity. Consequently, the 1888 Statement by the American bishops was, ultimately, bound to be upheld by the English bench.

The actual importance of the REC and the RCE in the church life of the UK

When all is said and done, neither the REC nor the RCE reached any significant size during the years 1880 to 1900. At best Gregg had some 20 churches in Britain at any one time. Richardson had perhaps 18. Even together, in terms of numbers, they never came anywhere near to being the threat to the Established Church that some had hoped for in the late 1870s.

Yet, the importance of the denominations was magnified out of all proportion to their size by the confusion and the trouble that surrounded them. The confusion over the orders of the men who applied for admission to the ministry of the Church of England; the threats by Richardson to protest at ordinations where an REC man was being re-ordained; the vigorous prosletizing of Gregg, and the confirmations which were obviously attracting Anglican laity; the continuing

willingness of Gregg to "fish in Scottish waters" - all these factors took the time and energy of both Benson and his brother bishops.

In hindsight, the threat to the Church of England - or even the effective leverage against ritualism for which people like Lord Ebury and the Earl Sidney hoped - was simply not realistic. The denominations were too small, and the historical fact was that they remained small whatever Gregg or Richardson did. BUT, without the gift of hindsight, the fact of the matter is that both denominations were perceived as dangerous by many in the Church of England. Hence the "open hostility" of the Established Church, as Vaughan remarked in his Memories and Reflections (p. 4), was reserved for the Reformed Episcopal Church (and the RCE) rather than the Free Church of England at this time.

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But with the departures of Gregg and Richardson, and with the uniting of both denominations under the more pragmatic hand of Eldridge in 1894, the former actively antagonistic approach to the Church of England was to change.

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CHAPTER 8

THE FCE: 1880/81 - 1900/01

"Like a ship becalmed we require the heavenly breezes to fill our sails, the old Welsh 'hwyl' to speed us on our way'."

[Benjamin Price, 28 June 1881 (see below)]

An overview

Unlike in the case of the Reformed Episcopal Church of the UK, or that of Bishop Gregg's Reformed Church of England, by the early 1880s, the time of great expansion for the Free Church of England was over.

It had been founded before the other denominations, and it is true that in many cases REC and RCE church communities grew out of existing FCE churches (or indeed took them over) - usually because various power-groups within the churches did not believe their structure to be sufficiently firmly "episcopal". Yet, nevertheless, the earlier strength of growth ensured that the older denomination generally remained the stronger throughout these years. A factor which also ensured the greater strength of the FCE at this time was the continuing loyalty of a number of Connexional ministers together with their churches. These were they who, whilst convinced that the best way forward was that of the "New Testament" episcopal structure together with the central authority of the Convocation, yet were not prepared to follow the overtly "Establishment" pattern of the two newer denominations.

Certainly there were new churches and church communities during these years. But there were others which either failed, or left the FCE to find a place in the REC or the RCE, or perhaps in the Established Church.

In July 1880 the official list of Churches and Mission Stations included 39 church communities. Of these, five were distinguished Connexional foundations - Brighton; Spa Fields, London; Shoreham, Sussex; Tunbridge Wells; and Worcester. Two others, St. John's, Westcott (Dorking), and Norwich Tabernacle were also CHC, although not in the Trust.¹

In the Year Book of 1900 - 1901, the list included just 21 churches and missions. Of these, only the Connexional churches at Worcester and Norwich remained in the FCE.²

Taken as a whole therefore, it is evident that, just like the other two denominations, the new century actually saw a significant decline in the numbers of churches in the FCE. However, the older denomination had seen none of the dramatic troubles suffered by the other two during the early 1890s. Indeed, a closer examination of the times shows a more steady church life overall for the denomination.

Even so, there were troubles amongst the authorities of the FCE and amongst the communities themselves. In addition to this, right at the turn of the new century, there was to be a very serious division of theological thought which almost succeeded in making a most radical change in the episcopal style and polity of the denomination. Indeed, it was an attempt by some to reverse completely the "Anglican" style of ministry which had developed over the previous 40 years.

Again, as has already been suggested, the concerns of the ordinary people at the end of the old century and the beginning of the new one were very different from the widespread and public anti-Ritualist and anti-Roman Catholic passions and high feelings of the 1870s and 1880s.

The FCE in 1880/81: churches, clergy and administration

An alphabetical list of churches and missions was published in the August edition of the FCE Magazine in 1881. There were 35 congregations, of which 5 were also Connexional:³

Alston, Lancashire; Avebury, Wiltshire; Brighton CHC; Buxton; St. Paul's, Cardiff; Cleeve near Cheltenham; Crowborough, Sussex; Westcott near Dorking (CHC in origin, although not in the Trust); Eastbourne; Exeter; Haslingden, Lancashire; Hollinwood, Lancashire; High Wycombe; Ilfracombe; Spa Fields CHC, London; Everton, Liverpool; Lynmouth, Devon; Leominster; Market Drayton, Salop; New Cross, London; New Malden, Surrey; Norwich (CHC, not in the Trust); Oswaldtwistle; Putney; Shoreham CHC, Sussex; Southampton; Spalding, Lincs.; Teddington, Middx.; Tottington, Lancashire; Tyldesley near Manchester;

Ulverston; West Drayton, Middx.; Wheelton, Lancashire; Wilsden, Yorkshire; and Willesborough, Kent. Since June 1880, the FCE causes at Birkenhead and Ludlow had ceased, and both Tunbridge Wells and Worcester Connexional churches had left the FCE. In fact, Worcester was soon to return, through the loyalty of its distinguished Minister, Thomas Dodd, to the FCE "Declaration of Principles".

To serve these communities, there were 29 recognised ministers. Of these, the two bishops of the denomination were also in full-time charge of churches, for otherwise the denomination simply could not have afforded to pay its bishops. Thus Benjamin Price, as "Bishop-President" remained at Ilfracombe, and Bishop Frederick Newman was at Christ Church, Willesborough. In addition to these ordained clergy, there were also 2 Licensed Evangelists who were in charge of the churches at Haslingden and Hollinwood in Lancashire.

Essentially, the administrative structure of the denomination had not changed from the earlier years. In the 1880s the main legislative body of the denomination was still the Council, which consisted of 43 members under the chairmanship of Bishop Benjamin Price. Of the membership of Council for 1881 - 1882, 22 were clergy and 20 were laity (men).⁴

For the purposes of local communication and administration, as for some time, the country was divided into 6 "Ecclesiastical districts or dioceses":

The London District included Middlesex, Surrey, Kent, Sussex, Hampshire, Oxford, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Berkshire and Hertfordshire.

The Northern District included Lancashire, Yorkshire, Northumberland, Durham, Cheshire, Cumberland and Westmorland.

The Western District comprised Devon, Cornwall, Somerset, Wiltshire and Dorset.

The Eastern District included Lincolnshire, Suffolk, Norfolk, Northampton, Cambridge, Huntingdon, Rutland and Essex. Because of the few FCE churches in this area, the administration was attached to the London district.

The Midland District included Worcester, Gloucester, Derbyshire, Leicester, Hereford, Shropshire, Warwickshire, Staffordshire and Nottinghamshire.

The North and South Wales District also included Monmouthshire. However, in 1880 and 1881, St. Paul's, Cardiff was the only permanent church community, and so for ease of administration South Wales was attached to the Western District, and, inconveniently, North Wales was attached to the London District.⁵

Each District was governed by a President who was assisted by a treasurer and a secretary. Each of the districts held its own quarterly meetings, and all joined together for the yearly Summer "plenum" at Convocation.

Problems within the administrative structure: 1881

Whilst the more "advanced" churchmen had left the FCE for the REC or the RCE, it is evident from the 1881 Convocation that there were still many divisions of opinion. It is almost certain that the "low-church" and Independent element was continuing to over-react to the past divisions, and that in so doing, was producing serious strains within the structure. It is also evident that the problems were "public" enough to be the subject of open comment within the other Free liturgical denominations. In November 1879, the editor of the Episcopal Gazette published a leading article, "Goodwill towards the FCE". In this he says: "We have had opportunities of judging the way the FCE has been a blessing in the earth, we have seen with regret the attacks it has been subject to, and we have observed some of its errors of administration."⁶

Evidently the editor was taking issue with the nature of the administrative structure itself, which he felt to be too cumbersome and "ponderous". He continued: "our wonderment is on a par with our disappointment, that it does not...number at the present its hundred churches, and its hundred clergy".

Certainly the slow progress of the denomination was uppermost in Bishop Price's mind at the turn of the new decade of the 80s. In his Presidential Address, delivered on Tuesday 28 June 1881, he particularly indicated a division over personalities: "Our spirit has been too much that of 'I of Paul, and I of Apollos'." More particularly this had concerned the relationships between the Convocation and the churches, and the District Meetings and the Council. In fact Price told the Convocation bluntly: "this want of cohesion among us...has paralyzed some of our most promising efforts".

Carefully, Price emphasised the need for the FCE to remember its episcopal nature, and the key to the problems he saw as being the lack of attention to attendance at the District Meetings. These, he said, are "the soul of the system". But like Eldridge later in the 1890s, Price saw a greater work for his denomination than just responding to the prevailing ritualistic abuses. "It would be a blessing, at least, to be imbued with the spirit of this evangelism, and be not only a protesting, but also a working Church..."⁷ Indeed, it is

significant that, despite the insularity of both FCE and REC from the ideas and theological developments in the broader church (discussed more fully below), both Price and Eldridge were expressing feelings which were becoming increasingly strong in British nonconformity at the close of the nineteenth century. Writing in 1911 or 1912, in The Hope and Mission of the Free Churches, Edward Shillito summed up some of his thoughts on the imperative to evangelism which overrode denominational differences in his chapter "The distinctive beliefs". He urged: "They (the different nonconformist communities) have to reinterpret the reality by which they have been made... They have to meet the challenge of the new age...to confront a bewildered age with the certainty of the life eternal..." Again, writing probably in 1905 or 1906, the distinguished R.W. Dale stated that Congregationalists had long felt that the denomination itself took very much a second place to the aim of evangelism.⁸

Yet what is demonstrated clearly in Price's words is the difficulty for him to keep the peace between those who continued to wish for a more "Established Church" pattern on the one hand, and those on the other who retained the older and congregationalist values of the Connexion. He himself held a middle course, and he deplored the problems which the questioning of the validity of their orders had caused. "I believe...that the element of discord to which the question about 'orders' gave rise has much to do with our weakness and unprofitableness".

Price was a powerful speaker, and even the written transcription of his address conveys the feeling of great urgency which motivated his words. He concluded his address with the quaintly expressed but most telling comment: "Like a ship becalmed we require the heavenly breezes to fill our sails, the old Welsh 'hwyl' to speed us on our way".⁹

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Churches and clergy, 1881 - 1900.

Also a brief examination of the administrative structure of the FCE, and its changes, as in 1895 and 1900

Churches and clergy 1881 - 1885.

Until the failure of the FCE Magazine in 1885, regular news contributions were sent from the churches of the denomination for publication. Using these contributions, together with other sources of information like the dissertation by I.M. Mallard (op. cit.) on the Connexional communities, and the typed Index of Deeds and Documents (op. cit.), it is clear that between June 1881 and June 1885, nine or more churches were established by, or newly associated with, the FCE. These were:

Mill Street Chapel, Leamington, Warwickshire (CHC - 1882); Trinity Church, Cathays, Cardiff (1883); St. Paul's, Laisterdyke, Bradford (1883); St. Matthew's, Accrington, Lancashire (1883); St. John's, Penarth, Glamorgan (1884); St. Stephen's, Preston, Lancashire (1884); Christ Church, Broadway, Cardiff (1885); Emmanuel, Morecambe (1885).

During the years 1881 to 1885, however, several churches had left the Lists. In the latter part of 1881, or during the first part of 1882, Emmanuel, Eastbourne moved to the REC. Emmanuel, Market Drayton, Shropshire and St. Paul's, Wheelton, Lancashire both transferred to the jurisdiction of the C of E. In 1884 the church at Leominster closed. Thus by the time of the publication of the official List of the Churches in July 1885, there were 34 churches, 4 of which were also Connexional:

Alston, near Preston; Accrington; St. Paul's, Cardiff; Trinity Church, Cathays, Cardiff; St. John's, Penarth, Cardiff; Christ Church, Roath, Cardiff; Cleeve near Cheltenham; Crowborough, Sussex; Westcott near Dorking (also CHC); Exeter; Haslingden, Lancashire; Hollinwood, Lancashire; High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire; Ilfracombe; Laisterdyke, Lancashire; Everton, Liverpool; New Cross, Surrey; New Malden, Surrey; Norwich (also CHC); Oswaldtwistle; Morecambe; Preston; Putney; Shoreham, Sussex (also CHC); Southampton; Spalding; Teddington; Tottington, Lancashire; Tyldesley near Manchester; Ulverston; West Drayton, Middlesex; Wilsden, Yorkshire; Willesborough, Kent; and Worcester (also CHC).

In July 1885, there were 36 recognised ministers, of whom three were bishops. Of these bishops, Price and Meyers were full-time ministers of their own churches. Bishop Newman continued to live at Willesborough for a time, but as

the Bishop-President grew increasingly aged, much of the responsibility for the denomination fell to him, and he retired from Christ Church in order to concentrate on his work as bishop. Together with these clergy, there was one Licensed Evangelist who worked at St. John's, Penarth.¹⁰

However, details of the progress of the FCE in the years following 1885 are far more difficult to obtain.

Documentary problems 1885 - 1905

Part of the difficulty of providing a connected picture of the denomination from 1885 to 1905 is the fact that there are no official denominational sources available other than the Year Books which were published from 1895 onwards. In fact the Year Books themselves are very difficult to locate, the best collection being at the British Library, and that being substantially incomplete. However, part of the private library of Bishop D.A. Thompson of the FCE was lodged at the Evangelical Library after his death in January 1984. Within this are a number of volumes which had originally come from the private library of Bishop Benjamin Price - and then of his daughters after his death in 1896. However, this collection has a complete run of the early Year Books, other than the volumes for 1898-99 and 1904-05. Even so, although these provide the official minutes of the Annual Convocations, the Lists of Churches and clergy, and the church membership statistics, they do not provide the same detailed and unfolding picture of the work of the denomination that was provided by the FCE Magazine.

Even more problematical is the fact that a small denominational magazine was continued for some two and a half years from 1886 onwards. The Free Church of England Record was published in Cardiff by the Reverend Alexander Roger, minister of Trinity Church, Cathays Terrace. References to it are found in Bishop Gregg's Reformed Church Record. But even after extensive search, no copies have been located. Again, the FCE Magazine actually continued publication from 1896 onwards - advertisements for it are printed on the rear cover of all the Year Books. But the only collection which survives is that at the British Library, and this begins in Autumn 1905. Searches in London, Oxford, Cambridge, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Bristol, Cardiff, Aberystwyth and Dublin have produced no further copies of either publication.

After 1895, whilst using the Year Books as a basis therefore, further reference has to be made to other sources, such as newspapers, or the occasional collection of church records which have survived. From 1885 to 1895 some information is occasionally available in Gregg's denominational magazine for the RCE which ran until 1891. From 1896 onwards, the REC also occasionally provided information in the newly published magazine Work and Worship.

In the cases of both the FCE and the REC however, virtually all hand-written records were either burned by an incendiary bomb on the offices of the FCE solicitors during the London blitz, or they have disappeared in a series of accidents during the last 70 years (these are discussed further later). Most however have simply disappeared - and, as Bishop Vaughan remarked acidly in his Memories and Reflections, when he took over as Primus he found that there was no proper record even of the ordinations that had taken place.

The FCE in 1895: the number of churches and clergy, and a brief look at the changes in its administrative system since 1880.

A comparative examination of the numbers of churches and clergy between 1885 and 1895 shows that the fortunes of the denomination had not improved - indeed the numbers of both churches and clergy had actually dropped substantially. The reasons for this are many and are not always easy to see. Certainly the FCE itself had difficult times between 1888 and 1891 when the unity negotiations with the REC failed. Again, there is little doubt that the very public problems of both Gregg and Richardson in the early 1890s must have had an effect upon the FCE, for even though it was a different denomination, yet nevertheless both other denominations for the most part ultimately came from the FCE. In the public mind, the three denominations were linked - certainly their aims and style appeared similar to the untutored observer.

But, as for the other two denominations, from 1890 onwards public concerns simply changed. Ritualistic excess was no longer a public "cause célèbre", and the earlier white heat which had generated the foundation of numbers of the reformed churches in the past was simply not there. In this respect it is significant that Bishop Price was reminding the FCE of the need to make evangelism as opposed to anti-ritualism a priority in the mid 1880s (see above). This was a message emphasised even further by Bishop Eldridge for the REC at the turn of the century (see above). It is evident that this change in

public interest and concern was felt instinctively by both these most able men; and both were at pains to gear their denominations to this change.

At the time of the Annual Convocation in June 1895, there were just 22 Churches and Missions, three of which were also associated with the Connexion.

For administrative purposes, the former system whereby the country was divided into its six "Ecclesiastical Districts or Dioceses" had now been considerably contracted and streamlined. The country was divided into just two Dioceses, each with its own Synod - Northern and Southern. The cover of the 1895-96 Year Book shows that Bishop S.J.C. Dicksee was in charge of the Southern and Eastern part of the Southern Diocese; Bishop Price was in charge of the Western and Midland part of the Southern Diocese. There was just one bishop for the Northern Diocese, and Bishop William Baker had a very large area to cover.¹¹

The considerable "slimming-down" of the administrative structure is almost certainly a reflection of the reduction in the number of churches during the years 1886 to 1895. However, the final "tidying-up" of the diocesan system took place at the Convocation of 1897 on 30 June. Here it was resolved "that the Southern Diocese now include the Western and Midland Diocese with the exception of the counties of Derby and Stafford, which are transferred to the jurisdiction of of the Northern Diocese".¹²

For the 22 churches in the FCE in 1895 there were 30 clergy, of whom four were bishops. Three bishops were in charge of churches - Dicksee at Crowborough, Baker at Everton in Liverpool, and Price at Ilfracombe. In fact Price had just decided to retire from the care of Christ Church in favour of his assistant, the Reverend The O'Shea of Kerry. Bishop H.O. Meyers, the "Missionary Bishop" was, for a number of years at this time, living in Australia. In addition to the clergy there were 14 Licensed Evangelists, often working as assistants to the ministers of churches. The Evangelists were mostly employed in the North.

In June 1895, the churches were:

Southern Synod: Crowborough; Emmanuel, Eastbourne; Exeter; Ilfracombe; New Malden; Putney; Teddington, Westcott near Dorking (also CHC); Willesborough, Kent; and Worcester (also CHC). Also in the Southern Synod were two "Missions": Norwich Tabernacle (also CHC); and Ockbrook, Derby.

Northern Synod: Accrington; Emmanuel Church, Camlachie, Glasgow; Haslingden; Hollinwood; Everton, Liverpool; Morecambe; Oswaldtwistle; and Tottington in Lancashire. Also in the Northern Synod were two further Missions: Emmanuel, Cutler Hights, Bradford; and the FCE congregation which met in the Board School at Hunslet in Leeds.

Losses to the denomination

By comparing the lists of churches, therefore, it is possible to see that between the Winter of 1885 and the Summer of 1895, no fewer than 17 churches or missions had either failed or left the FCE. These included: Alston; St. Paul's, Trinity, and Christ Church Cardiff; St. John's, Penarth; Cleeve; High Wycombe; Laisterdyke; New Cross; Preston; Shoreham; Southampton; Spalding; Tyldesley, Manchester; Ulverston; West Drayton; and Wilsden, Yorkshire.

A detailed study of the failure of the Cardiff and Penarth churches can be found in the Case Studies chapter (Appendix, pp. 510 ff.). The troubled history and the failure of the FCE at Spalding is also examined there (pp. 551 f.). Shoreham returned to its Connexional affiliation - where it remains to the present (1993). West Drayton was largely dependent upon the distinguished and very able George Hugh Jones, its minister. When he retired at the end of 1884, the church was never able to regain the stable ministry that it needed.¹³

Gains to the denomination

However, between the years 1885 and 1895, the FCE had gained five new church communities:

Southern Synod: Emmanuel, Eastbourne (back to the FCE from the REC); and Ockbrook FCE Mission, Derby.

Northern Synod: Emmanuel, Camlachie, Glasgow; Emmanuel Mission, Cutler Hights, Bradford; and Hunslet Mission, near Leeds.

The FCE, 1895 to 1900

Between 1896 and 1900 there were further changes to the denominational strength. From the official Lists of Churches and Clergy in the newly published annual Year Books of the FCE, it is evident that six churches either returned to the FCE or were started within its jurisdiction. These were:

Furrough Cross Church, Babbacombe, near Torquay (returned to the FCE from the

Connexion - 1896);¹⁴ Micklem Mission, near Dorking (1896); Trinity Church, Springburn, Glasgow (1896); St. James', Southview, Crowborough (1899); St. Paul's, Catford, Surrey (1899); St. Andrew's, Shrewsbury Road, East Ham (from the REC - 1900).

Nevertheless, there was no great advance in strength for the denomination, for by the time of the publication of the Official List of Churches in June 1897 both Micklem Mission and its parent church, St. John's, Westcott, had left the FCE to return to the sole jurisdiction of the Connexion.¹⁵ Again, by June 1899, Emmanuel, Eastbourne had disappeared from the List, and it is likely that this had failed some time in 1898. Further, after a serious dispute between Bishop Baker and the Council of the FCE in 1898 (see below), Baker left Emmanuel, Everton. The church failed, and by June 1900 it no longer appeared in the List.¹⁶

Thus, at the time of the 1900 Convocation when the official lists of churches and clergy were approved, there were just 21 churches, of which two were also in the Connexion:

Southern Diocese: Catford; Crowborough - Christ Church, and St. James' at Southview; East Ham; Exeter; Ilfracombe; New Malden; Putney; Teddington; Torquay; Willesborough; Worcester (also CHC); and Norwich (also CHC).

Northern Diocese: Accrington; Glasgow - Emmanuel in Parkhead, and Trinity in Springburn; Haslingden; Hollinwood; Morecambe; Oswaldtwistle; and Tottington.

To run these churches there were 27 clergy, of whom 2 were bishops, Dicksee and Meyers. Bishop Dicksee was also in charge of the two churches at Crowborough; but the Missionary Bishop, H.O. Meyers, although having returned from Australia to live in Hounslow, had no pastoral charge. In addition to the clergy, there were two Licensed Evangelists.¹⁷

The administrative structure as in 1900 - 1901

The basic administrative structure was largely the same as it had been when the first Year Book was published in Summer 1895. However, the last vestige of the earlier system of division into the six "Districts or Dioceses" had finally disappeared. In essence, the administrative structure of the denomination had reached the point at which it would stay - not only until the Union with the REC in 1927, but also up to the present, 1994. Certainly there were to be

changes in 1927, including the creation of a third "Central Diocese"; but in essentials the die was cast. However, there were yet many problems for the administrative structure of the FCE to cope with in June 1900.

The 21 churches of the FCE were divided into two dioceses, North and South. Each of the dioceses had its own synod, of which the bishop was normally the President. In 1900, however, following the resignation of Bishop Baker from the denomination at some time at the end of 1898, there was no bishop for the North, and until the process of election and consecration had been attended to, the Reverend William Troughton of Morecambe had been elected to the role of "President of the Synod".

In view of the fact that, ultimately, Troughton was not consecrated until 5 August 1901, it is tempting to suppose that there was a good deal of major internal political wrangling which is not now apparent from the "shortened" form of the official Minutes of Convocation. A factor which supports this is the record of a major discussion at Convocation in June 1901 as to whether or not the denomination was to have its bishops actually consecrated, or to have them wear any distinctive form of dress. Effectively the motion failed - nevertheless, in June 1900, the whole question of the episcopate as it had developed in the FCE was under question. This matter is discussed further in this chapter, below.

It is therefore clear that, as with the General Synod of the REC, the Annual Convocation of the FCE was far from being a "rubber stamp", for the acceptance of ordinands, the official acceptance of new church communities for the denomination, and the process of the election to the episcopate - all were within the province of the Convocation. However, the smaller and more manageable executive unit which met as needed (sometimes each month) was that of the Council of the FCE. In the year 1900 to 1901, this consisted of 24 people: both the bishops ex-officio, 14 clergy elected from Convocation, and eight laity, also elected from the Convocation - all male. Each diocese appointed its own secretary to the Council - presumably for the ease of subsequent administration within each diocese after meetings.

As always, the important ancillary work of the denomination was put out to elected committees, each of which made its reports annually to Convocation (or perhaps to the diocesan Synods if needed). The five committees were: "Doctrine and Worship"; "Constitution and Canons"; "General Examination"; "Discipline",

and "Finance". Each had between seven and nine members; usually the clergy formed approximately 3/4 of the membership.

Again, it is significant that "Officers" of the denomination who had to be elected year by year included not only the obvious ones of Treasurer, Registrar and Secretaries to the Synods and main committees. The elected offices also included the position of Bishop Primus (by Convocation), Diocesan Bishops (elected by Dioceses, then confirmed at Convocation), and the position of Missionary Bishop. In fact the post of Primus in the FCE is still, to the present time, by annual election.

An overview

In June 1881 there had been 35 churches with 29 clergy and two Evangelists. In June 1900 there were 21 churches with 27 clergy and two Evangelists. The evidence available shows a decline in the denomination. However, this is perceptible not just through a comparison of the numbers themselves, but such a decline becomes especially evident when consideration is made of the many changes amongst both churches and clergy. The actual number of churches and clergy leaving the denominational lists during the years 1881 to 1900 shows that stability was not the strongest feature of the FCE.

It is true that there was, overall, a greater strength within the FCE as compared with the RCE and the REC through the years; certainly the state of both the RCE and the REC before their Union on 15 May 1894 was parlous. Nevertheless any strength perceived was illusory rather than real. At the turn of the new century the FCE had very many problems to address - not the least of which was the acute question of its leadership, for its two bishops were both old and tired. Indeed, the Northern Diocese still had no bishop of its own. Above all, the only active one of the two bishops, the Primus, was to die within the following months.

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Further brief details on the new churches dealt with during this chapter are included in the chart-survey in the Appendix, pp. 590 ff.

Internal relationships 1881 - 1885: the continuing link between the
Connexion and the FCE, and the "churchmanship" dispute.

It was at the 1873 Conference of the Connexion that Thomas Dodd of Worcester had proposed the scheme whereby ministers of either the FCE or the CHC might be recognised as ministers of the other denomination. The Connexional view of this arrangement is shown by I. M. Mallard in the dissertation which he wrote in 1957: "There was a tendency for the FCE element to assume a superiority over the Connexion". He gave as examples the fact that the CHC magazine Harbinger was absorbed by the Free Church of England Magazine, and also that the material "clearly favoured the more authoritarian denomination".¹⁸ It is fairly evident therefore that from the early days there were those in the CHC who were less enthusiastic than others about the scheme. Nevertheless, by 1880/81, although the "federative relationship" had lost its first impetus, there was a continuing Connexional influence in the life of the FCE through both clergy and laity who held dual membership.

Most important of all these was Thoresby of Spa Fields - one of the "architects" of the FCE. But there were others also, the most obvious being the Reverends Thomas Dodd of Worcester and J.B. Figgis of Brighton. Both were distinguished Connexional ministers, but both also believed very firmly in the concept of the Free Church of England; as such, like others, they had made their assent to the Declaration of Principles and to the Poll Deed of 1863, and thus held a dual ministerial membership.

However, the Connexional influence was a continually restraining force within the FCE, which, by its ultra-conservatism, had nearly caused yet a further split after the REC had emerged from the parent FCE. Again, this "restraining force" was certainly involved in the discord and disagreement over episcopacy and orders. It was also behind the "party feeling" that had caused Bishop Price to make such a forthright speech at the Convocation of 1881. Indeed, the influence of the Connexional members was to continue until the early 1890s. But even though death diluted their restraint through the years, there was continuing discord within the FCE. Indeed, certain forces at the Convocation of 1901 actually sought to reverse the established pattern of episcopal government and polity.

In fact the failure of this attempt was a watershed for the denomination. Thereafter, the traditional pattern of episcopal government was assured - and by the same token, the more Calvinistic and radically protestant influence was ended. But in the middle of this "ebb and flow" in the long continuing issue of churchmanship came the attempts in 1888 and 1891 to unite the FCE and the REC once again. These served only to complicate matters; furthermore, a major disciplinary issue in 1898, involving Bishop Baker, completed the problems.

1881 - 1885

Perhaps the degree of influence that the Connexion still had in the early 1880s is well illustrated by the constant news contributions that were made from a number of the Countess' Chapels to the "Ecclesiastical Register" in the FCE Magazine during 1881. However, the influence of the "high-church" party during this same year was made clear by a letter in the September 1881 edition from the Reverend Professor Bradshaw. Bradshaw was an FCE presbyter who, as a theological specialist, had been appointed "Professor" as a teaching post within the denomination. In his letter he heartily commended a new "brochure" by Bishop Newman, Thoughts on Church Order and Government, which strongly supported an episcopal form of polity and ordination. By the same token, the pamphlet sternly denied any mechanistic idea of the Apostolic Succession - something which was applauded and re-enforced by Bradshaw.¹⁹ It is interesting to see that, whilst there was clearly a general attempt to support the "party line" as laid down by Price at Convocation that same June, yet, at the same time, there was an equally clear attempt to hold on to the Connexional element still within the FCE.

The events of 1882 confirmed the idea of a deliberate papering over of the cracks, or perhaps, almost an attempt to turn back the clock to the time when the two denominations were run very much "in tandem". Not only were there several contributions from CHC chapels to the magazine through the year, but the August 1882 edition carried an account of the Annual Assembly of the Connexion. Just one month later, there was an extensive abstract of the financial accounts of the Connexion. But far more significantly, in the Annual Report of the Council, the secretary, the Reverend G. Hugh Jones, re-iterated the decision of the previous Convocation which had made a formal end to the union between the FCE and the REC. Indeed, Jones revealed that: "That union, whilst it lasted, was largely nominal, and where it was

not nominal, it was mischievous". He continued: "The resolution...removed a deep root of bitterness, and enabled the Council to concentrate its attention to the immediate work..."

There are two things which are very apparent - even though they are not directly stated. The first is, that the claims to a primacy which Richardson had made in conversations (Chapter 4, p. 180) were deeply offensive to many - particularly the more traditional Connexional clergy and laity. The second is that the great strains within the FCE (which had nearly caused a split even after the "withdrawal" of the REC out of the FCE) were continuing to be caused by the insistence of some upon Holy Orders being within the ancient succession. It was this sort of dogmatism which Price had condemned in his address the previous year, for it immediately underlined the difference between the clergy of the Connexion who had been presbyterially ordained, and those of the FCE who had been episcopally ordained. Many found the "high church" movement in the denomination deeply offensive. Certainly, it was dangerously divisive.

It is more than possible therefore to see the formal ending of the FCE/REC agreement (rather than its being simply left in abeyance) as a distinct act of deference to the "low-church" party and to the Connexional element still within the denomination.²⁰ This is in some contrast to the analysis of Mallard who says that, even in 1879, the affiliation scheme had met with "rather a half-hearted response".²¹

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During 1883 the denominational magazine once again gives a very definite impression that the Connexion was being deliberately "included" as a matter of policy. Certainly that year was a milestone for both the denominations, for with the new year came news of the serious illness of the two great leaders, Price and Thoresby. Price recovered, but with Thoresby's death on 7 March at Spa Fields Parsonage, one of the main links between the FCE and the Connexion disappeared (see below).

There were several contributions to the FCE Magazine from Connexional churches through the year, but in addition, both the February and October editions carried reports on the long standing work of the CHC Missions in Sierra Leone. The February report, written on 11 December, gave the figures

of church membership and Sunday School membership at the 10 churches there - as well as the Training College at Waterloo. Whilst the work was successful, it would not have commanded such attention if the internal relationships within the FCE had not been so sensitively balanced.²²

The Report of the Annual Convocation in June 1883 carried much about the recent death of Thoresby. But above all, Bishop Price used his masterly Address as an opportunity to appeal for unity in the denomination. He put the issues clearly and firmly, and he reminded those present how the great problem at first had been the FCE Poll Deed with which many in the Connexion had disagreed. But against this Price set the utterly firm convictions of Thoresby himself: "He honestly believed it to embody those great principles and doctrines which will characterise the church of the future". Very carefully, and as uncontroversially as possible, Price was making an impassioned appeal to those who were within the FCE and yet were trying to reverse the Poll Deed in some way. He underlined Thoresby's convictions further: "'He was as certain of it,' he said one day, not long ago, 'as he was of his own existence.'"²³

Here, however, it is worth pointing out the fact that Price was using considerable licence when speaking of Thoresby's devotion to the Poll Deed. In Thoresby's bitter letters to the press over the REC and the new church at Littlehampton, it was abundantly clear that his view of the episcopal polity of the FCE was far more conservatively protestant than that of Price himself. In his letter to The Rock of 14 September 1877, he had written: "The Poll Deed has episcopacy, but it will never sanction, theoretically or practically, three orders of ministers". Yet by 1876 it is clear that the FCE functioned, to all practical intents and purposes, with a conventional three-fold ministry. Nevertheless, Price used the Thoresby "tradition" as a unifying factor at this difficult time.²⁴

The June 1883 Report of the Council, again, tackled difficult problems firmly. It admitted that the hopes that the FCE would make more rapid progress had not been realised, "but the people of England are a cautious nation". Perhaps most controversial amongst the matters was that of the federative union with the REC which had caused so much strain within the FCE. The secretary of the Council, the Reverend G. Hugh Jones, took a very tactful line as he referred to the changes that had taken place over interpretation of the nature of holy orders:²⁵

"There have been times...when with the very laudable view of securing greater and more rapid progress...the FCE has sought alliances with other religious bodies...Alliance on one hand has meant a tacit setting aside of our scriptural episcopacy; and on the other it has sought to invest it with an essential importance contrary to the provisions of our Poll Deed, and unsought for by the true and wise friends of the Free Church of England".

It is clear that the leadership was "bending over backwards" in an effort to minimise the divisions - and to heal them if possible.

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During 1884 the tension was not as evident as it had been the previous year. Tension there must have been, but good news during the course of the year of the new congregations at Laisterdyke, Accrington, Preston, and Penarth must have boosted the morale of the denomination.

Connexional news continued to be contributed from Brighton (January), Bath (February), Malvern Link (March), Bath (May), Spa Fields (September and November). In the September edition of the magazine there was also a set of Sunday School statistics published, and these included those of the CH churches associated with the FCE.

But it is interesting to see that, in some ways, there was a definite attempt to "externalise" denominational problems - or perhaps to "de-personalise" some of the tensions. Certainly Price had made his address the previous year very inward-pointing and specific. However in June 1884 the principal subject of his speech was the 400th anniversary of the birth of Luther which had taken place the previous November. This, together with the coming celebrations for the 500th anniversary of Wycliffe's birth, gave Price the opportunity to produce dramatic warnings about the dangers of papal supremacy and the ever present Anglican sacerdotalism. He warned: "It would soon deprive you of your freedom, put out your eyes, and compel you to grind at the mills of the Philistines, as Samson did." Price was deliberately stirring up feelings about a common and external foe for all parties within the FCE. As always, it was a carefully planned piece of oratory, and one designed to further the cause of internal unity.²⁶

Finally, there is an interesting indication that a new determination had entered the minds of the leaders of the FCE during the earlier part of 1884. A single sentence in the opening report of Convocation reads: "It was

unanimously decided that the word government be added to the form of declaration signed by all persons entering our ministry". Quite simply, this was the work of Price, Jones and others, ensuring that there would be no possibility in the future of a man entering the ministry of the FCE first and then questioning its episcopal polity afterwards.²⁷

For the moment, matters within the denomination seemed more stable - or perhaps more under control.

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There is evidence of a greater cohesion within the FCE during 1885. The account of the 1885 Convocation was published in the July magazine, and it is interesting to read that: "The meeting was harmonious".²⁸ But in addition, both Price and Newman obviously felt secure enough to be able to make statements about the FCE which contained more than an element of personal rebuke for some. Leaders who are besieged with great problems will not often make personally pointed and public rebukes for fear of stirring-up still further the difficult personalities involved.

In his address, Price stated baldly: "The Free Church of England is not Independency with a liturgy, but a duly organised body of Christians united together in one bond of fellowship..."²⁹ Superficially, such a statement may not have seemed very significant. But given the fact that the both the Connexion and the FCE, in its earlier days, had been strongly identified in the public mind with Independency, and actually materially allied with the very independent-minded Calvinistic Methodist communities, the end result was that such a statement would have given cause for a number of people to think hard about some of their own cherished opinions. (Particularly here, perhaps, Dodd of Worcester, E.J. Boon of Southampton, Figgis of Brighton, Alexander Roger of Cathays in Cardiff - and probably even G. Hugh Jones. Just the previous year at Convocation, Jones had unsuccessfully proposed a move towards union with the "liturgical Free Churches".³⁰)

Newman's address took a slightly different direction; and if the address of the Bishop-President had sent a warning shot across the bows of the "low-church" party, then Newman's was directed towards the "high-church" members of the denomination. "May I humbly ask whether, as a Church, we may not have been depending too much upon our machinery, on our orders, on the

externals of worship, and thus have forgotten, in degree, the holiness of our calling..."³¹ But although Newman's direction may have appeared to be different, his record in the denomination shows him to have been both loyal to Price, and eminently able as both a church minister and a bishop.³² The truth of the matter is, therefore, that in 1885, both men were in a position which was secure enough for them to start pushing the extreme wings of the denomination into the middle way...that of the system of the often mentioned "Scriptural episcopacy". The image of a pair of sheep dogs skilfully dealing with a diverging flock comes to mind!

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Whilst it is clear that the internal "political" unity of the denomination was more secure by the end of 1885, it is difficult to give a detailed picture of the churchmanship issue through the succeeding years, until the publishing of the year books begins in 1895. However, it is quite clear that, by the mid 1890s, the division between "high" and "low" had once more become an issue - moreover, an issue which was eventually to reach a climax in Summer 1901.

Meanwhile, in both 1888 and 1891, the FCE leaders evidently felt secure enough to make a serious attempt at union with Bishop Richardson's REC. In fact the attempt failed. But it is likely that the attempt itself, together with the issues and the personalities involved (especially Richardson) opened up old wounds and stirred up long held suspicions.

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The FCE and REC unity attempts of 1888 and 1890

It is a testimony to the inner security that must have been restored to the FCE, that by the late 1880s, the leaders could even consider unity discussions with the REC in the United Kingdom. However, the initial approach is likely to have been made by Bishop Richardson, for it was during the middle months of 1888 that the other negotiations were being made for the return of the RCE in Canada to American REC jurisdiction. Certainly, moves were afoot to unify as many of the scattered REC jurisdictions as was possible at this time.³³ It is therefore likely that the unity negotiations in both Britain and Canada were parts of a single initiative from the REC. But the results on each side of the Atlantic were very different.

However, the main difficulty in examining the unity attempts of both 1888 and 1890 is that of the lack of documentary sources. Neither Vaughan nor Annie Darling Price mentions the union negotiations at all. Again, there are no known hand-written records which survive. In addition to this, the FCE Magazine had ceased publication after December 1885. For its part, the REC simply did not have a journal at the time.

In fact considerable coverage of events is provided by Bishop Gregg's Reformed Church Record, although Gregg's own view of negotiations was soured by virtue of the fact that he had no part in them. Nevertheless the information he provides is valuable - including details of letters in the Episcopal Recorder, the official magazine of the REC in America. Again, although some information was published in evangelical papers such as the Rock, the amount of detail given is little. It is also significant that, from the side of the American church authorities, there is virtually no information in the official transcripts of the General Councils. In fact, in his 1889 Report to Council on the progress of the REC in the UK, Eldridge made no specific mention whatsoever of the events of the previous Autumn.³⁴

All the indications are, therefore, that the negotiations were ill prepared for by the parties concerned in Britain, and that they caused misgivings within both denominations. Certainly Gregg's journal makes it clear that the 1888 unity decisions actually received the strong disapproval of the American General Committee. In fact it was clearly their refusal to accept the settlement in England that resulted in its ultimate failure - and something of an embarrassment to those involved.

The unity attempt of 1888

In the Reformed Church Record for November 1888, Gregg announced: "Since our last issue, two meetings have (we assume) taken place, one in Canada, September 26th, and the other in London on October 10th, with a view to promote the union of Churches. We have not heard the result of either of these meetings..."³⁵ In the meanwhile however, in the English Churchman and St. James's Chronicle of 18 October 1888, information was given that: "At a numerously attended meeting of the Bishops, Clergy, and Wardens of the Reformed Church over which Bishop Richardson presides, and those of the Free Church of England, which was held yesterday week in the parlour of Exeter Hall, London, a union of these two churches was effected without a dissentient voice." The surprising information followed that "The amalgamated churches will in future be known as "The Free Reformed Episcopal Church of England".³⁶

Short announcements were made in both the Christian and the Rock that the the union had taken place. But the very next week (26 October 1888), the Christian published a correction: "We are desired to state that the paragraph in our last issue...does not accurately represent the facts. The meeting held in Exeter Hall was only a preliminary one, called to discuss the basis of a projected future union. Nothing definite has yet been accomplished in the way of organic union..."³⁷

The fact was that matters were in utter confusion. On 11 October 1888, the day after the meeting, the Reverend W.H. Simms wrote (presumably officially) to the Editor of the Episcopal Recorder in America. Published in the edition of 25 October 1888, the letter was both fulsome and clearly precipitate. After announcing the successful union, Simms wrote:³⁸

"There was a fine spirit of brotherly love manifest, and the fusion of the two bodies (always one in heart and principle) was carried by acclamation. Henceforth we shall be known as 'The Free Reformed Episcopal Church of England'...Good Bishop Price was in the chair, supported by Bishops Richardson, Sugden, Meyers and Greenland. Now the Lord be praised for this new departure. I feel sure that our brethren in America and Canada will rejoice at this consummation, so long deferred. Only Satan hindered it long ago. We have cast him out at last..."

But the brethren in America were very far from rejoicing indeed, and they voiced their displeasure in that same edition of the Episcopal Recorder.

Firstly, the editor reminded readers that "The General Council long since granted to our brethren in Great Britain the right of self-government." But clearly the change of name was done without any trans-Atlantic consultation at all, and it met with a cold disapproval.

"Whether a change of name.. was contemplated by the act consenting to the autonomy of our Church in England we do not know. Certainly a new ecclesiastical body has come into existence over which the General Council can exercise no control. The relations hereafter to exist between the two bodies can only be determined by the consent of both the General Council and the Free Reformed Episcopal Church of England."

The editorial comment was carefully worded, but it is evident that the action of the REC in Britain was regarded as an act of secession. "We are impelled to ask whether they have not left us both in form and fact, and whether there may not be cause for thanksgiving even in that event". Certainly the American Authorities had been greatly exercised by the continual internal disunity within the REC in the UK (see above). As if to try to dilute the undeniably hostile note of the editorial, the writer concluded: "It has always been difficult for Englishmen and Americans to see things just in the same light when they had to do with Church government. Owing to their diverse methods of thinking there is almost certain to be misunderstanding on one side or the other..."³⁹

As might have been expected, Gregg was bitterly critical of the negotiations. The union in the name of these two bodies, he maintained, was actually "an act of open disruption from both". But however unattractive was Gregg's attitude, his judgement was factual and true: "...this attempt at fusion...cannot be legally effected without the consent of the English Court of Chancery on the one hand, and the General Council of the REC on the other."⁴⁰ The steadying strength of the FCE as far as both its polity and its properties were concerned lay in the fact that, as a denomination it had been registered together with its Poll Deed in Chancery on 31 August 1863. Therefore, as a named denomination, together with the properties which were vested in its name, it was protected by the rule of law. But it is clear that these implications had not been properly thought out in the negotiations.

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Despite the bias which is so evident in Gregg's opinions, in succeeding editions of the Reformed Church Record, he provided a useful source of information on the subsequent events surrounding the unity agreement.

In the January edition of his journal, Gregg repeated the simple truth of the matter: "...this fusion of the Free Church of England and the Anglo-American branch of the Reformed Episcopal Church cannot have any legal existence without consents not yet, nor likely to be, obtained." He quoted an editorial comment from the Episcopal Recorder of 22 November 1888, and it is clear that such consent from the American side would not be forthcoming: "...the union referred to has separated from us by adopting a name which cannot apply to us in this country." Gregg then continued with a further quotation which claimed that the ministers and members of the former RCE in the UK had "in fact and in law taken their departure from our own particular family."⁴¹ Matters must have looked endlessly confusing for many outside the denominations.

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At this point it is necessary to see that the encouragement which seemed to have been given to Gregg by some in the REC in the USA (to think that some form of reconciliation might have been possible in the latter part of the 1880s) was certainly part of the American reaction to the unity pronouncement. It is obvious that many in America felt it to have been a betrayal of them by Richardson and others in the British REC.

In Chapter 5, pp. 210 f., the curious claim was discussed that a leading authority of the REC in America had declared that the names of the British clergy were to be removed from official REC lists. It seems certain that this was true. But it is likely also that, having decided not to recognise Gregg as the leader of the true REC in Britain, the public spreading of this story became a matter of embarrassment to America.

In March 1889, the Reformed Church Record quoted a disclaimer which had been included in the Episcopal Recorder for 24 January 1889. The American editorial writer denied that the journal had at any time said it would cease to print the list of the clergy of the British branch of the REC. Gregg's reply in this most confusing saga was to make counter claim that he had indeed been informed by letter, "upon the highest official authority in America" that the "the names of Richardson and those associated with him in England will hereafter be omitted from our Clergy List". Gregg continued "It is well, however, to remember that the Episcopal Recorder is not an official paper of the REC, nor of any other body; and it does not in any way fairly represent even the American REC". This

was yet another example of the way in which Gregg seemed to be able to reason along a line that bore no relation to reality.

What, however, is of interest in this muddle, is a statement which Gregg had found in the same edition of the Episcopal Recorder in question. He wrote: "For one thing...we thank the Episcopal Recorder, viz., that it confirms a statement which we made...that 'there was no truth in the report' that the American branch of the REC (in England) 'had united with the Free Church of England'".⁴² It is evident that, even before the turn of the new year, members of both the REC and FCE in Britain must have realised that the decision of the meeting at Exeter Hall on 10 October 1888 was null and void.

The unity attempt of 1890

The final edition of the Reformed Church Record was published in January 1891, and amongst its somewhat acerbic contents, a long article, "The 'Union Conference'", carried details of a conference which had been held at Exeter Hall, Strand, on Tuesday 9 December 1890. The aim of this had been once more to unite the FCE and the British branch of the REC.

Predictably, Gregg (the writer of the article) condemned the meeting, for the RCE had not been involved in any way. However, he reveals the significant fact that the Reverend J.B. Figgis was present - certainly representing the "Connexional" side of the FCE. Indeed it appears as if the suggestion of a form of re-ordination had been discussed, for Figgis reportedly recounted advice which he had been given during other unity conversations (the Connexion with the Church of England). That advice was, in short, "not to be re-ordained..." Yet any such suggestion of re-ordination would have been made by Richardson, and it would have been directed at those clergy of the FCE not episcopally ordained. This alone would have ensured the failure of the talks, for those present would have seen Richardson once again making a claim for primacy.

Gregg's writing is very diffuse, and his threads of reasoning constantly wander. However, from what he says, it is clear that the failure of the negotiations on this occasion was also likely to have been through the insuperable legal problems. Once again these revolved principally around the trusts and the name of the new and united body.⁴³ Indeed, exactly when the negotiations failed is difficult to say. But judging by the article in the

January edition of the Reformed Church Record, it is unlikely that there were any further meetings.

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However secure the leaders of the FCE may have felt the denomination to be, it is certain that the overall effect of the discussions in 1888 and 1890 was to undo much of the hard work of Price and Newman in 1884 and 1885. The "churchmanship" issues which had created so much trouble in the late 1870s and early to mid 1880s might well have been calmed. But the unity discussions would have involved matters of great delicacy - like episcopal jurisdictions. Again, Richardson's requirement for the episcopal ordination of FCE clergy formerly ordained in the Connexion ran directly counter to a fundamental principle in the FCE that the orders of all protestant denominations were acceptable, and accepted. (In practice, then as now, non-episcopally ordained clergy tended to be given the position of deacon. But, in these earlier days, this was not invariable). Finally, the American authorities had taken a strong and an authoritative line over the legality of the 1888 decision.

The result can only have been confusion for many as to the identity of an FCE where there were so many radical changes proposed (including name, and, by implication, ecclesiastical polity). Old wounds will have been opened, and a number of people alienated. Certainly, by the time of publication of the 1895 Year Book of the FCE, neither the name of Thomas Dodd nor that of J.B. Figgis appeared, even though both had supported the denomination from the beginning.

The fact was that, by the late 1890s, much of the former worry and division within the FCE seems to have returned. But in particular, the focus was now to be upon the nature of the episcopal office itself.

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Internal relationships 1895 - 1901: the final links between the Connexion and the FCE, and a climax in the "churchmanship" dispute.

1895

The 1895 Convocation was held at St. John's, Tottington, in Lancashire on 24, 25 and 26 June. But the meetings seemed to do little more than was barely necessary for the continued running of the denomination with the election of its officers and committees. To start with, however, there were certain basic problems which did not help the session - like the sudden illness of a senior presbyter, Tudor Rogers, causing one of the meetings to be abandoned.

But far more serious was the lack of any strong and experienced episcopal leadership such as that which had gathered together the disunited forces of the denomination during the middle years of the 1880s. The justly revered Bishop Price was by this time 91 years of age, and too frail and unwell to attend. Bishop Meyers had moved to Australia, probably at the end of 1889 or the beginning of 1890, and Bishop Newman had died in October 1887 in retirement in Leamington.

Consequently, in 1889, two younger bishops had been consecrated, William Baker (Liverpool), and Samuel Dicksee (Crowborough), both of whom were present at the Convocation. But whilst they were undeniably good and able ministers, neither had the strength of leadership quality and the long continuity of experience that Price had. More difficult again was the fact that they had both been consecrated together - at Christ Church, Westminster Bridge Road, Lambeth, on 6 November 1889. Thus neither was clearly senior to the other. Again, both men stood at opposite ends of the spectrum in churchmanship, and this difference was to cause not only increasingly bad feeling between the two men themselves, but an even more pronounced "churchmanship" polarisation within the FCE.

Baker, in particular, lacked Price's wisdom, and this was to cause problems later. In fact Baker chaired the Convocation; yet although incapacitated, Benjamin Price was once again elected to the position of Bishop Primus.⁴⁴

1896

However bland the 1895 Convocation may have seemed, by the time of the next Convocation in June 1896, there were definite signs of strain within the

denomination once again. Above all, the serious matter of the leadership of the FCE had to be settled, for at six o'clock on the morning of 6 January 1896, Benjamin Price had died at 91 years of age.⁴⁵

There is no doubt that the debt of the denomination to him for his skilful and strong leadership through the years was very great indeed (further discussed below). But, although his death was expected, it nevertheless caused a most difficult political situation. Meyers was still in Australia, and of the two possible successors to Price not only were both equal in official "seniority", but serious personal and theological differences between the bishops were evident - certainly by the time of the Convocation in June 1896.

In the previous year, Convocation had been chaired by Baker. But on 30 June 1896, not only was Dicksee elected to take the chair, but later that day he was also elected Primus - "nem. con." [illustration p. xi]. Earlier on that day, there were discussions on the subject of "Letters of Orders". Basically these are simply legal documents certifying that a man had been ordained to the office of deacon, or presbyter, or bishop, but the wording within them was written as by the ordaining bishop. Thus the letters were a statement of what had been done by that individual bishop. And as such, in the Established Church, the bishop concerned always used the first person plural.

For some time, the FCE bishops had not used the hierarchical form which laid certain stress upon the apostolic nature of their role. It appears, however, that William Baker had been using the traditional and "Anglican" form. This emphasised that the ordinations were "Episcopal", and the document itself was signed together with the formula "in the xx year of our consecration".

The matter of Letters of Orders had been discussed at length by the Council of the FCE, and the Council, in turn, passed that matter back to the Convocation. Apparently during the protracted negotiations which had previously taken place, several letters had passed between the Registrar and Bishop Baker on the matter. At the meeting of Convocation the deliberations were said to have been "exhaustive", and, during the course of discussion, those letters between Baker and the Registrar were read out. The result was the resolution that: "The wording of the 'Letters of Orders' be as originally expressed, viz., that the words 'Episcopal' and 'In the xx year of our consecration' be omitted from all future 'Letters of Orders'."⁴⁶

There was a peremptory tone to the resolution. But as Baker's correspondence had been read out in discussion, the resolution was obviously directed against him, and as such it would have caused resentment. Certainly the seeds were sown for future trouble between Baker and the denomination itself. Once more, it is possible to see that, not far beneath the surface of the denomination was the "Connexional" spirit of Independence. This was a clear demonstration of a radical and "low-church" reaction to what it considered improperly "high" in Bishop Baker. The "churchmanship" division had opened-up yet again.

1897 and 1898

By the time of the Convocation of 28 and 29 June 1897, this theological unease had focussed itself into a fairly definite opposition to the way in which the episcopal office had developed in the FCE. From the time of the patronage of Lord Ebury onwards, the conviction of many in the FCE had been that the best way forward for an effective church, and one which would be attractive to the population as a whole, was on the model of the Established Church.

But as long as the membership of the denomination included men who had been nurtured in the ministry of the Connexion like Dodd, Figgis, Newman, Thoresby, and Benjamin Price himself, this party was not able to gain power. The denomination had divided into the two camps - "high" and "low" - and the convictions of the "high" party that the Established Church model was the only way forward had been the cause of the split when the REC had been formed from within the FCE.

But Price in particular represented both sides. In origin he was a Calvinistic Methodist who had served within the Connexion. BUT he was also a Bishop who had been consecrated in the ancient succession. This is partly the secret of his strong leadership, for both sides of the churchmanship divide found in his careful rule a satisfactory "via media". He, together with the able Bishop Newman, had been able to weld together the disparate groups in the mid 1880s. Now however, Newman, Dodd, Thoresby, and finally Price himself, were all dead. Moreover, following the difficulties of the Unity attempts of 1888 and 1890, Figgis (and probably Dodd) had effectively left the FCE to return wholly to the Connexion.

Thus the old "restraining" force within the leadership had ceased...but with that restraint had also gone the reconciliatory abilities of Price, Newman and Figgis. In truth, the denomination needed both qualities.

Now, in the late 1890s, certain people like Baker were clearly determined to work according to the Anglican model. Others disagreed very strongly: but there were neither the gentle "restrainers" nor the reconcilers who were able, as in the past, to defuse the tensions.

Part of the difficulty of the resolution of such tensions, however, lay in the fact that the number of people who attended the Convocation meetings was actually very small. The 1895 Convocation had had 16 clergy present and 4 layman (apologies from 4 clergy and 3 laymen). In 1896, possibly in the realisation that there might well be bad feeling in the meeting, there were just 11 clergy and 2 laymen present (apologies from 6 clergy and 1 layman). In 1897 there were 12 clergy and 1 laymen (apologies from 5 clergy and 2 laymen).⁴⁷ Thus the feelings and disputes, which were very real indeed out amongst the church membership at large, were not always easily or demonstrably seen in the Convocational environment or the minutes. For the sake of the unity of the group itself, the disagreements would have been somewhat muted. Nevertheless, even though so few were actually at the meetings, and even though the medium of information is that of the official minutes, it is still possible to see much in the way that words were sometimes chosen or expressed. Often, the slightest nuances were strong indications of high feelings.

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In June 1897, it was the Bishop Primus, Samuel Dicksee himself, who gave a clear indication of the way in which certain changes in thought were taking place in the FCE.

According to the minutes of the meetings, his presidential address "was marked with eloquent and forcible utterance concerning important issues at present agitating the Church of Christ". But whilst dealing with "sacerdotalism in the ministry" Dicksee not only re-iterated the traditional denial of "Apostolical Succession", but he made specific reference to the office of bishop within the FCE. The minutes read: "Several quotations were given from the early Fathers showing that the power of government rested in the Church and not in the Episcopate." Dicksee made his point even more secure as he had continued: "A

clear utterance was given to the scriptural position of the FCE Episcopate as an office and not a distinct order of the Ministry".⁴⁸

At first sight, the account of his address looks perfectly in accord with the sort of theology of Episcopate which had been emphasised many times before. It placed the episcopal function as a total part of presbyterate, and therefore looked back to the days when Price, and others within the CHC/FCE ecclesial community, recognised and worked with a two-fold order of ministry - diaconate and presbyterate (presbyterate actually including certain episcopal functions). Hence, after his determinedly old-fashioned manner, for most of the time Price had been referred to as "Bishop-President".

Certainly, from 1875/6 onwards, the FCE had effectively used (and had therefore commended by its use) a three-fold order of ministry. However, what the FCE had never done was to affirm that there was any change in its theology of ministry. By this present assertion, however, whilst Dicksee had denied nothing of what had happened by the consecrations of 1876, what he did do was to focus the mind of the denomination back to an earlier and presbyterial polity.

Although there is no documentary proof, it is more than possible to see a direct corrective being made to the episcopal theories of Bishop Baker. Price would never have made such a direct corrective. He would in all probability have taken his colleague quietly aside; he might well have spoken in strong general terms at Convocation about New Testament "episcops", but he was far too much of a politician and a pragmatist to have made such a personal division of thought so apparent. Most pointed of all was the fact that the Convocation meetings that year were being held at Baker's own church at Everton, Liverpool.

It is almost certain that Baker viewed this as some form of attack upon him and his episcopal position - certainly, also, an attempt to limit the independence he felt was truly his as a bishop. Indeed his subsequent actions indicate that, just as with Bishop Greenland in the REC, William Baker saw his role as a bishop very much in the Anglican mould. It is certain that, far from healing divisions, the words of Dicksee only served to make matters worse. And the results of what had quite obviously become "bad blood" between the two bishops was soon to become a most unfortunate and irreconcilable breakdown of relationships between them. The crisis point came that same Autumn, on 5 November 1897, and William Baker resigned both from the Northern Diocese and from the FCE.

It is, perhaps, a measure of the way in which divisions within the denomination had been building up that, although H.O. Meyers had now returned from Australia to live at Richmond House, Hounslow, and although he continued as "Missionary Bishop",⁴⁹ yet he was not at Convocation. Certainly, as a general assistant bishop, he ought to have been present. However, not only was his name missing from the list of apologies, but there was no public reference made to his absence, nor was there any message from him.

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The Year Book for 1898-99 is unobtainable: even so, it is unlikely that there would have been any details about the resignation of Bishop Baker in the Convocation minutes. The resignation would simply have been noted "with regret". The facts are, however, given in the confidential Memories and Reflections of Bishop Vaughan which he wrote in 1949.⁵⁰ Whilst the details of the sour relationship between the two Diocesan Bishops were obviously not known to Vaughan, from the further information which he does give, the reason for the sharpness of feeling on both sides becomes evident.

During the mid 1890s, Baker planned to ordain into the FCE George W. Ginty, the minister of an independent mission in Wallasey, thereby extending the work of the denomination to that part of the Wirral. At the same time he also wished to ordain one of his own church officers at Everton who was a "well placed" shipowner. In the FCE, the tradition was that Convocation alone granted permission for men to be ordained, and, probably in 1896, the Convocation refused them ordination. Baker saw this decision as the prerogative of the bishop as in the Established Church, and, according to Vaughan, he proceeded without authority and ordained them both. In fact, in the Year Book for 1897-98, "Rev. Geo. W. Ginty" appears in the List of Churches as Baker's Curate at Everton.⁵¹

The result of Baker's action was a disciplinary proceeding by the Convocation. This was probably during the late Summer of 1897 - although there are no surviving records to prove it. But the consequences were unfortunate for everyone, for Ginty immediately took action - according to Vaughan, against Baker - "for slander, or defamation of character". Vaughan tells how "It was tried in court and presently settled. But Mr. Ginty departed to America and the Bishop had to retire.. "

Some 10 years later, after Baker's death, a brief but gentle appreciation was made in the Year Book for 1908-09. The minutes of Convocation that year asked that a note be put by the name of Baker in the list of bishops of the FCE. This was to state that "Since Nov. 5th. 1897, Bishop Baker has not performed any episcopal acts on behalf, or with the authority, of the Convocation of the FCE". This was evidently the date of his resignation.⁵²

Bishop Baker continued to work, probably amongst the non-aligned and independent liturgical churches. Certainly his signature appears in the Service Register for Christ Church, Wells Street, Cardiff in both 1901 and 1902 (Case Studies chapter, Appendix, p. 553).⁵³ His church at Everton eventually failed in the winter of 1899/1900. But Vaughan says that subsequently "the building became a Mission Hall of the Parish Church of that district".

1899

It is little wonder that there had been, earlier, the clear indication of bad feeling and even bitterness in the Minutes for the Convocation of 1897, for this was when the dispute was coming to a head. But that some of the fault lay with Dicksee himself is certain. Certainly the brief accounts of his Presidential Addresses show him to be both dogmatic, and lacking in tact - a distinct contrast to Price, whose strength, yet careful pragmatism had weathered so many storms.

In his Presidential Address at Convocation in 1899, once more Dicksee hammered home a militantly protestant theme, but one which, by implication of past events was anti-Establishment - and barely disguised:⁵⁴

"The address dealt, in eloquent and forceful language, with the momentous issues at this time agitating the minds of men in the Christian Church. The Primus tracing the growth of Christianity from the creation to the heralding of the birth of Jesus Christ by the angels in the slopes of Bethlehem, ending his address by clearly setting forth that Jesus was the only Priest."

Dicksee had swung very much to the "low church" wing of the denomination, and whilst this may well have been in reaction to the "Establishment" style of Baker, it was certainly not in the careful protestant via-media that had been nurtured by Price and Newman in former days. In fact Dicksee was in danger of making a serious shift in the nature of the polity of the FCE. Although there is no written or documentary proof, once again it looks very much as if he was trying to take the style of the denomination back to that of Connexional times.

Exactly how much co-operation he had from others within the denomination at the time is unknown. What is significant is that in June 1899, although Dicksee and Meyers were now the only bishops, Meyers still did not attend Convocation. Whilst illness could have accounted for this, there was no recorded mention of such a problem in his letter of apology which was read. He continued as in the position of Missionary Bishop, and indeed, ex-officio he was a member of the General Examination Committee and the Discipline Committee. He was also, ex-officio a member of the Council. But all the signs are that, like Baker, he did not find it possible to work closely with the militantly-minded Dicksee.⁵⁵

During 1899, it seems as if the intense feelings of the previous two years which had centred around William Baker had died down. Apart from Bishop Meyers' continued absence from the Convocations there were no other obvious signs of disagreement. However, this was not to last, for there were clearly those within the denomination who did not approve of the strong bias towards the "low church" wing.

Perhaps most interesting was the fact that, although Baker had resigned in November 1897, even after the Convocation in June 1899 the position of Bishop of the Northern Diocese was still vacant. But the reason why the vacancy was so prolonged did not become evident for a further two years.

1900

The prevailing theological "thrust" exerted by Samuel Dicksee continued firmly towards the "low" wing of the denomination, and this is quite evident in the Minutes of the Convocation of 1900 which was held in June at Crowborough. In fact, it now became obvious that his intentions had major theological implications for the nature of the ministry of the FCE.

Firstly, there was still no election for the position of Bishop for the Northern Diocese, and at the time of the election of Officers, it was agreed that "the election of the Rev. Troughton as President of the Northern Synod be confirmed".⁵⁶ Secondly, the official minute about the Ordination Service which had been held at the time of Convocation stated: "...the Revs. John Greenwood and D.M. Somerville were admitted to the Presbyterate". Yet this was a distinct change in wording, for the usual terminology in the FCE was the conventional one where deacons were "admitted", but Presbyters were "ordained" Thirdly, G. Hugh Jones proposed that: "a Select Committee be appointed to revise the Canons

and lists of Text Books which have reference to the Admission of Candidates to Holy Orders in this Church". There were no further details.⁵⁷

Well may the minutes have noted (unusually) that "not a ripple of unkindness or uncharitableness in thought, word, or deed, had marred the happiness and peace of our business and social intercourse",⁵⁸ but it seems clear that battle lines were now being drawn up over the subject of Holy Orders. Again, although there is no easy way of knowing which "party" Meyers supported, nevertheless, for the first time for several years he attended Convocation in person.⁵⁹

1901: dispute over the "radical" movement within the FCE

The whole issue of churchmanship and ministry came to a head at the Convocation in Manchester on 24 and 25 June 1901. But the "battle lines" which were drawn up the previous year had been suddenly and very substantially altered by the death of the Bishop Primus, Samuel Dicksee, during the previous months.

This was a crisis of some considerable magnitude for the FCE. The only remaining bishop was Henry Orion Meyers, and he had taken little part in the denomination for some time. In addition to this, he was too unwell to attend Convocation, and the sympathy of the meeting was sent to him "in his continued illness". Thus, by 1901, the denomination was in a considerable turmoil.

In the event, the Reverend William Troughton, President of the Northern Synod, was elected to the chair - and so began a period of far firmer and more positive leadership than the FCE had seen for some years. Indeed, his distinctive gifts were used immediately, for half way through the afternoon of Tuesday 25 June, the most extraordinary proposal was made by the Reverend E.J. Boon (formerly Southampton FCE, now Worcester CHC), and seconded by the Reverend Alexander Roger (formerly from the FCE in Cardiff, and now at Putney):

"That in future Presidents of the Northern and Southern Dioceses respectively be elected, that they be given the New Testament title of Bishop, that they be NOT (caps. in minutes) Consecrated, and that they wear no other dress than the ordinary Ministers of the Free Church of England."

At first, this proposal seemed to be simply a direct return to the situation of the ministry of the FCE as it was at the time of the registering of the Deed Poll in Chancery in 1863. In fact, it was more radical than that, because, although there was a deal of ambiguity in the Deed Poll as to future ecclesiastical polity, nevertheless a conventional episcopal system was allowed

for by its tenets. Indeed, taking this proposal into account, together with the change in the previous year of the terminology which substituted "admission" for "ordination", it looks very much as if the intentions of Dicksee and others had been to revert to a completely congregationalist system where the ministers were totally identified with the "laos", and simply "called-out of the congregation" for the specific function of ministry.

Yet this was a very far cry from any intention that Thoresby, Dodd, Figgis, or Price had ever had in the past. Indeed, for all that Price and the other "elder statesmen" had had difficulties holding the "high church" party in check in past years, and for all that they might therefore have favoured the "low church" or Connexional tradition, this proposal was far more radically Protestant than anything they could have accepted. It simply reversed what had long been the most important and basic tradition of the FCE - that of a conventionally ordered liturgical (evangelical) but "Free" Church of England.

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Despite the compressed and factual nature of the minutes it is evident that feelings were stirred, for the motion would appear to have been defeated on the result quite simply of what was called an amendment, but was actually a counter-proposal. Certainly, although the original motion was "thoroughly discussed", it did not reach the stage of a vote.

The Reverend James Hodgkinson (Emmanuel Church, Glasgow) moved and Mr. R.H. Talbot seconded an amendment, "That the Bishops of the Free Church of England be Consecrated as heretofore". The other supporting speakers were the Reverends John Greenwood (Holy Trinity, Oswaldtwistle), G. Slater (Christ Church, Exeter), H. Francis-Gordon (Emmanuel, Great Harwood), John Halliday (Trinity Church, Springburn, Glasgow), and D.M. Somerville (St. James, Hollinwood).

Considering the evident unease at the original proposal by such a group of clergy, the outcome was certain. The amendment was passed by 15 votes to 5. The Amendment itself was then put as the substantive motion and carried by 15 to 5.

From this point onwards, the FCE with the traditional pattern of a three-fold ministry, as it had developed, was secure. The older Connexional clergy had nearly all died, or had left the FCE. Again, whilst both Boon of Worcester, who had proposed the original motion, and Alexander Roger, the seconder,

continued in the denomination, neither took major office subsequently. But above all, the prime mover of the proposed changes had been, without doubt, Bishop Dicksee, and death had prevented any further influence from him.⁶⁰

The possible origins of the "Radical" movement in the FCE.

The radical thinking of the "low-church" party is something of a surprise, coming as it did at the end of the century. If such a dispute over the nature of holy orders had made its appearance in the 1860s during the preparations for the Poll Deed in 1863, or perhaps later in the 1870s during the disputes resulting in the creation of the REC, it might have been more understandable. Yet it was not until 1900 that these views were brought to public view.

Almost certainly, however, it was the strong personality and leadership of Benjamin Price that simply damped down such discussions during his lifetime. Certainly the evidence shows that, from 1881 onwards, he had become more conservative in his views, perhaps a natural feature of his increasing years. Certainly, as he demonstrated clearly in his Address to Convocation in 1881, and in his words in subsequent years, he disliked both extremes of churchmanship. Even after his death, there would have been a reticence on the part of many to go against the evident wishes of the man who had been Bishop-President since his election in 1863, more than 33 years before. By 1900, however, that influence had gone, and a militant protestant was now Primus.

Even though Dicksee had died between the Convocations of 1900 and 1901, it looks very much as if Dicksee, Boon, and Roger, together probably with the Reverends J.T. Bland and G. Hugh Jones, had formed a very definite party in the denomination. Consequently, when Dicksee died, the others carried on what had been their plan. Thus, this radical thinking was not merely confined to Dicksee himself, otherwise it is more likely that the whole project would simply have been dropped.

Seen as merely a phenomenon of the FCE, the events of 1900/1901 do not make a great deal of sense. But it is possible, by cross-referencing between denominations, to see the thinking of this radical group as in some way a pale reflection of what had already happened within Independency, the Baptists, and amongst a number of the Congregationalist clergy some years before.

During the 1870s and 80s, a "tendency" re-occurred in parts of English non-conformity to move away from the traditional forms and institutions of church life and polity. In his book Free Churchmanship in England, J.W. Grant calls this process "Spiritualisation": "To some the way to a free approach to God seemed to be by the scrapping of what they considered to be surplus pieces of ecclesiastical machinery". He quotes the taunt sometimes hurled at the structured Established Church, "we are spiritual, you are carnal; we are free, you are in bondage". This tendency meant that some non-conformists actually minimised the importance both of the sacraments of the church and its ministry. Indeed, the distinguished congregationalist minister, R. W. Dale (1829-1895), had written critically at the time that Congregationalists had become: "for the most part, Zwinglians of the purest type".⁶¹

The Autumn Session of the Congregational Union in 1877 was held in Leicester, and on the evening of the second day, a second conference was held, at Wycliffe Congregational Church, of "those who value spiritual religion, and who are in sympathy with the principle that religious communion is not dependent on agreement in theological, critical or historical opinion." At the following meeting of the Congregational Assembly, the Reverend Dr. Mellor of Halifax spoke of the "uneasiness produced in the churches of the Congregational Order by the proceedings of the recent Conference".⁶²

Although many fought against the extremes of this movement, like the distinguished Robert William Dale, yet nevertheless their own habits and customs were subtly altered. As Grant points out, their aim was to combat the sacerdotalism of the high-church party, and "to relate the ministry more closely to the active life of the world" Thus, Dale himself abandoned clerical dress, and looked forward to a time when ministerial dignity might be even more eroded within the standing non-conformist traditions. In his book The Evangelical Revival, Dale wrote: "If without 'ordination' men may preach, and teach, and conduct worship, what meaning is there in the fences which, even among Evangelicals, separate the life of the minister from the life of the layman".⁶³

Grant says that Dale's intention was "to spiritualise the laity rather than to secularise the clergy". Nevertheless, as he points out, it was the ministry which showed greater signs of change.⁶⁴

These theological changes were also seen very strongly in certain parts of the Baptist community where members of other churches were sometimes invited to take communion. Here though, the more "extreme" tendency towards a rationalism and a clear questioning of the plenary inspiration of Scripture was met by Spurgeon at the Metropolitan Tabernacle with the stern counterblast of the "Down Grade Crusade" in his magazine Sword and Trowel. In short, his unhappiness at the extreme way in which the spiritualisation movement had developed was such that, in 1887, he resigned from the Baptist Union.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, like Dale, Spurgeon was also affected by the movement. He was one of the first amongst his clerical colleagues to drop the title "the Reverend", and he, like Dale, discarded the long-established Puritan ministerial dress.⁶⁶

It would certainly be unwise to tie Samuel Dicksee and the others (who had supported the motion at Convocation 1901) directly into the earlier "spiritualisation" movement within non-conformity. The movement itself is both complex and diffuse, and in any case, there simply is no evidence available to make a watertight case. Nevertheless, in that Dicksee, Roger, Bland and Boon had come from non-conformity to the FCE, it is more than likely that, at some stage, they had met personally the ferment caused by the movement. It is also likely that, like both Dale and Spurgeon, they had in some way been affected by it. Certainly there are some significant echoes from the movement within the Convocation meetings of the late 90s and at the turn of the new century.

In his Address to the Convocation of 1897, Dicksee had emphasised the FCE Episcopate as "an office and not an order". Furthermore, in the Report on the 1900 Convocation, not only was there a proposed alteration in Canon Law in the matter of Holy Orders, but the account said that "the Revs. John Greenwood and D.M. Somerville were admitted to the Presbyterate" (see above). In point of fact, such emphases were very typical of Congregationalist principle, never more so than within the "spiritualisation" tradition. At the annual meeting of the Congregational Union back in 1866, in his Chairman's Address, the Reverend Dr. Newman Hall had said "With us, the call of the Church invests the pastor with validity, and not ordination, which is rather the recognition of validity than the bestowal of it".⁶⁷ In fact, both Dicksee and Baker were consecrated by Price and Meyers on 6 November 1889 at Christ Church, Lambeth - Newman Hall's own church, and certainly in his presence as minister.

Again, in his Address to the 1899 Convocation, Dicksee had "traced the growth of Christianity from the Creation to the heralding of the birth of Jesus

Christ....clearly setting forth that Jesus was the only priest" (see above). In his book published in 1884, A Manual of Congregational Principles, R.W. Dale had asserted that "in every Christian Church the will of Christ is the supreme authority". Later in the same volume he wrote: "from an assembly in which Christ himself is present, and whose decisions He confirms, there can be no appeal".⁶⁸

Finally, after Dicksee's death, Boon, Roger, and Bland had brought forward the debate which sought to stop the practice of consecration for bishops, and further sought to stop the wearing of any special dress "other than the ordinary ministers of the Free Church of England". Again, this has very distinct resonances with that part of the spiritualisation movement which attempted to "break down the separateness of the ministry", and in fact resulted in the widespread abandoning of clerical dress altogether.⁶⁹

As has already been stated, if this sudden radical set of attempted changes in the theological policy and polity of the FCE are examined in isolation, then they simply make no sense. But certainly there do seem to be ways in which this strange phenomenon within the FCE at the turn of the century is a pale reflection of the movement in which the most celebrated R.W. Dale and others became caught-up in the 1870s and 80s within mainstream non-conformity.

But, if this were not the case, then it is difficult to see why such a policy (and it clearly was a policy) should have been adopted by a party (and it clearly was a party) within an otherwise very conservative little denomination. The fact above all that the powerful leader who had been Bishop-President for 33 years had just died when the changes began makes it look even more certain that the views of the group were, until then, held in check by the strong rule of Price himself.

The ministry crisis solved, August 1901

However, even after the Convocation of 1901, the ministry of the denomination was still in a critical situation. There was just one bishop left, and he was ill. It is also significant that, whilst the matter in the change of Canon Law regarding the episcopate was still under consideration, a bishop for the North had not been consecrated, and Troughton had simply been left as President of the Northern Synod.

After the crucial vote, however, it became clear that a good deal of preparatory work had already been done in anticipation of the result before that session. Later that same afternoon, it was resolved that "the election of the Rev. W. Troughton as Bishop of the Northern Diocese be confirmed".⁷⁰ Later again it was resolved that the matter of Troughton's Consecration be left in the hands of the Northern Synod.⁷¹ In the meanwhile, although he had no diocesan responsibility, H.O. Meyers was elected Bishop Primus of the denomination. It is interesting to note, in view of former political troubles, that the election of G. Hugh Jones as President of the Southern Synod was confirmed by Convocation.⁷² He was not proposed as Bishop, nor did he ever become one.

Troughton was consecrated on 5 August 1901 [illustration p. xii] with Meyers as the sole consecrating bishop. He was assisted in the laying-on of hands (as is still the custom) by "several Presbyters", but Meyers' health had continued to decline, for the Consecration was performed, probably in a nearby chapel, in Hounslow, Middlesex, where Meyers was living.⁷³ Meyers was dead within a few months.

Some concluding thoughts on the decline of Connexional influence in the FCE

Fairly obviously, one of the main reasons for the declining influence of the Connexion through the years was the gradual falling-away of the older clergy who had dual membership - through death or other circumstances. Yet what is not immediately obvious is why they were not replaced by others who might have valued the richness of the two traditions.

In the years following 1863, on the one hand, the newly formed FCE become a conventionally ordered protestant episcopal church. On the other hand, the Connexion, racked with legal problems, just like the college at Cheshunt (see above), had steadily moved into the sphere of Congregationalism. This involved both different polity and liturgical tradition - hence the reason for some of the disputes over churchmanship issues.

In his book, Free Churchmanship in England, J.W. Grant says that the Connexion had entered into such a close relationship with Congregationalists that by 1870 "they could hardly be distinguished from them". Probably Grant overstates the case here, because he actually ignores the several churches which had a dual membership through their clergy with the FCE. Even so, in the FCE Magazine for

December 1870, a "Friend of Union" wrote deploring the fact that "the Connexion ...has gravitated down into unjustifiable dissent".⁷⁴

This move was to continue. The distinguished CH minister, the Reverend W. Clayton Fuidge was sometime President of the CHC Conference, and, moreover, during the latter part of the 1890s he also became editor of the revived CHC magazine the Harbinger. At some time during the 1930s, he wrote his impassioned and substantial booklet The Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion, What it was! What it is! What it might become! In essence, Fuidge made a plea for the Connexion to return to the authority of the Conference, for he felt very strongly that its identity had been totally lost within Congregationalism. The primary needs for the denomination, he argued, were for the control of finances, and for the control of appointments once more to be returned to "full Conference control".⁷⁵

It is clear that a major step in the "blending" of the Connexion with Congregationalism was taken in 1896 with "The New Scheme" brought forward by those within the Connexion who wished to take the relationship further. This complex matter had to do with the easier administration of trusts. In fact, Fuidge's writing is far more passionate than clear. But, with the scheme came the effective removal of the balance of power from the Conference to the Trustees - hence the loss of effective financial control. He indicated that a number of those who supported the development (including Figgis) did not actually understand the full implications of it at the time. He also saw the scheme as something of a take-over which had been organised by those who were Congregationalists, yet functioning within the Connexional sphere.⁷⁶

Certainly by the time that I.M. Mallard was writing his dissertation in 1957, the absorption of the Connexion was complete. He wrote: "This...is now, virtually, a Connexion in the Congregational denomination"⁷⁷ To date, apart from the fact that the Trustees still hold specifically Connexional properties and funds, the life of the 19 or so remaining churches, their services and their ministry is totally identified with the Congregational Federation - although some have become identified with the United Reformed Church.

Continuing needs within the denomination, 1881 - 1901:

"Money and Men" (Bishop William Newman, October 1883)

Introduction

In November 1868 Benjamin Price had made a public Appeal in the Daily Telegraph for £50,000. This was for the erection of churches, schools and school-houses - to combat the "blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits" in the Established Church. But as the following years showed clearly, the appeal was unsuccessful.⁷⁸ Moreover, like the REC and the RCE, in the earlier part of this period, the FCE had no organised central administrative structure for finance.

The case-studies chapter examines in greater depth the very many problems involved in running these new "Free" communities. Again and again it is seen how they carried through into their new lives the white-hot strife from which they had been born. All too often there was an inherent instability which made smooth and long-term running very difficult. Indeed, this instability, especially before the turn of the century was the subject of comment by Frank Vaughan in his Memories and Reflections. Within this, he identified the overriding problem for the communities as being that of finance, and he pictured the typical process which so often lead to failure:⁷⁹

"Groups of Church people, caught in the wave of Protestant enthusiasm...secured land, and built a Church, often on Mortgage and always from outside sources, for there were no central funds. All went well for a while, then, a quarrel in the congregation, or some blunder by the minister split the church and those remaining had difficulty in supporting their minister and paying off the Mortgage: the inevitable happened: the Mortgage was foreclosed and the remaining group scattered".

An examination of the records available confirms that chief amongst all the problems for the FCE was that of a continual financial insecurity - not only for individual churches, but for the denomination as an organisational unit.

1881 - 1885

In fact a central Connexional fund for the support of new missions had long been in operation, and even after the Poll Deed of 1863, this was viewed as being a responsibility of the FCE as well as the CHC. In 1881 the FCE Magazine continued its published accounts of gifts from churches and individuals to the "Society for the Spread of the Gospel at Home and Abroad".⁸⁰

Again, there were other central FCE accounts under the control of the Treasurer. These included the FCE Magazine Account, and a General Expenditure Account. In both cases the amounts concerned were probably fairly small, although it is impossible to give proper detail as the figures published were not properly constituted accounts, being mainly shown in order of date. In the August edition of the magazine during the following year, 1882, the various incomings and outgoings were totalled (although not divided into separate accounts). The Treasurer balanced his accounts at £169-0-10d.⁸¹

But that there were problems with some sort of hidden agenda at this time is made evident by the extracts from the minutes of the Council meeting of 10 October 1882 which were published in the magazine. Numbers of the members had refused to send their contributions due (amount unspecified) "for reasons stated in writing". However, the Council did not consider these reasons valid, and a letter was being sent to all who had not paid. This letter was published together with the minutes, and it pointed out to clergy and church officers that "their promises must be regarded as being good in honour, equity, and Christian obligation. Certain liabilities press upon Council, which all, (especially those who have promised) are obviously bound to see paid off".⁸²

It is possible that this hidden agenda was something to do with the internal disputes that the denomination had had over the whole churchmanship issue, and against which Price had spoken so passionately during his Presidential Address at Convocation in the previous year (June 1881). Certainly some of these would have included legal fees owed for work on the conveying of properties in which the Central Trust had an interest. In fact, the surviving manuscript copy of the Index of Deeds and Documents indicates that there had been a number of legal documents to do with the church at Putney during the course of 1880 and 1881 which had required professional attention. This had culminated in the considerable expense of obtaining a Counsel's Opinion.⁸³

In the December 1882 edition of the magazine, there was a short editorial review of the year for the denomination. The editor made the comment "The reports brought up at Convocation held in June last, show that, although there is much struggling in many of the FCE churches, the tone is healthy...."⁸⁴

But the Spring of 1883 showed no improvement in denominational finances. The minutes of the Council meeting for 9 January reported that "a friend" of the FCE had offered, unsolicited, the gift of £25 on 31 December that same year if

three contributions of the same amount were given by the same date. However, the evidence from the magazine gives no indication of this appeal having been successful. Yet these minutes and those of the Council meeting on 13 February 1883 give clear evidence of a deep concern about the finances of the FCE. At the February meeting letters of application were read for grants of money for a church in one place, and for assistance to begin mission services in another (places unspecified). Both applications were refused through lack of funds.⁸⁵

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Yet in the long run, financial shortage in the denomination also had a pronounced effect upon the quality of its ministry. In October 1883, an article by Bishop Newman was published in the magazine: "Stray Thoughts on the Situation of the Free Church of England". Typically of Newman, it was essentially practical in matter, and it brought firmly to the notice of the denomination the need for an adequate and trained ministry.

Amongst the pleas for sound prayer amongst its people and easily understood sermons from its ministers ("in pure Saxon tongue") was the concern which he voiced for the quality of its ministry. There seems always to have been a shortage of candidates for ordination - just as there was with both the REC and the RCE. By the 1880s, the numbers of clergy moving from the Established Church to the other denominations were very few indeed. Certainly clergy came to the FCE from other non-conformist denominations, but, very often, the church would provide for its ministry from within the ranks of its own laymen. Thus, a man would serve as Licensed Evangelist almost as an apprenticeship. If his worth were proved he would later be ordained to the diaconate, and then, if there was a place for him, to the presbyterate.

But there were many problems. For although the men concerned took the examinations set by the denomination for Deacons and Presbyters, because of the lack of finance in the denomination there was no chance of finding a proper training at theological colleges such as the Congregational New College, London, or perhaps the Connexional college at Cheshunt.

Again, because there was no centralised financial administration, the clergy depended for their remuneration upon the financial security and the good will of the Vestries of the individual churches by whom they were called - consequently, some clergy had to have additional secular employment. Further,

as in the other two denominations, although the bishops received certain expenses from Convocation, they also relied upon the churches where they were minister for remuneration.

Still more pressing was the basic quality of the men needed. In his remarkably frank article Newman said bluntly: "We want an ever-improving class of men: our Church must not be turned into a sort of Cave of Adullam - a refuge for all sorts and conditions of men. We do not require the services of gentlemen who have been unsuccessful elsewhere, nor of those who imagine they can find an entrance into the Church on very easy terms." He summed up the main needs of the FCE with the words: "In order to carry out the views, &c., of the Free Church of England, we must have two things - MONEY and MEN!"

Newman carried this frankness and realism into his address to Convocation the next June when he put his finger firmly on the need for the "professionalism" that a proper academic training would give to the ministry. "And for the work of the ministry amongst us, we require men called by God to do the work...men of education and intellectual power, men of talent, Christian gentlemen, that we may be equal to the clergy of any denomination, fitted to fill our places in the drawing-room of the wealthy, and at the dinner table of the educated and polished classes of society". Newman had a gritty and a frank practicality which might well be unpalatable to the sensitivities of a later age.

Nevertheless he reached the heart of the problem of evangelism and outreach in a church that had, by this time, lost the patronage of such as Lord Ebury or the Hon. and Reverend E.V. Bligh, but which still had to compete with the usually university educated clergy of an Established Church that could afford both to train and then to pay its men properly.⁸⁶

In his confidential Memories and Reflections, Vaughan had much to say about the difficulty of finding suitable men, and then the impossibility of paying for training. His words have a surprising bitterness when dealing with certain types of candidate: "Perhaps the type of person who has caused us most real pain is the unctious piety professor, who strives to convince all around him that they come sadly short of the spiritual standing and experience he enjoys". Vaughan continues by asking: "Is there a remedy for these things? Perhaps only with a lengthy stay in some residential College for intensive training...We have no such College or Scheme."⁸⁷

But it was not only candidates for the ministry and the problems of the General Financial Account which were causing concern. In the December 1883 edition of the magazine, the leading article spoke of the need for a large number of new subscribers to the FCE Magazine to make it financially viable. This same theme was echoed once again at the time of the 1884 June Convocation when G. Hugh Jones spoke of the need to find means to support the publication of the magazine. The matter was referred for consideration to the Council.⁸⁸

However, serious warnings as to the state of denominational finances generally were given by the Financial Secretary at the 1884 Convocation. "I have the painful duty of stating that the Church is not as yet free from debt." It appears that the appeal for collections to pay off the debt of the FCE had been answered by just 7 churches. The total raised by West Drayton, Putney, Oswaldtwistle, Southampton, Brighton, Cathays and Willesborough came to no more than £19-5s-4d. The Financial Secretary ended his report with the appeal for the starting of a Sustentation Fund in order that the stronger churches might be enabled to help those either just starting, or which were less well off. It is interesting to see that Gregg in particular was having similar problems; but in his case, the founding of a Sustentation Fund simply did not help.⁸⁹

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The Winter of 1884 saw the beginnings of serious trouble for publication of the FCE Magazine. In the November edition of the magazine, a letter from Thomas Wilson (FCE Treasurer) to Glenny-Crory (Financial Secretary of the FCE and Editor) was printed. Clearly the available monies for the denomination had been used for reducing "the old debt" (possibly the various legal charges including the fees for Counsel's Opinion). Meanwhile, he said, "while we have been reducing the old debt, the Magazine accounts are left unpaid". As Glenny-Crory commented to readers, "some churches do not take it in, and others take but a few". He pleaded for all the churches to take the magazine.⁹⁰

In July 1885, the Annual Report of Council stated that the magazine was still not "self-supporting". According to the "Treasurer's and Magazine Reports", news of the "old debt" however was better. "This incubus is becoming less serious, and it is hoped it may be removed altogether". Even so, the Treasurer made an urgent plea for donations "GREAT OR SMALL, and AT ONCE".⁹¹

On the matter of the magazine, little further was said. But the fact was that a number of churches evidently still gave it no support. The result was predictable, and after the issue of December 1885, the Free Church of England Magazine failed. Although replaced after some months by the smaller and short-lived FCE Record, the magazine was not re-started until 1896.

1895 - 1901

Perhaps most significant of all the financial changes that took place between the years 1886 and 1895 was the successful provision of the "Sustentation Fund". Although not a large sum, it created a special pool of money, other than that provided by the General Account, which could be used for the need of the growing churches themselves, or perhaps to assist in the early days when missions were being conducted and then church communities were being set up. This Fund was under the separate control of denominational trustees. At the time of the Convocation in 1895, the Report showed the figure of £40-9s-9d. However, it is interesting to see the full accounts which were published at the end of the Year Book, for these show the way in which the fund was used.

In fact the accounts themselves, corrected to 26 June 1895, showed the total figure of £55-18s-9d. On the receipt side, the balance from the previous year (1894) had been £43-0s-2d. To this sum had been added £12-18s-7d - this being annotated "Feb., Cash, Trustees of Charitable Funds." On the Debit side, a grant of £15 had been made to Emmanuel Church in Everton on 12 December 1894. In addition, on 7 June 1895, 9/- had been paid to the secretary for a Minute Book and to cover postage.

Yet, financial matters in 1895 were on a slightly better footing than they had been 10 years before, and the "old debt" had obviously been paid off. In the General Account, the total for receipt and expenditure during the previous year balanced at £30-13s-8d., and at the start of the new accounting year in June 1895, there was a balance in hand of £10-1s-2d.⁹²

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In 1896, matters seemed to have remained secure, although, in truth, by comparison with any of the larger denominations, the amounts of money concerned were tiny.

The figures given to Convocation in June 1896 for the General Account showed a balance in hand of £12-17s-7d. The Sustentation Fund stood at £47-4s-2d. This year, however, there were considerable calls upon the Sustentation Fund for assistance. The result was that, after a separate meeting of the Trustees of the Fund, St. Paul's, Haslingden received £15; Holy Trinity, New Malden received £15; Ockbrook Mission received £10. In addition this year, Tudor Rogers, the elderly and retired presbyter, was given a grant of £5.⁹³

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In June 1897, the General Account had fared less well than usual, and showed a sum in hand of £2-14s-0d. (the books had been balanced at a total of £22-16s-7d.). The Sustentation Fund seems to have recovered well after the considerable grants given, for this stood at £38-12s-8d., and, in fact, the Accounts show a total balance of expenditure and income through the year of £73-19s-2d. Further grants were voted to the needy churches: £10 to St. Paul's, Haslingden; £10 to Emmanuel Church, Everton; and £12 to Trinity, New Malden.

In addition to the General Fund and the Sustentation Fund, a third and separate fund for publications had been formed. Like the others, this was very small, and, in June 1897 it stood at just £8-13s-1½d.⁹⁴

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The Year Book for 1898-99 is missing, but that for 1899-1900 shows something of a decline in the finances of the denomination. It is probable that the dispute between Bishop Baker and the Primus in 1898 had something to do with this. Certainly, Vaughan seems to indicate that there was a legal action for defamation involved, and even though this may not actually have involved denominational accounts (and it probably did), nevertheless there is likely to have been considerable damaging of internal relationships in the FCE.

The General Account for June 1899 shows a balance in hand of £19-14s-2d. Total expenditure and income through the previous 12 months had balanced at £33-11s-10d. The Sustentation Fund had been balanced at £34-16-8d., and the monies left in hand were just £19-11s-8d.⁹⁵ Matters were no better by June 1900.

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The "new century" in 1901 started positively, with the vote on the matter of the preservation of the historic episcopate, and then the consecration of William Troughton for the Northern Diocese. This gave a new and strong lead to the denomination that had been brought to a crisis by its radical Primus.

However, the financial insecurity for the denomination remained much as before.⁹⁶ Whilst not being actually in debt as the case had been in 1886, the balance in hand in June 1901 was just £24-1s-7d. The Treasurer's Account had been balanced at the total of £42-0s-1d. The Sustentation Fund had improved. The accounts had been balanced at a total of £62-12s-0d: after various grants in 1900, the amount in hand stood at £37-8-0d.

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In his Addresses, Frederick Newman had stressed the need for good quality men as candidates for the ministry. But, the problems for the continuation of the ministry of the FCE in the new century were very considerable; for under Samuel Dicksee as Primus, there seems to have been a definite policy not to consecrate a successor to Baker who had resigned on 5 November 1898. Thus, after Dicksee's death during the Winter of 1900/1901, until Troughton had been consecrated by the ailing Bishop Meyers in Hounslow on 5 August 1901, there simply was nobody either to ordain men to the ministry, or to license those already ordained.

In fact, at the Convocation in June 1901, just 2 candidates were accepted for ordination, as and when Troughton had been consecrated:⁹⁷

T.S. Shafe was Evangelist to the former REC church of St. Andrew's, East Ham, and in this Convocation it was agreed that Shafe was to be ordained to the "permanent diaconate". This was a rank normally unknown in the FCE, but evidently reflected their misgivings about the candidate. The second man, F.W. Walker was to be ordained Deacon for Christ Church, Ilfracombe.

Yet neither of these had been professionally trained in the way that Newman had so hoped might happen. Indeed, as matters stood, in 1901 there was no possibility of providing enough money to support a man at theological college. Moreover, it was to be some 27 years more before it was possible to found the FCE's own residential "Bexhill Training Scheme".⁹⁸

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The FCE, 1880 - 1901: some general conclusions together with an overview of the churchmanship dispute: concluding thoughts on leadership: the leadership of Benjamin Price: some final thoughts on the leadership of the three denominations - and the "spiritualisation" phenomenon.

There is no doubt that the FCE shared many of the weaknesses and strengths that have already been noted in the surveys of both the REC and the RCE during the same period:

1. The continual financial problems, both for churches and for the denomination as a whole.
2. The inability to maintain a regular magazine. This meant that detailed communication throughout the denomination at membership level was impaired.
3. The lack of a proper financial "overstructure" which meant that resources were stretched, and that it was not possible to maintain a proper support for the less profitable churches in times of difficulty.
4. The small size of all three denominations meant that there was no proper "umbrella" of clerical support for services; nor was it possible to supply or to replace clergy for churches which were very often widely spread across the country. In any case, lack of money for theological training, and lack of suitable candidates only made this more difficult.
5. Very often, the clergy were untrained, other than as enthusiastic and hard-working members of communities themselves. As Frederick Newman had noted very shrewdly, they were not therefore able to deal in the same way as clergy of the Established Church with the more wealthy and privileged classes. Yet, it was these classes whose support was badly needed for the sake of both financial and managerial stability.
6. Despite the episcopal polity of the three denominations, and despite the administrative structures which were well established, because of the small size of the denominations and the lack of independent denominational monies the balance of power lay with the individual groups of Trustees who often owned the church properties, and who, through their Vestries, called the minister and then payed him. This had the effect of a "centrifugal" force which took the actual power outwards from the central Convocation or Synod.
7. Nevertheless, the "congregationalist" tendencies in the denominations actually acted as a safeguard in times when the central authorities failed, for the individual churches (if secure) survived in spite of the failure at the centre. The most obvious examples are provided by the illness and final fall of Gregg in the case of the RCE; the bankruptcy and fall of Richardson in the case

of the REC; and, in the case of the FCE, the leadership crisis before and after the death of Bishop Dicksee at the turn of the new century.

The churchmanship dispute - an overview

Yet, in addition to these factors, the FCE had its own special problems.

Indirectly, both the other denominations had ultimately come from the ranks of the FCE. But the reason why the splits had occurred was that the breadth of churchmanship throughout the total membership was too wide for the denomination to cope with. Thus, just as the liturgical party of the FCE had effectively split away from the Connexion, so later (in broad terms) the membership of the REC and the RCE came out of the membership of the FCE.

By the early 1880s, when the FCE had formally cut its federative relationship with the REC, the FCE itself remained as a split and weakened body. BUT, it gained strength from the security of the links which had been kept with the CHC - especially in the fact that ministers (and therefore their churches) who accepted the terms of the Deed Poll and the Declaration of Principles could have a dual membership with both the FCE and the FCE.

The twenty-one years from 1880 to 1901 show the gradual erosion of that strengthening link. This was partly because the CHC itself was changing through these years, and was gradually moving towards Congregationalism pure and simple. Nowadays, none of the remaining Connexional churches in Britain have the traditional liturgical form of service, neither do their ministers wear the traditional Anglican choir-habit.

But, at the same time, the old Connexional loyalties remained with many in the FCE, such as Thoresby, Dodd, G. Hugh Jones, J.B. Figgis, E.J. Boon, Alexander Roger, and indeed both Bishops Newman and Price. Therefore there was a strong "low-church" and restraining influence still present within the denomination. Yet, there were others in the FCE who clearly felt unable to join either the REC or the RCE, but still felt that the more conventional Anglican model of episcopacy and church government was the true norm.

Thus, there had grown up within the FCE a divergence of churchmanship sympathies, and a resulting source of tension within the membership. Part of this chapter seeks to trace the way in which those issues, based on the

continuing Connexional links, only gradually faded during the later 1890s through the deaths of the Connexional members, or through the fact that they left active membership of the denomination. Indeed, the issue of churchmanship came to a head at the turn of the century when Bishop Dicksee's "party" unsuccessfully proposed a reversal of the traditional FCE episcopal polity - and again, the chapter aims to show this "radical" phenomenon as the reflection of an earlier movement within main-stream non-conformity.

Concluding thoughts on leadership and denominational strength - including a brief consideration of the leadership of Bishop Benjamin Price.

It is interesting to see the way in which the inner tensions and pressures seemed to correspond directly with the strength or weakness of the leadership of the denomination through this 20 year period. The point has already been made that the smooth running of a denomination, which was effectively empowered at congregational level, depended upon the co-operation of the officers of the individual churches, the loyalty of the Clergy, and the management skills of the bishops.

In the case of the FCE, it is possible to see that the churchmanship problems were manageable when the leadership was strong and skilful - as was that of Bishop Price. But when the strength of the leadership declined, then in due proportion, the disputes threatened the security of the denomination.

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It would be hard to over-estimate the importance to the FCE of the life and ministry of Benjamin Price; and therefore it would seem appropriate to review his leadership qualities briefly at this point. Certainly, it is evident that, from the time of his election as Bishop-President in 1863 to his death on 6 January 1896, he remained the "linchpin" which held the denomination together. The reasons for this are several.

Firstly, the difference of his birth and background from that of other leaders gave him breadth of experience and understanding in matters of the ministry and its pressures. It also gave him the experience of handling many people of very different backgrounds and types.

Born in Builth Wells, he was from a well placed Mid-Wales family, his father being a leading elder in the Calvinistic Methodist movement. His early training was for commerce, yet after theological training he was ordained in 1830 into the CM ministry. Here he spent the first seven years working in Wales. But, it is interesting to note that, although his first language was Welsh, he was obviously absolutely fluent in both languages. In fact, it is noted that in the year of his ordination, he was appointed to preach in English (this is emphasised) to a crowded meeting of 10,000 people at Newtown, Montgomeryshire.

In the meanwhile, he married an English wife, and for a while, held the mastership of a school in her home parish. This was an interesting appointment, for the post had become vacant after being held by the Curate of the local parish - yet Price, a non-conformist minister, was appointed. It was from this work that he moved to the new Free church at Ilfracombe in 1845.

Thus, when he moved to his main work, he already had the experience of an influential family background, commercial training, theological training, a pastoral and preaching ministry in Wales, the position of a schoolteacher - and all the administrative work that this had involved. Moreover, he was used to the work of ministry in two languages - and two different traditions.⁹⁹

Secondly, he had a powerful personality, and this had been finely honed by the experiences of the very troubled times in the early life of his own church at Ilfracombe when he was appointed there as minister.¹⁰⁰ Again, as a leading member of the group of "Free" churches which ultimately came out of the Connexion as the FCE, he had had the further experience of dealing with constant theological and "political" controversy.

Thirdly, although he was a convinced and firm protestant, he had seen the logic of the step which introduced the historic succession to the FCE through the consecrations by Bishop Cridge in 1876 - a theological pragmatism which gave him great strength, for he did not view the theology of ministry as an unchanging "monolith". His own views changed, even though it is clear that he was always identified with the "low-church" party. Yet, because Price was identified with the "low-church" party, and yet had been prepared to accept the historic episcopate, therefore, both he and his leadership were acceptable to a wide cross-section of the membership and ministry of the FCE.

Fourthly, he seems to have been an able and a shrewd judge of men. Whilst he was in a controlling position, there seems to have been, for the most part, a united front presented to the world by the leaders of the denomination.

Finally, Price was a powerful speaker. Following the manner of his experience as a Welsh CM minister, the written addresses and sermons show a vivid and sometimes "oratorical" style. Nevertheless, what he said was usually both practical and logical - especially when he had important issues to fight for, such as the internal unity of the FCE at the Convocation in June 1881.

The leadership team of the FCE with Price as Bishop Primus.

The years 1863 to 1887 show a particularly strong partnership of three leaders: Price, Thoresby and Newman. But all hinged on Price who was Bishop-President. T.E. Thoresby was the architect of the denomination, and also the theological mind behind the work; he also held a powerful ministerial position as minister at Spa Fields. Later, from the time of his consecration in 1879, Newman brought his loyalty, his management abilities and pastoral skills (e.g. his mediation in the troubled waters at Spalding), and his essentially practical mind to the FCE. There was a good deal of unanimity in the leadership at this time. All three were supporters of the "low-church" tradition, and yet all three were also convinced supporters of the "New Testament Episcopacy" and polity of the denomination. But with the years, this situation was to change.

Thoresby died in March 1883, and his death deprived the denomination of a powerful "elder statesman".¹⁰¹ Meanwhile, in October 1883, Henry Orion Meyers, minister at Emmanuel, Putney, was consecrated as "Missionary Bishop" - that is, as an assistant to Benjamin Price, who was, by this time, 79 years of age. But the pressure upon Price was not in any way lessened, for Meyers does not seem ever to have taken any real leadership role. He merely remained "Missionary Bishop" - and in fact, from early 1890 to 1896/97 he lived in Melbourne, Australia. But in addition, Price's great supporter, Bishop Newman, died in October 1887 - and it was with his death that the problems of leadership became urgent, for Price was now 85 years of age, and growing increasingly frail.

Because of the need for episcopal assistance, it was probably at the Convocation in Summer 1889 that the two new bishops were elected - William Baker and Samuel Dicksee. But with their consecrations that November, new possibilities for disunity came to the FCE, for not only did they hold

diametrically opposing theological views, but clearly they did not relate well to each other - indeed, after Price's death, their views helped to polarise the positions of others within the denomination. Nevertheless, whilst Price was alive, even though of great age, his powerful influence clearly continued to hold the disparate parties - and personalities - in check. It was only after his death on 6 January 1896 that the disparate nature of the new leadership allowed the two "parties" in the FCE to polarise theological thinking to the point where the crisis over episcopacy occurred in 1900-1901.¹⁰²

Some final comparative thoughts on the leadership of the three denominations - and also on the "spiritualisation" phenomenon

Like Price, both Gregg and Richardson were strong and determined leaders - though in truth, Richardson had nothing of the genuine distinction of either of the other two. Again, like the FCE after the death of Price, the influence of the other two leaders disappeared, leaving a power vacuum.

The RCE had no adequate leadership to follow Gregg, and a number of communities disappeared as the result. In the case of the REC, the able and powerful P.X. Eldridge took over the leadership - ultimately uniting both the REC and the RCE in 1893. Nevertheless, despite the temporary weakness of both denominations, the evangelical but rigorously "Anglican" style of polity and practice meant that, as with the Established Church itself, there was no chance of the "spiritualisation" process finding any support as it had in the FCE under Dicksee. Both Gregg and Richardson had spent much time in showing to the world at large what were utterly conventionally "clerical" organisations.

The FCE, which had never aimed so rigorously at an "Establishment" style as the other two denominations did find problems after the ending of the long leadership of Price. Indeed, had it not been for the sudden and unexpected death of Dicksee, and the succession of the younger, stronger, and more pragmatic William Troughton in 1901, the resulting problems could have caused very far reaching, and possibly irreversible, changes in the life of the denomination. Like the Connexion, the FCE would have slipped into Congregationalism until it was as indistinguishable from that tradition as is the Connexion today.

CHAPTER 9

The FCE and the REC (UK): 1901 - 1920/21

Introduction

The backcloth of mainstream non-conformist experience

In Free Churchmanship in England, J.W. Grant points out that "In the early years of this century the Free Churches were adapting themselves to a new England."¹ For most denominations this involved a number of new ideas, hopes and challenges. Amongst these was a new ecumenism (national and international); greater political strength (Silvester Horne went to the Commons in 1910, and others such as Asquith, Runciman, Lloyd George, and Hewart came from non-conformity); a new non-conformist entrepreneurial class; the burgeoning of dissenting scholarship; and an increased understanding of "churchmanship" which resulted in a new sacramentalism within the Free churches. Indeed, the extreme end of this is shown in the startling "Free Catholicism" of J.M. Lloyd Thomas of the Unitarian Old Meeting, Birmingham - and more dramatically by W.E. Orchard at the Congregationalist King's Weigh House in London.

But perhaps the most significant change for non-conformity during the early part of this century was a marked decline in membership. D.W. Brogan commented: "In the generation that has passed since the great Liberal landslide of 1906, one of the greatest changes in the English religious and social landscape has been the decline of Nonconformity". [The English People, p. 121]

The truth this for the main denominations is borne out in the more detailed surveys of nonconformity, such as those of Ernest Payne, J.W. Grant, Horton Davies, and Donald Davie.² Reasons for this decline varied in different areas; and the matter is further examined below.

Continuing isolation for the two denominations

However, although it is important to see this broad backcloth of a period of "hesitancy", as Ernest Payne calls it,³ it is more important to see that the thinking of the FCE and the REC continued to be in isolation from other denominations in the earlier years of this century - just as it had been during the latter part of the 19th century. Moreover, at the beginning of the century, there was also an isolation from each other.

Certainly, the fact that both denominations had a definitely episcopal polity meant that they were set firmly aside by the Established Church - especially after the PECUSA Memorandum which followed the 1888 Lambeth Conference.

On the other hand, the claim of both denominations had always been that they were not "dissenters" in that they represented the true Church of England tradition - but purified. This had been a continual "cri de coeur" of Bishop Gregg long before, and in the early years of the century, Bishop Eldridge, as Presiding Bishop of the REC in Britain, repeated the same claim very clearly in his substantial booklet The Origin, Orders, Organisation and Worship of the Reformed Episcopal Church in the United Kingdom. He ended the work by stating forthrightly "...it is the Ritualist priest, and not the Reformed Episcopal minister, who is the real Dissenting parson...."⁴ The same point was made firmly by the FCE. In his Presidential Address to Convocation in June 1903, Bishop William Troughton, re-iterated the claim:⁵ "But we are not dissenters from the worship and teaching and doctrines of the dear old Church of England...and...we hold most dear that historic succession that we have from the church of this dear land of ours." Thus both denominations were effectively separated from mainstream non-conformity by the insistence of their polity.

The two denominations - "Change" but not "decay"

J.W. Grant pointed out how, at the beginning of the century "the Free Churches were adapting themselves to a new England". Certainly there was within both the FCE and the REC a feeling that the new century was to bring new social conditions and new challenges for each of them to face. This was expressed by Bishop Eldridge of the REC in a leading article which was published in Work and Worship for April 1900. He painted a picture of an urgent national need:⁶

"On every hand sacerdotalism is advancing by leaps and bounds, and it is becoming more and more manifest that no relief is to be looked for from within the national Church... Our Reformed Church, with its Scriptural episcopacy, its Protestant teaching, and its liturgical worship, is just the movement that such people need..."

But whilst the main features of non-conformist life at this time may well have included ecumenism, political power, new financial strength, theological scholarship, and a new sacramentalism, yet through poverty, isolation and their small size, these largely passed the FCE and the REC by. Indeed the evident "parochialism" of the denominations was principally engendered by the need to

concentrate all recourses on merely continuing to exist. Certain of the issues, however, did touch the FCE and the REC as well as the larger Churches:

Firstly, within both the REC and the FCE, there were pale reflections of the great increase of non-conformist scholarship in the new century. In the REC this appears in the provision of a structured and formal training course for ordinands and clergy which led to an LTh diploma. Within the FCE, there was a considerable re-structuring of the training courses and reading lists for candidates for the ministry. In addition, there was a clear policy of ensuring that the most promising men had the chance of a proper college training - and a university degree if this was possible. Even though there were no great academic leaders, there was an increased respect for academic prowess.

Secondly, the new "churchmanship" found reflections in both denominations, including the decision of the FCE to accept the REC Prayer Book for the worship of the denomination. Again, in the REC, the new Handbook for the Clergy showed a widening of liturgical vision with the provision of a number of "Occasional Services" that were not in the Prayer Book.

Thirdly, for both there was a challenge to ecumenism. This came from within by virtue of the need to share what few resources there were; and again from without by the strength of the 1920 "Appeal to all Christian People" which was issued by the Anglican Bishops at the Lambeth Conference. This latter was to be a difficult matter, and one which not only delayed a union between the two denominations for 7 years more, but very nearly split the REC itself.

Finally, the single most powerful impact upon all the denominations was made by the needs and problems of a country caught up in the bitterness and suffering of the Great War.

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However, the years 1901 to 1920/1 also showed a number of significant issues within the lives of both denominations which were not dominating issues within mainstream non-conformity. Primary amongst these was a continuing and disabling poverty for both FCE and REC. Yet there were other matters; and a number of problems arose from the curious "cross breeding" of a firm episcopal polity and central administration on the one hand, but the inherently weak "congregationalist" system in most of the communities on the other. So for

instance, there were Trust problems in both denominations; and the need for a strong Central Property Trust was found in both the Churches during this period - the only way in which the ill effects of the tendency towards "independency" could be countered. Indeed, most of the smaller denominations experienced Trust problems at various times: but in the case of the FCE and the REC, their closeness to the Anglican model caused unique problems.

However, perhaps the most immediately significant difference between the FCE and REC on the one hand, and the large non-conformist Churches, on the other, was the fact that both denominations actually increased in size, especially during the years 1901-1914. Certainly, for both, the days of great and aggressive expansion were over. Nevertheless, for them, unlike the larger churches, D.W. Brogan's statement was wrong.

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Accordingly, this chapter seeks firstly to show how both denominations grew in numbers, and then remained constant in strength. At the same time, the development of the central administrative and episcopal structures is examined.

Secondly, those principal features in the life of both Churches which were common to all the larger non-conformist denominations are examined: the quest for new standards in theological learning and education; the development of an ecumenical imperative; and the great changes imposed by the First War.

Thirdly, those factors which were peculiar to the FCE and the REC are examined: a continuing poverty; the disputes and problems resulting from independent Trusts; and finally, the disastrous clash between Bishops Eldridge and Vaughan in the REC - and how the 1920 Lambeth "Appeal" almost succeeded in causing the absorption of the REC into the Anglican Church.

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A growing FCE: churches, communities and administration,
1901 - 1920/21

By 1900, the administrative structure of the denomination had reached the point of development at which it would stay - not only until the Union with the REC in 1927, but also up to the present (1994). Certain changes in 1927 were to include (for a time) the creation of a third "Central Diocese"; but, for the main part, in structure and polity, the die had been cast. Nevertheless the pattern for that structure was to be one of a growth in strength, certainly from 1901 to 1914.

FCE Churches and Communities 1900/01 - 1914

By June 1901, there were 20 churches in two dioceses:

Southern Diocese: Crowborough; East Ham; Exeter; Ilfracombe; New Malden; Putney; Teddington; Torquay; Willesborough; Worcester (also CHC); and Norwich (also CHC).

Northern Diocese: Accrington; Glasgow - Emmanuel Parkhead, and Trinity Springburn; Great Harwood; Haslingden; Hollinwood; Morecambe; Oswaldtwistle; and Tottington.

The 21 clergy included Bishop H.O. Meyers, who had no pastoral charge. There were also two Licensed Evangelists.⁷

Following the recent death of Bishop Dicksee, who was Minister of Crowborough, the new mission of St. James, Southview, had ceased services. In addition, the church at Catford had disappeared from the List of Churches. On the other hand, in the latter part of 1900 the new Emmanuel Church, Segar Street, in Great Harwood (Manchester) had joined the denomination.⁸ However, the most immediate problem at this time was that of adequate episcopal oversight; for although William Troughton was consecrated on 5 August 1901, the ailing Bishop Meyers was dead within a matter of months (see above). Troughton was to remain the only bishop for more than three years.

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By June 1903, St. Stephen's Mission had been started at Clydebank in Glasgow under the care of the licensed Lay-Evangelist Robert Walker from Springburn.⁹ But this addition was balanced by the fact that the church at Furrough Cross, Torquay had left the FCE - which had not been able to provide a minister.¹⁰

With just 19 churches in 1903, the denomination had shown no real growth for some time, and in his Presidential Address to the Convocation that year, Bishop Troughton gave some of the reasons, as he saw them. He stressed the fear for many English people of becoming "dissenters" in the eyes of the law. It was in this address that he defended the right of the FCE not to be classed as dissent because of the traditional worship and polity of the denomination (see above). But another reason he advanced was that the worship of the FCE was not in accord with the aesthetic fashion of the times: "Music, painting, sculpture, have all lent an influence to that which we protest against...the scenic display at so-called altars...and the people love to have it so."¹¹

Certainly it is fair to say that the prevailing old-fashioned low-church style of FCE worship was then, and remains now, a rather more cerebral thing. Some clergy have adopted a more modern, and some even a charismatic style of worship. But in the majority of the churches, the traditional patterns and the language of the Book of Common Prayer remain the norm.

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But within two years the situation had begun to change. At the Convocation of June 1905, the official List of Churches and Missions showed 25 communities,¹² including new churches at Broadstairs, Leicester, Peterborough (from FCE),¹³ Stapleford, Dudley Port near Tipton, Whiteinch in Glasgow, and Sheffield.

Amongst these additions, it is significant to see that St. Philip's Mission, Whiteinch near Glasgow was actually the fourth FCE church in that area, being run from Emmanuel Church by the Reverend J.W. Hodgkinson. Lack of support meant that by June 1906, St. Philip's had failed. At the same time, it is, perhaps, surprising that there should have been four FCE churches in Glasgow at all, especially in view of the fact that there was no strong presence of ritualistic Anglican churches. However, as is clear from later editions of the denominational magazine, the FCE churches tended to serve the militantly protestant Church of Ireland communities which had moved to Glasgow and Clydeside to serve the shipbuilding industry. The other main churches of the area were either Roman Catholic or Established Church of Scotland.

Although Presbyterian, the heirarchical and "Establishment" nature of the local parish churches do not seem to have attracted the Irish immigrants as much as, for instance, the powerful Ulsterman, the Reverend John Halliday, who was

minister of Trinity FCE, and chaplain of the local Orange Lodges. His death later in 1911 was a serious loss to the FCE communities in Glasgow. Indeed, this provides an interesting example of the way in which the FCE was able, from time to time, to touch the particular needs of a community in the way in which other more "professional" denominations were not. It is clear from his obituary that Halliday's style was markedly different from that of his more educated and, perhaps, more "subtle" neighbouring clergy.¹⁴

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By June 1906, the recent improvements in denominational strength had suffered a slight reversal. There were 22 churches in the published list, for the Glasgow mission in Whiteinch had failed, and that at Clydebank had left the FCE for the time being. Moreover, work at the FCE church at Haslingden in Yorkshire had been suspended, and although the building remained the possession of the denomination, for a number of years it was leased out to another denomination. The problems continued, for by June 1907, there were just 20 churches in the FCE, Stapleford and Dudley Port having left.¹⁵

June 1908 saw an upturn in numbers with 22 churches in the official list. The new churches, St. George's, Mill Hill, Blackburn and Emmanuel, Alum Rock, Birmingham, were both the result of dissension over ritualism at the local parish churches. Both remain strong churches within the FCE.¹⁶ Again, within the following 12 months, four more churches joined the denomination to make a total of 26 by June 1909: Emmanuel, Chorlton-cum-Hardy, Manchester; St. Stephen, Middlesbrough; St. Jude's, Walsall (which had returned from the REC); and Ormond Street Mission, Birmingham.¹⁷

By June 1910, Christ Church, Sheffield had left the FCE. But there were still 25 churches in the denomination at the time of the Convocation of June 1911. Moreover, in the following 12 months, three more churches brought the total number to 28 in the official list published at Convocation in May 1912: St. Stephen's, Clydebank (which had re-entered the denomination); Hoyland, near Barnsley; and Wolverhampton.¹⁸

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By June 1913, there was a new Mission in Birmingham. Like the Ormond Street Mission, St. John's, Aston Road, was being run by the Reverend T.H. Whitehouse from Emmanuel, Alum Rock.¹⁹

However, just 28 churches remained in the official List of June 1913. There had been a dispute between the Vestry of Trinity Church, Glasgow, and the Council of the FCE because of the non-payment of overdue stipend to the widow of the late minister. Until the debt was paid, the Council had removed the church from the Roll of the denomination. Despite negotiations, Trinity Church was not re-admitted to the official List until June 1920. Minutes of the 1918 Convocation showed that a condition of re-admission included the church deeds being deposited with the Registrar of the FCE.²⁰

The importance of this dispute at Trinity Glasgow is that it demonstrates clearly the greatest weakness in the basic working of both denominations. Although, in principle, strictly episcopal in polity, the reality of the situation was that the balance of power went to those who held not only the purse strings of the church but also its Trust Deeds. Like any "proprietary chapel", there was the chance of a serious breakdown in relations between denomination and Vestry, simply because the denomination had no redress in a dispute other than refusal to license a building or a man for its services.

Just 12 months later, on the eve of the Great War, the lists included 26 churches. Leicester had finally left the denomination, and, after many years, Worcester CHC church was no longer within the FCE.

Worcester was the last church to have a dual membership of both the FCE and the CHC, firstly during the ministry of Thomas Dodd, and then on his retirement, through E.J. Boon who moved to Worcester from St. John's FCE at Southampton. Boon died at Worcester on 27 November 1913 at the age of 69, and when he died, as had happened with other churches, the Vestry and its new incumbent evidently did not wish to maintain the connection. In fact it is clear from the CHC Trustees' Report of 1914 that Boon's work had met with problems from time to time: "for upward of 28 years (he) carried on the work of the ministry at Worcester often amidst great discouragement...". Nevertheless, the unusual warmth of regard for him was firmly echoed in the manuscript record of the meeting of the CHC Trustees on 27 January 1914: "...an esteemed minister of Christ and as warm a friend of the Connexion and its work at home and abroad...." Although some hopes for federative unity remained within the FCE

for five or more years (see below), it was with Boon's death that the last link was broken in what had once been a powerful relationship between the denominations.²¹

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The FCE Convocation of 1914 took place in Middlesbrough from 8 to 11 June. In his Presidential Address Troughton commented sadly "nationally, politically and socially the clouds are black....One wonderingly asks the question 'what does it portend'?" Less than three weeks later, on the afternoon of 28 June, a Bosnian Serb assassinated the Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife in Sarajevo.

In the meanwhile however, it is worth noting that by June 1914, there were 27 churches (of which, Haslingden was being leased to another denomination). These were served by 26 clergy (of whom two were bishops), and 19 trained Licensed Evangelists. In June 1901, there had been 20 churches in the denomination. These had been served by 21 clergy (of whom one was a very frail bishop), and 7 trained Licensed Evangelists.²²

Contrasts: declining non-conformity, yet evidences of a relative strength within FCE communities, 1900/01 - 1914

The Great War was to change many things for the churches of both denominations, but in the meanwhile it is worth looking briefly at the way in which, unlike other non-conformist denominations, the work of the FCE had actually strengthened.

In Free Churchmanship in England, J.W. Grant looks at the decline of non-conformity in the early part of the century. In particular he evidenced the figures in the Congregationalist Year Books from 1908 to 1923: he comments "Non-conformity was beginning to decline in strength, and was falling back on the defensive". In some instances, it was local conditions that dictated which denominations found most difficulty. It is interesting to see that in the City of York, for instance, the Presbyterians and Quakers actually increased their numbers. The Congregationalists lost ground; but according to Edward Royle, it was the Wesleyan Methodists who suffered the greatest fall in numbers. Royle examines briefly the six main Wesleyan Chapels in York, and comments: "The combined strengths of the six chapels was no higher in 1905 than it had been in

1900, and in the years 1905-14 it fell by 22 per cent". [In Methodism generally, Rupert E. Davies, sees the main decline after 1918, and largely as a response to the Great War.]

In one of his "Sermons" written in 1915 or 1916, the celebrated Congregationalist W.E. Orchard saw decline as part of the nature of the church as an institution which, although divine in origin and inspiration, was all too human in its executive. Looking at the problems surrounding the European church at the time of writing, he comments "The Church is not immune from the creeping paralysis that sooner or later overcomes all human institutions." ²³

This obvious decline in main-stream non-conformity was the subject of comment by Bishop Troughton in his Presidential Address at the Convocation of 1908. Although a convinced and old fashioned Protestant low-churchman, he showed the same surprising frankness that he did in 1903 when looking at the facts of church "extension": "Nonconformity confesses to a loss of 80,000 members, one Church alone reports 8,000 less on its communicants' roll. Truly this is appalling..." A little later he admitted, "Protestant as I am, I cannot but admire the earnest spirit that has pervaded the Establishment during recent years...Whence the success of the Oxford movement?" He then examined the popularity of ceremonial and colour in the worship of Anglo Catholic and Roman Catholic services - even though they were features which the FCE rejected.²⁴

But clearly he did not include the FCE in his comments on the problems of non-conformity. Moreover, the March 1909 FCE Magazine editorial stated:²⁵

"During the last few years there has been a marked increase in the number of our Churches. Progress is being rapidly made, and that in spite of many difficulties...and at the next Convocation, it is probable that more candidates will...be presented to the bishops for admission to Presbyters' and Deacons' orders, than there have been for many years. This is cheering and encouraging, as the FCE stands for uncompromising Protestant Church principles."

During the years 1901 - 1914, the overall picture of church life as shown in the details and figures presented by the churches in the denominational magazine is indeed one of a steady success. Sometimes there are surprises, such as that reported in December 1909 when a recent Tea Meeting at the new church in Middlesbrough had been attended by 700 people! Again, like a number of the churches in earlier times, Teddington, Tottington and Oswaldtwistle ran day schools for the local children (although the school at Oswaldtwistle was under threat of closure during 1913).²⁶

Further, there is no doubt that much of the success of the churches derived from the gifts of the individual ministers involved. Part of the strength of the FCE in Glasgow relied upon the vigorous Protestant preaching and pastoral ability of John Halliday, the incumbent of Trinity Church. His chaplaincy of a number of the Orange Lodges gave him a strong power base - as indeed did the fact that he was an Ulsterman who was dealing with the Northern Irish workers in the Glasgow ship building industry. Troughton was celebrated in the whole of his home area as a skilled Lakeland guide. Lander was well known for teaching young men for the ministry, or in "cramming" for the universities (see below). Others like the clerical secretaries for the dioceses, W.E. Young and A.V. Bland, had both pastoral insight and a very considerable executive ability; indeed Young's abilities took him to the episcopate in 1925.²⁷

Although there were failures throughout the period, and churches either fell or left the FCE, the overall "tone" is one of steady industry and success. This is certainly in contrast with the CHC, with the urgent appeals provided by the editor of its re-formed journal the Harbinger, the Reverend W. Clayton Fuidge. His militant front page editorials in September and October 1906 were headed "A Declining Force". Even more revealing was the title of his impassioned pamphlet published in the early 1930s: The Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion - What it was! - What it is! - What it might become!²⁸

1915 - 1920

The Great War affected the churches of the FCE most profoundly - particularly in the urban areas. Sunday Schools, ministry, church attendance, transport and financial restrictions: hardly any part of church life was left untouched (see further below). But in terms of "church extension", strangely, the years 1915 to 1920 saw very little change from the way in which the FCE had developed by June 1914.

At the Convocation of June 1915, the List of Churches showed no fresh closures. In fact a small mission had been established at Clacton-on-Sea. However within 12 months St. Stephen's had failed.²⁹ By June 1917 matters had changed little - other than the fact that the difficulties of war-time life within the town of Broadstairs had meant that two of the town's churches had to be closed "for the duration". One of these was Anglican, and the other was the newly consecrated Christ Church FCE. Like a number of the East Coast resorts, this area was the serious victim of shelling from the French coast and of air-raids by the enemy

Zeppelins. Many of the town's children and elderly were moved away to safety further inland.³⁰

By June 1918 little had changed, for the War still had a further 5½ months to run until Armistice Day on 11 November. Even after the War, by the time of the 1919 Convocation at Teddington, from 30 June to 3 July, the situation for the churches of the denomination was no different. Patterns of life had been changed for very many; and although the life of the congregation at Teddington was greatly enriched with the return of so many of the young men, it was proving impossible to re-open the church at Broadstairs yet.³¹

By June 1920, the denomination was more stable. It was reported that the Church at Broadstairs was open once more, and working well. In addition to this, an agreement had been reached between the Council of the FCE and the Vestry at Trinity Church in Glasgow, so that after a number of years Trinity entered the List of Churches once more. There were problems at Birmingham, for the incumbent of Emmanuel in Alum Rock, T.H. Whitehouse, had left the denomination to be re-ordained in the Church of England. Only swift action by Brook Lander had prevented him taking the congregation and church building with him. As a result, St. John's Mission, Aston Road, was simply no longer viable as a working unit, and had closed.³²

The FCE in 1920

The 1920 Convocation took place at Emmanuel, Glasgow, from 14 to 16 June. But even by this time, a large part of the life of the country still had not returned to normal. It was still only 18 months since the Armistice, and perhaps 12 months or less since many had been "de-mobbed" from the armed services. Also, hundreds of thousands had died or been injured, so that hardly a household in the country was not deeply affected in some way or another.

Without a doubt the years of the Great War had left their mark upon the denomination. Although not badly damaged by the radical social changes which the years had brought - to say nothing of the large-scale movements of troops and people - yet nevertheless, the definite advance in numerical strength for the FCE up to the year 1914 had stopped, so that the situation had remained static. As in 1914, there were still 27 churches (Haslingden still being leased to another denomination):

Southern Diocese: Birmingham - Emmanuel Saltley & Ormond Street Mission;

Broadstairs; Crowborough; Exeter; Ilfracombe; New Malden; Peterborough; Putney; Teddington; Walsall; Willesborough; Wolverhampton.

Northern Diocese: Accrington; Blackburn; Glasgow - Emmanuel Parkhead, St. Stephens Clydebank and Trinity Springburn; Great Harwood; Haslingden; Hollinwood; Hoyland; Chorlton-cum-Hardy; Middlesbrough; Morecambe; Oswaldtwistle; and Tottington.

In 1914 there had been 26 clergy (including 4 bishops) and 19 Licensed Evangelists. Following the war years when many clergy had taken on extra war work, or moved to the forces as chaplains, in June 1920 there were just 20 clergy (including one bishop). Furthermore, the number of Licensed Evangelists had fallen to 13. The Primus was Bishop Richard Brook Lander, who had taken over from William Troughton after his death in 1917. Moreover, although A.V. Bland had actually been elected Bishop in June 1917, he had refused the call. However he did agree to be President of the Northern Synod.

A start on restoration had been made during the previous 12 months with the induction of incumbents to Exeter, Walsall, Middlesbrough, Ilfracombe and Broadstairs. But if any real extension of work was to be re-started on pre-war lines, then the most immediate problems to be tackled were those of clerical manpower and episcopal assistance for the Primate.³³

Nevertheless, it is important to see that the strength of the denomination was not to be measured just in the numbers involved. For despite the problems of communication, transport, financial restriction, and the shortage of "non-essential" commodities like civilian printing and paper supplies, much had actually been done through the years since 1914 to ensure that the general tightening up of the administration and running of the denomination should continue as before the war. Education, property, finance, mission, and the somewhat limited ecumenical vision - these continued to be a part of the life of the FCE.

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A growing REC: churches, clergy and administrative development:
1900/01 - 1921

Introduction: the REC in 1900/1901

When Bishop Eldridge signed and dated his Report to the Sixteenth General Council on 4 May 1900, he spoke of 21 congregations.³⁴ These were:

LONDON Balham; Harlesden; Upton Manor; Gunnersbury; Manor Park.

COUNTRY Brighton (Nathaniel); Barnstaple; Exmouth; Farnham; Hemel Hempstead; St. Helier, Jersey; Warrington; Southend; Liscard; Eccles; Yeovil; Tue Brook; Leigh on Sea; Birkenhead; Aldershot; St. John's Mariners' Church, Dover.

To serve these there were 1 bishop, 24 presbyters, 1 deacon, and 3 Lay Readers. The Easter Statistics of 1899 had shown 1500 communicants; 2580 Sunday School scholars; and 256 teachers.

Unlike the main non-conformist denominations, but like the FCE, the years 1900-1914 showed growth. Thereafter, again like the FCE, that progress slowed to a steady maintenance of strength, especially during the Great War. However, unlike the FCE, there was a major division within the REC during the years 1914-1920. Even so, churches continued to be founded, clergy to be ordained, and people confirmed.

The REC 1901-1914

In Work and Worship for April 1903, Philip Eldridge wrote an article entitled "Progress". In this he said: "There has been, during the past year, an increase in the number of our clergy and congregations". But Eldridge saw other important factors, and he asserted: "Our work is becoming more consolidated; there is more cohesion..." At the same time, he warned specifically against the ever present tendency towards "congregationalism" in the churches.³⁵

On 8 May, just one month after the article was published, Eldridge completed and signed his report for the Seventeenth General Council which was meeting at St. Paul's, Chicago, from 20-24 May. Here he spoke of the deaths of four presbyters during the previous eight months - a loss which had caused the closure of two of the churches. From the Presidential Address that he later gave to the June meeting of the General Synod it is clear that these were Manor Park (the Reverend S.C. Burn), and the small cause at St. Helier in Jersey (the

Reverend William Westbury). This loss was, however, balanced by the gaining of two new congregations - Emmanuel at Carshalton, and (for just a few months before it moved to the Congregational Union) Furrough Cross Church, Torquay.³⁶

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But one of the problems for the denomination during these years (as before) was that of facilitating communication between the small communities which were widely scattered throughout the country. This was made more difficult by the fact that there was just the one bishop, based in South London. Not only was physical communication difficult, but, just as important, there was little sense of an overall denominational unity and fellowship. Within the Church of England, the diocesan system with its division into Archdeaconries, and further sub-division into Rural Deaneries, provided much more support for both clergy and congregations at local level. This sub-division also provided a convenient set of pastoral and administrative links "upwards" to the Bishop.

In earlier days, both Bishop Gregg (RCE) and Bishop Richardson (REC) had had hopes for a similar diocesan system within their denominations (see above): but the size and poverty of the denominations had made such a hope impossible. At the very least, the consecration of a second Bishop would have eased the burden of episcopal work upon Eldridge, and would have enabled the churches to see more of a senior clergyman. At the General Synod of 1901, in view of the "precarious...health of our revered bishop", the election of a second bishop was proposed. The matter was, however, deferred for twelve months.³⁷

At the Synod in the following June, 1902, the matter of another bishop was raised again. F.T. Gregg proposed the election of "one or more Bishops" which would enable church work to be "more vigorously and systematically carried on than is at present possible". There was evidently bad feeling involved, for these somewhat critical latter words were actually voted to be withdrawn. Nevertheless, Gregg subsequently proposed the election of three bishops.

Once more there was disagreement, for after discussion this was reduced to one, and the Reverend Dr. T.W. Bowman of Christ Church, Liscard was elected. However, the matter was again shelved when Bowman decided that he could not accept consecration. At the Synod of June 1903, Bowman was elected bishop a second time. Yet again, at the close of the Synod, he declined office, and it was agreed that further election be not considered at that session. In fact,

this time, Gregg himself had come second in the voting, and his impatience with Bowman's hawing is evident in the vigorous underlinings and exclamation marks which he made in his copy of the minutes.³⁸

A further attempt to proceed to an election in June 1904 failed, and the matter of a second bishop was dropped for several years. But this was far from satisfactory, and Gregg's impatience and frustration must have been shared by many, for what had been clearly identified as a most pressing need was simply not addressed. Indeed, the result of Eldridge's overwork was a serious breakdown of health during the early part of 1907. In the Synod meeting that June, he stated clearly: "I cannot much longer endure the strain of a parochial charge, as well as the burden of the episcopate".³⁹

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It was not until 1909 that a definite effort was made to take some of the heavy responsibility for overall pastoral care from Eldridge's shoulders. In the April edition of Work and Worship, it was announced that agreement had been given for the formation of a "Diocesan Association of Northern Churches". The intention of this was to provide a support, administrative and information network for those congregations situated so far away from the Bishop who was living in Brighton. The editor spoke of the hope that the Association would work in rather the same way as the Rural Deaneries in the Established Church. This significant development in the REC provided the basic corporate identity and administrative pattern for what was later to be the new Northern Diocese.

It is significant that the Secretary of the Northern Association was the Reverend Frank Vaughan of the REC church at Warrington. An ex-Grenadier Guards Sergeant, he had for some time been a Stipendiary Lay Reader in the Diocese of Liverpool before joining the REC. With his forceful personality and very clear ideas of the way the denomination should go, the secretaryship gave him an important power-base at the start of a very long and distinguished ministry.

Despite the occasional lack of support for the meetings by some of the clergy, the idea clearly worked, and at the General Synod of 1911, it was announced that there was to be a similar Association for the Southern Churches. The first meeting of the Southern Association took place at Christ Church, Harlesden, on 28 February 1912. Here, it is significant that, although Bishop Eldridge was present to address the meeting, and the Secretary was Frank Gregg, once again

it was Frank Vaughan who held a consistently high profile in the arrangements: for he had now moved South, and was Incumbent at Harlesden.

However, by this time, the electing of a second bishop had become a matter of the utmost urgency. With the successful creation of the Southern Association, the first spadework was completed for the division of the denomination into the two dioceses. Again, it is interesting to see the leadership role that Vaughan was gradually assuming.⁴⁰

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In the meanwhile, although there were problems with a number of the churches, there was, overall, a steady advance in the strength of the denomination.

During 1907, the churches at Yeovil and Birkenhead faced many difficulties. At Yeovil, a financial scandal which had involved the incumbent resulted in particular problems during 1908 over the securing of a small iron church to replace the large church which had been sold. In fact the cause failed some time during October 1913.⁴¹ At Birkenhead, the local trustees refused to put the property into a specifically REC trust, and they handed the property over to the local Vicar. Although the land was subsequently purchased by members of the congregation, by 1908 the cause was simply not viable, and almost certainly failed soon after the report had been made that June.⁴²

The failure of both churches demonstrated clearly the same problems faced by many churches in both denominations through the years: the dependence upon a strong and sound clerical leadership, the problems of insecure financial provision for the churches, and the insecurity of Local Trusts vested outside the denominational authorities. Moreover, although Birkenhead was within reach of other REC clergy and churches, Yeovil was far away from any possible clerical assistance, or perhaps even more necessary, the moral support of another REC congregation.

However, to make up for these difficulties, on Sunday 12 July 1908, the "Free" Liturgical church of St. Philip, Adlington, was received into the REC by Bishop Eldridge. By July 1910, a Mission Room was also opened to cater for those whose work and life centred around the waterway system in that part of Lancashire.⁴³

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St. Philip's continued within the REC until 1922; but at this time a disagreement arose because the minister failed to secure the election he expected to the FCE episcopate following the death of Eldridge. As Vaughan remarks somewhat bitterly in his Memories, the property was not in trust for the REC, but was held "in their own hands". The minister at Adlington, Charles Edmund Wincott, and the Minister of the REC church at Wigan, John Pownal Hodgkinson (see below) were elected as bishops by a Convocation of their own creation which was held on 21 November 1922. Following this, both Hodgkinson and Wincott underwent a presbyteral consecration on 17 January 1923 at the hands of an REC presbyter. As Vaughan makes clear in his Memories, the consecrator, the Reverend R. Eason-Jones was at that time under censure, and threat of dismissal from the denomination for other breaches of discipline. This was utterly illegal as far as the REC was concerned.

At first, the four or five churches took the title for the denomination of "The Church of England Unattached", but within a short time, this was reorganised as the "Evangelical Church of England". The denomination had some half dozen churches, mainly in the area of Lancashire, and enjoyed some success until the 1950s (see further below).⁴⁴

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Meanwhile, although 1909 was identified as a year of decline for some of the large non-conformist denominations, that April, news was published of three more applications to join the REC. Christ Church, Wigan; Wycliffe Church, Ashton-in-Makerfield; and St. Paul's Fleetwood were all independent Liturgical churches which were the result of local Anglican ritual controversies, and the General Standing Committee had approved their acceptance. In October 1909, there was news that Christ Church, Workington (Cumberland), had also been admitted to the denomination.⁴⁵

However, the REC was not only adding new churches in 1909, but it was extending existing work in other directions. On 1 March that year, not only were 36 candidates confirmed by Bishop Eldridge at Christ Church, Tue Brook, in Liverpool (16 of them being Chinese converts), but in addition, a special Sunday School had been started to serve the local Chinese population of the area. There were over 70 pupils in the school.⁴⁶

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During 1910, the general work of the denomination was continuing well. At Trinity Church, Southend, on Sunday 10 April, for instance, 21 candidates were confirmed; and the Annual Report of the Presiding Bishop at the General Synod on 6 June 1910 was one of optimistic confidence. As well as reporting the dedication of the new church at Wigan in the previous August, and the two new congregations in the denomination, he reported the ordination of two deacons, six presbyters, and one presbyter from Canada. He had conducted 11 confirmation services, and a total of 157 had been confirmed in the preceeding 12 months. It is clear that his work was hard, for as well as looking after his own church, Nathaniel at Brighton, he reported visits to 39 other churches all over the country, in the course of which he calculated that he had travelled 6,500 miles. There was, he noted, a general increase in the size of congregations; and, in addition, he mentioned the fact that work was developing particularly well in the North of England.

There were also two new churches admitted to the REC in 1910. On 1 June, the new congregation of St. James' in Glasgow was admitted; and on 20 July, the iron church of St. Mary, Chesterton (Staffordshire) was dedicated by Eldridge.

In fact, neither church was to be a strong and lasting part of the REC. The tiny new congregation in Glasgow met in the "Baths Hall". It disappeared from the list of churches in the November edition of Work and Worship in 1913.

However, a small remnant remained worshipping independently for many years until the Reverend Thomas Cameron (later FCE Bishop Primus) formed them and others into St. Mark's FCE, Radnor Park, Clydebank in the late 1930s.⁴⁷

Chesterton had an able ex-Anglican minister, T.H.W. Raspass. But it is clear that he did not fully understand the Protestant nature of the denomination, which had none of the "elasticity" of the Established Church. By the beginning of June 1912, he had left after internal disagreements, and by July 1915, the church had closed.⁴⁸

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The relatively flourishing state of the REC at this time, however, is evidenced by Bishop Eldridge's heavy work-load, which continued through the following years, 1911 and 1912.

In 1911 there were no new congregations, but, even so, he made no fewer than 60 visits to existing REC churches all over the country. As he reported to the

General Synod that June, in 11 confirmation services he had confirmed 125 candidates, he had also conducted three ordinations, and in the course of this work he had covered no fewer than 10,000 miles. The result of such great effort was considerable encouragement for the churches of the denomination. In the January 1911 edition of the denominational magazine, there was an account of Eldridge's visit to Workington the previous November. Reports of large congregations included one evening service of 700 people!⁴⁹

In the January 1912 edition of Work and Worship, there was a new Mission Church listed at Aspull which was run by Hodgkinson from Wigan, just nearby. "St. Stephen's" left the denomination at the end of 1922, together with both Adlington and Wigan, to form the basis of the Evangelical Church of England.

However, in his Report to the General Synod in June 1912, Eldridge spoke encouragingly of the strength of the REC. Despite a number of deaths and removals amongst both clergy and senior laypeople, the denomination continued, in his view, to increase in both numbers and influence.⁵⁰

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The years 1913 and 1914 were not times of great church expansion for the denomination; but they were times of useful consolidation.

Firstly, the "disciplinary" trouble at Chesterton had also been followed by problems at Emmanuel, Gunnersbury. In February 1913, the account of a meeting of the Association of Southern Churches was published. Bishop Eldridge appealed at the meeting for "a deeper loyalty to the Church, (and) to closer attention to the rubrical directions of the Prayer Book..." This certainly referred to the church at Gunnersbury, where the minister, the Reverend Basil Allen, had left the previous September.

From the information given in the June 1913 edition of the denominational magazine, it is clear that the basic problem - as so often - was that of an independent Trust, for, following disagreements, the Trustees had been about to sell the whole property. This had prompted swift action by Bishop Eldridge, who stepped in and bought the property for the denomination itself. But as before, the underlying problem appears to have been a strong independency of mind, combined with (as in the case of Chesterton and other places) a lack of real understanding as to the true, and rather inflexible protestant, nature of the

denomination. The previous October (1912) in his "Monthly Pastoral", Eldridge appealed in the magazine for their church people to be taught why the REC was actually a denomination outside the Established Church. He also lamented the fact that many seemed ashamed of the REC and were loth to put the denominational title on their noticeboards.

Corroborating evidence of this was provided later in 1948 by Vaughan in his Memories. In discussing some of the problems of the congregations who refused to put their buildings in trust for the denomination, he remarked: "Some congregations, like Gunnersbury, refused to adopt the title of the Church which they had joined, claiming that they were Ch. of Eng. people, making use of our Church as a local convenience: little did they understand, or care about the cause as a whole, or the definite Principles on which it was founded".⁵¹

It is important to see that, in the light of problems like those at Chesterton and Gunnersbury, the creation of the two Associations of churches, Southern and Northern, was a strong factor in the countering of such problems. It enabled a more powerful sense of corporate identity to be fostered, both amongst the clergy and the laity. It also meant that the new administrative requirements of the Associations actually put people physically in touch with each other. Again, it can only have acted as a spur to those who had long wished to create not only a second bishop for the denomination, but also a second diocese, in order that the often widespread communities might the better be served.

Apart from the important securing of Gunnersbury, the only new church during these two years was that of St. Barnabas, Lewes, in Sussex. In his Address to the General Synod of June 1913, Eldridge announced that: "A new mission movement has been commenced at Lewes". Exactly how long the church remained in the denomination is not clear. However, the typed minutes of an interview between Eldridge and Archbishop Randall Davidson, on 18 June 1920, speaks of the Minister and Congregation at Lewes having been received "recently" into the Church of England by the Bishop of Chichester (the minutes were marked "Private", and were of a most sensitive nature - see below). Almost certainly the property, an iron church in the area of Southover, never belonged to the REC, for there is nothing of Lewes in the Index of Deeds and Documents. According to the Kelly's Directory for Lewes, by 1937/8, the building appears to have been used as a Salvation Army Hall.⁵²

During these years, it is important to see the significance of a regular and proper episcopal oversight. As an essentially episcopally ordered denomination, much depended upon the smooth working of the hierarchical order. It is interesting to compare the working of the REC at this point with the RCE under Gregg whilst he was still physically and mentally fit - in the mid 1880s. It was only with his later severe illness and the lack of any sort of episcopal encouragement and oversight that the denomination began to suffer severely.

At the General Synod Meeting of June 1912, Eldridge took the opportunity to point out certain clouds on the denominational horizon. His own burden of responsibility, and the weight of a country-wide episcopal ministry was far too great, and he had been suffering from serious stress. Members of the denomination must have been only too aware of the urgency of finding some proper episcopal assistance for Eldridge - not the least of them being Frank Gregg, who had seen the fatal effects of the impossible pressures that had fallen upon his father in the late 1880s and early 1890s.

In fact, episcopal elections which took place at that Synod in June 1912 were once again in vain. Herries Gregory (Eldridge's son-in-law) was given nearly unanimous approval. Nevertheless, Gregory felt that he could not accept consecration, and the house postponed the matter until the General Synod the following year, 1913.⁵³

As soon as the General Synod was over, Eldridge went abroad for a month's break to Switzerland for a complete rest. But the state of his health made it imperative that the matter of a second bishop be addressed early in the New Year. Consequently a special meeting of the General Synod was convened at Christ Church, Harlesden on 26 February 1913.

In the first vote, the Reverend E.T. Reed polled 9 clerical votes and 12 lay votes. Vaughan himself polled 7 clerical votes and 8 lay votes. Significantly, Frank Gregg polled no votes whatsoever, and his displeasure is evident in his markings in the Report. In fact, Reed declined office as he was starting a new project involving work for Cheshunt College.

Vaughan polled the majority of the votes in the second vote, and in the final round (ayes versus noes), he polled 22 ayes, 6 noes and 5 abstentions. Vaughan thanked the house, but refused to accept election because he did not feel it possible to go forward with the minimum vote possible under the statutes.

Probably after some pressure during the break for lunch, Vaughan announced his acceptance at the afternoon session. But it is a measure of the delicacy of the whole matter that the house was still not able to decide the precise way in which Vaughan was to work, or of his jurisdiction. Eventually the discussions were concluded by Eldridge himself with the suggestion "That Rev. F. Vaughan be appointed Assistant Bishop to the Presiding Bishop, and in the meantime the question of jurisdiction be referred to the General Standing Committee..."

Vaughan was consecrated at Christ Church, Harlesden at 8 p.m. on St. Mark's Day, 25 April 1913. In a crowded church, the consecration was performed by Bishops Eldridge and Richard Brook Lander of the FCE, assisted by several Presbyters. So began one of the strongest and most significant episcopal ministries in the history of the united Church, and one which was to last until his death on Sunday 30 September 1962, at the age of 93 years 5 months.⁵⁴

The urgency of the election was underlined by the fact that at the subsequent meeting of General Synod in June 1913 Eldridge was absent through illness, and Vaughan had to preside. Almost immediately, the Synod addressed the matter of the jurisdiction of the new bishop. At first he was proposed as "co-adjutor"; but eventually, in view of Eldridge's health, the Synod appointed Vaughan as the Diocesan Bishop for the following 12 months, in order to give Eldridge "needed rest and relief".

At the next meeting of General Synod, in June 1914, Bishop Eldridge was again elected Presiding Bishop, and Vaughan was elected "Assistant Bishop to the Presiding Bishop".⁵⁵ Nevertheless, in all that had taken place during the previous 18 months the seeds of very bad feeling had been laid down between the two men (see further below).

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Whilst still a small denomination, the REC had shown a slow but steady growth since 1900/01. In May 1900 there had been 21 congregations, 26 clergy (including 1 bishop) and 3 Lay Readers. In June 1914, there were 26 congregations:

Adlington, Aldershot, Ashton-in-Makerfield, Aspull, Balham, Barnstaple, Brighton (Nathaniel), Carshalton, Chesterton, Eccles, Exmouth, Farnham, Fleetwood, Gunnersbury, Harlesden, Hemel Hempstead, Leigh-on-Sea, Lewes, Liscard (Wirrall), Tue Brook, Southend (Trinity), Warrington, Wigan, and

Workington (Christ Church). The January and February magazines also had an entry for "The Boatmen's Mission", at Aberdeen. This was evidently an affiliated congregation, meeting in a local hall. Again, the Reverend Frank Gregg was working, as an REC minister, as incumbent at Christ Church, Willesborough (FCE).

According to the "List of Churches and their Ministers" in Work and Worship in February 1914 (and including Gregg at Willesborough) there were at least 25 clergy involved in the work of the churches, two of whom were bishops. Realistically, together with those who had retired from active charge, the total number of clergy was probably 31 or 32. In addition, there were 10, and probably more, licensed Lay-Readers.⁵⁶

The REC, 1915 - 1921

As with the FCE, the Great War affected every one of the congregations of the REC most profoundly (see more below). But in terms of "church extension" the years 1915 - 1921 saw little change from the way in which the denomination had developed by the Summer of 1914. On the other hand, despite the many sociological changes and difficulties, the REC showed no very great loss in strength either.

Once again, as in the case of the FCE, there is a problem in finding documentary sources. Wartime restrictions on civilian printing and paper production - together with a similar lack of real supportive interest from the churches - meant that both Work and Worship and the FCE Magazine finished publication at the same time - December 1915. Again, the REC published no annual Year Books until 1922; moreover, the only traceable printed copies of the Reports of the General Synod finish in 1916. Nevertheless, some information is available from other sources, such as the Vestry Books of Trinity Church, Southend, or occasional newspaper reports. In addition, the REC Year Book for 1922 also included a Report of the General Synod of 1921, together with information from that same year - hence the extending of this period of examination to the year 1921.

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In May 1915, Bishop Eldridge wrote an article in Work and Worship making it quite clear that in his mind, there was a visible progress. But like Bishop

Richard Brook Lander of the FCE, he felt that progress was not always a matter of adding up numbers in the pews. He continued: "But the prosperity of a Church cannot always be measured by its numerical increase...I believe that our Church, as a whole, is more spiritual than it was." As an example, he quotes evidence of a far greater interest in the work of the Daily Prayer Union. Nevertheless, considering the numbers of men from the churches who were now in the armed forces (80 from Fleetwood alone), it is hardly surprising that there was a concern in his words.⁵⁷

Even so, despite wartime shortages, especially in the building and construction industry, one church and one mission were opened during the course of 1915.

On Thursday 6 May 1915, Eldridge dedicated the Wirral church of St. Saviour, Egremont, which had been started from nearby Liscard.⁵⁸ Further, in his Report to General Synod in June 1915, Eldridge announced the opening of St. Luke's Mission in Blackpool. In the event, St. Luke's probably did not survive the war, for it had disappeared from the List of Churches by the time that the Year Book of 1922 was published. St. Saviour's, Egremont was eventually closed in July 1965.⁵⁹

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From the List of Churches published in the 1922 Year Book, and from the lack of any information in the Report of the General Synod of June 1921, it is clear that there were no further churches opened between 1916 and 1922. In fact, the only new cause was the "Reformed Episcopal Mission to the Jews" at 67 Grove Street, Liverpool; and this appeared in the List for 1922/3. Founded in 1906, it was probably only with the appointment of an REC clergyman, Paul Dressler, as "Curate in Charge" that this had come under REC jurisdiction.

Nevertheless, although the problems of wartime were in large measure the reason for the lack of any further expansion from 1915, it is also true that a major division within the denomination between 1914 and 1920 must also have been a strong factor (see below). Even so, the REC remained reasonably secure; and indeed, although there was a reduction of 2 congregations from the total, the numbers of clergy and Lay Readers had actually increased.

In June 1914, there had been 26 congregations. Including two bishops, the total number of clergy was probably 31 or 32. There were also 10 or more Lay-Readers.

According to the Year Book for 1922, there were at that time 24 congregations: Adlington, Aldershot, Aspull, Balham, Barnstaple, Brighton (Nathaniel), Carshalton, Eccles, Egremont (Wirral), Exmouth, Farnham, Fleetwood, Grove Street Mission (Liverpool), Gunnersbury, Harlesden, Hemel Hempstead, Leigh-on-Sea, Liscard (Wirral), Tue Brook, Southend (Trinity), Warrington, Wigan, and Workington (Christ Church). Again, Frank Gregg was working, as an REC minister, at Christ Church, Willesborough (FCE).

There were 38 recognised clergy, including 2 bishops (Vaughan and Louis Fenn, who had replaced Eldridge after his death on 20 March 1921). There were also 23 licensed Lay Readers.⁶⁰

Some thoughts on the developing administrative structure

If the eventual election of a second bishop for the denomination in 1913 was one of the most important factors in the consolidation and securing of the future work of the REC, then the division of the Country into two proper dioceses in June 1915 was the other.

As matters stood before 1913, the whole weight of a Country-wide episcopal ministry rested upon the shoulders of an increasingly aged man. Even with the consecration of a second bishop as his "Assistant", there was still no true division of responsibility. This is especially true in the light of the fact that the two men had a very different personality and "style", and simply did not get on well together (see below).

For some years, the two Associations of Churches, together with the administration that had been created to work them, had successfully divided the Country into identifiable areas. These made a more local administration possible; they also permitted a better flow of information, and a better pastoral care amongst the various church communities. Again, they fostered a better and more personal basis for communication.

Eldridge had long realised the great dangers inherent in the essentially "congregationalist" nature of the denomination. In his article in the May 1915 edition of Work and Worship entitled "Progress", he gave a very strong warning to readers of the dangers of what he openly called "congregationalism": "The more we can eliminate the selfishness of congregationalism, the more will our movement extend". This was no new warning, for in June the previous year

(1914), an article on the needs of "Sustentation and Home Mission Fund" had stated baldly: "The isolation of the churches naturally leads to independence of action and an almost selfish regard for local interests..."⁶¹ Again, Eldridge had warned readers about "congregationalism" in April 1903 (above).

The creation of two more localised diocesan units, each with its own administration and Synod, and each with its own Diocesan Bishop - yet, both responsible to the supreme authority of the General Synod - was a strong counter to the ever-present "centrifugal" tendency amongst the churches. It imposed a more local and therefore a more accessible authority upon the congregations. But yet more important, it also placed upon them a more localised notion of responsibility for the denomination. After all, they were then responsible for many important decisions, or offices, that were effective, for instance, right there in the North of England, and not just in the remote Home Counties area of the South of England.

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The process creating the two dioceses was easy; but the matter of episcopal jurisdiction was fraught with difficulty. On Thursday morning, 15 June 1915, the General Synod voted unanimously for two dioceses "corresponding to the provinces of Canterbury and York at present existing in the Established Church..." However, that afternoon, whilst discussion episcopal jurisdiction, Eldridge asked to be excused from undertaking long journeys because of poor health. Consequently, the Synod voted that he be appointed Bishop of the Southern Diocese.

But at the evening session it became evident that there was impasse between the two bishops. The fact was that the Northern Diocese was a new creation, so that there was much to be done in setting up the administrative bodies and committees that would be needed. In an extraordinary exchange, Vaughan emphasised his difficulties in taking the Northern Diocese (not detailed in the Report). Eldridge, however, declined to take it, and re-iterated his problems of health. "Bishop Vaughan replied that this practically forced his hand, and in that he could not acquiesce." In fact it was then Frank Gregg who broke the deadlock by proposing a temporary appointment to the North, which would enable the diocesan infrastructure to be created before the matter of full jurisdiction was raised again. It was on this basis that Eldridge agreed to take the North, and Vaughan the South - for just twelve months.

By this Act of General Synod, the way was prepared for the denomination to move forward towards a widely hoped-for federative union with the FCE. Certainly it now brought the REC into administrative conformity with the FCE, which had had two dioceses, together with similar infrastructures, since before the turn of the century.

Nevertheless, the 1915 session also highlighted differences between the two bishops. In the light of this, it is not surprising that the 1920 Lambeth "Appeal to all Christian People" should have been the occasion of a sharp division in the denomination. With hindsight, the creation of the two dioceses was subsequently a source of strength. But at that time there was some nervousness, as was evident in an editorial comment in the July 1915 edition of Work and Worship. In referring to the new two-diocese system, he admitted: "How far this will tend to promote the unity and future progress of the Church as a whole remains to be seen....There is more need than ever for earnest and continued prayer..."⁶²

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Theological education and training in the denominations -
and new academic emphases: 1901 - 1920/21.

A significant feature in the life of the main non-conformist denominations from the beginning of the century was a marked increase in their contribution to the discipline of academic theology. In 1903, Silvester Horne commented: "Of the many disabilities imposed on Nonconformists, ...denial of the privileges of the higher education was perhaps the cruellest". But after removal of the religious tests in 1871, not only had "an extraordinary proportion of the highest academic honours...fallen to Nonconformists", but both Oxford and Cambridge became centres for non-conformist academic teaching.

In October 1886, Mansfield College was founded at Oxford for the training of men for the ministry of the Free Churches, and especially Congregationalism. Subsequently, not only was an Unitarian College founded at Oxford, but, within a short time, Westminster College (Presbyterian) had followed at Cambridge.⁶³ Cheshunt College (largely Congregationalist) followed suit in 1905 with its move from Hertfordshire to Hills Road, Cambridge. Again, soon after Cheshunt, Wesley House (Wesleyan) was founded in Jesus Lane, Cambridge.

In searching for a reason why people felt it particularly important to move to one of the ancient centres, it is interesting to see that, in the case of Cheshunt, not only was it a political decision by denominational leaders, but apparently considerable encouragement was given to the move by the students themselves. Many of the students were said to have had "a high regard for Cheshunt's traditions and a low regard for London University". According to the centenary booklet on the College, this fact was substantiated by one of the former students who moved with the college.⁶⁴

Indeed, academic records of non-conformists newly admitted to Oxford and Cambridge were most distinguished. In the 30 years between 1860 and 1889 non-conformist students won the position in Cambridge of Senior Wrangler no fewer than 19 times. At one stage, this position was won by them for four years in succession. There was great impetus given to future non-conformist scholars and writers - many of whose works were (and sometimes still are) standard fare throughout all traditions.⁶⁵

But the same sort of contribution was not possible from either the FCE or the REC in Britain. The denominations were just too small, and there was no money to finance any residential theological training. The work done by Bishop James Renny and his residential theological college for the REC in East London (chapter 6) did not survive his death in July 1894. Again, because of the small numbers of clergy in the denominations, there was not the same reservoir of intellectual expertise available. Whilst there were some fine men with good minds, the primary need was simply to preserve the existence of the denominations - and it was only the congregations at grass-roots level that provided what little money there was.

However, it is interesting to see that there was a reflection of these developments within both denominations in that there were new attempts to systematise the training of ministers, and wherever possible to provide them with qualifications (either external or internal). The aim of this was to raise both the intellectual standard of the ministry, and at the same time to raise its status in the eyes both of members of the denominations and also of those who looked in from outside.

Training schemes and ordination examinations.

For the majority of clergy in the FCE and the REC, the pattern of training had not changed from the previous century. Here, a keen layman might progress through the ranks, from lay assistant through to Deacon and Presbyter, taking the examinations required "en route" (see chapter 6). This system was the inevitable result where there was not enough money to support men through a professional college training.

That the system worked is undoubted. Results were not usually published, but there were several examples during this period where FCE candidates had clearly failed an examination and were not permitted to proceed until they had re-sat the papers failed.⁶⁶ Indeed, as a training method this was not unknown within the Anglican Church - especially in the mission field. Again, it is worth seeing that the pressure upon the Order of Presbyters was lessened, because Deacons were permitted, under strict licence, to celebrate the Holy Communion. Moreover, the practice was for the considerable number of ministers who came from other dissenting denominations to be accepted as Deacons, and subsequently to be "Episcopally Ordained" to the Presbyterate. Nevertheless, the ideal was a proper residential training - as Bishop Newman had said so plainly.

In fact, the influx of a number of clergy, or students from other denominations during the period 1901 to 1920, meant that there were actually men within the ministerial structure who had undergone a more extensive professional training. Perhaps the most celebrated clergyman to come to the FCE, ready trained, from another denomination was Richard Brook Lander. Educated at Harrow School, Lander had received his theological training at Cheshunt during the Presidency of H.R. Reynolds.⁶⁷

Amongst the senior clergy of the REC, Frank Vaughan had come to the denomination as a licensed Lay Reader of the Anglican diocese of Liverpool (see below); but Eldridge had originally been trained at "Milton Theological College" before moving to be Minister of the Independent Chapel at Camden Town.

One of the most distinguished Presbyters of the REC was the Reverend Dr. Thomas William Bowman, who twice refused the episcopate. Born at Greenock, and educated at his father's school (Gainford Academy), Bowman proceeded to the University of Glasgow (MA), and then took the degree of PhD at the University of Rostock. Having been a schoolteacher for some years, he "returned to college", and was first ordained into the ministry of the Evangelical Union Church of Scotland.⁶⁸

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In 1902, the bishops of Church of England made a determined attempt to standardise the educational requirements for non-graduates who were proceeding to do theological training for the ministry. The requirements had previously varied widely; but the "Central Entrance Examination" set papers in Latin, Greek, Biblical History, New Testament exegesis (Gospels), English History, and the basics of philosophy, including elementary logic. An article in Work and Worship for October 1902 noted that this concern for a higher standard of training for the ministry was also seen in the other larger denominations. In the Congregationalist Church, it was seen in the insistence that all ministerial candidates at Mansfield College now be graduates. It was also noted that in the Wesleyan Methodist Church one of main colleges (Richmond) had become a recognised college of the University of London.⁶⁹

There was evident dissatisfaction within the FCE about their examination system as it was at the beginning of the century, and in 1902, the Reverend G. Hugh Jones organised a revision of the training scheme and the reading lists. In

1909, this was followed by a radical revision of the examinations together with another revision of the reading lists. Indeed, it is interesting to see that in FCE Magazine for the following January, 1910, in reviewing the events of the previous year the editor lauded the "drastic revision of the examination requirements" as an important step in the process of improving "the standards to meet the demands of these enquiring days".⁷⁰

In the REC, the early years of the century also saw the tightening-up of standards in ministerial training. In October 1902, an article in Work and Worship made the just comment that clergy training was generally "chaotic" in Britain: moreover, in the Established Church methods of training varied greatly. The author, possibly Eldridge, examined the current needs of the REC. Whenever it had been financially possible, men had gone to Cheshunt College for theological training; but, he said, the REC needed its own institution.

In the January 1903 edition of the magazine it was announced that the sum of £10,000 would be needed to establish a college for the REC; and in July an article explored in further detail some of the academic needs in training. The writer included Latin, Greek and Hebrew, "practical theology", homiletics, pastoralia, and a course in philosophy and logic. In fact there was no hope of finding the sum of £10,000 for a college, and there was no further serious mention of such an appeal.

However, in the Presidential Address to the General Synod of June 1906 Eldridge announced the details of a training scheme which would lead, after examination, to the diploma of LTh. The scheme was to be organised by the "Institute of Theology of the Reformed Episcopal Church in England"; and the details were subsequently presented at the General Synod in the following year, 1907. The Faculty for the Institute consisted of the Reverends T.W. Bowman, MA (Glasgow), PhD (Rostock); F. Thornton Gregg, MA (TCD); Herries S. Gregory, MA (Cantab); and Samuel Naish, MA (Oxon), LLD (?). The courses were to be by correspondence over a period of two years.

The syllabus was certainly more realistic than the one proposed the previous year, but still included Classical Greek, New Testament Greek, Scripture, Systematics, Christian Evidences, Church History, Pastoral Theology, Liturgics and Homiletics. This was not easy, especially for those who were already busy in the pastoral ministry; and it is clear that at first, very few candidates applied for examination. It was consequently agreed at the General Synod of

1908 that the diploma of LTh might be awarded to clergy who completed the requirements for the diploma - taking into account the examinations already passed for ordination. The scheme was essentially sound, and seems to have worked reasonably well until the Union of Churches in 1927 - although, according to the Clergy lists, very few men completed the course.⁷¹

The pursuit of university education.

Bishop Frederick Newman (FCE) had hoped for a clergy who were educated well enough to be able to meet and dine with the more privileged members of society on an equal footing (see chapter 7). Certainly by 1913 it was unusual for men in the Established Church and in the main non-conformist ministries not to have a further, or even a post-graduate, theological training. But, by contrast, it was most unusual for ordinands or clergy of the FCE to go away for a formal education at all; for when it did happen, it was announced in the magazine or the Year Book.

The Report of Convocation for June 1913 spoke of warm support for three students for the FCE ministry. Alfred Marsh of Teddington was proceeding to Cheshunt, Mr. Chadwick of Tottington who was entering "Dunoon College", and the Reverend G.W.F. Smith of Walsall was to proceed to St. Catharine's College, Cambridge (not Cheshunt as stated).⁷² Indeed, those who did graduate were publicly congratulated, and in Summer 1916, Marsh took the first class, and Forbes Smith an upper second, both in the theological Tripos. Marsh did not stay with the FCE; but Forbes Smith did - later, in 1938, to be consecrated bishop. The following year at the Convocation of 1917, congratulations were extended to the Reverend George Rivers, Minister of Crowborough FCE for gaining the honours degree of BA in Philosophy at London.⁷³

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The numbers of university men in the REC seemed to be even fewer than those in the FCE. Those who had had a formal tertiary education seemed to be either men who had transferred from other denominations, or perhaps those who had been in other professional occupations first. In fact, in the list of Churches in the June 1913 edition of the denominational magazine, the only university graduates amongst the clergy in active pastoral charge appeared to be:

Thomas Bowman, (a Theol. Coll. in Glasgow), MA (Glasgow), PhD (Rostock); Philip Eldridge, Milton Theological College, Hon DD (RES, Philadelphia); Samuel Naish,

MA, (Oxon), LLD (unknown); Frank Gregg, MA (TCD); Herries Gregory, MA (Cantab); J.P. Hodgkinson, BA, BD (unknown); and Arnold Palmer, BA (unknown)

However, unlike the FCE, the REC had the advantage of the "Institute of Theology" together with the LTh after a recognised course of study - this being possible for those who were actually working in the ministry. Thus, J.P. Hodgkinson of Aspull (also a graduate), F.W. Coulter of Tue Brook, and Bishop Frank Vaughan had all had the advantage of a structured tertiary theological training - after their ordination.⁷⁴

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In the denominations, those who did proceed to the University can only have done so through private means or scholarship, for neither denomination had any money for such funding. There was, however, the possibility for a certain amount of academic training at minimal private cost within the FCE, for Richard Brook Lander had considerable talent for training young men for the ministry, or "cramming" them for university entrance. His work in the FCE seems to have been in rather in the same mould as that of the distinguished former headmaster of Harrow (1844-1859), the Very Reverend C.J. Vaughan. It has been estimated that, through the years of his ministry, Vaughan's "doves" numbered as many as 400 men. These gained a good and structured theological education, largely free of charge. Indeed, although the connection has never been made, it is tempting to suspect that Lander, who had been at Harrow in the 1870s, had actually been influenced by Vaughan's reputation and his work.

The biographical sketch of him in the FCE Quarterly (Northern) Diocesan Magazine in 1915 pays warm tribute to Lander in this work. Amongst "the Bishop's boys" were both Alfred Marsh and Forbes Smith. It was a highly individual ministry, but a very greatly valued one in a denomination which was too poor to help the education of its clergy in any way. Indeed, although now almost forgotten, it remains a part of the "mythology" of the FCE.⁷⁵ However, in the REC, after the death of James Renny in 1894, no one seems to have had the facilities (or the skills) required to take on the same task as Lander.

Inevitably therefore, the ordinands in both denominations were mostly obliged to study by themselves for the Deacon's and Presbyter's Examinations. In this respect, although neither Church was able to produce any works of major scholarship, the Reverend G. Hugh Jones produced two particularly useful and

practical works for the FCE. The October 1916 edition of the FCE Diocesan Quarterly Magazine consisted of the reprint of a major pamphlet written by Hugh Jones a year earlier and entitled The Free Church of England: its Doctrines and Ecclesiastical Polity. A substantial and close printed octavo booklet, its 10 chapters dealt authoritatively with the theology of the FCE - including an overview of scripture, worship, holy orders and sacraments. The previous year, he had produced the booklet How to prepare for Holy Orders in the Free Church of England, and both provided valuable material for the ordination examinations. Jones was a distinguished teacher with several educational publications to his credit.⁷⁶

The REC in Britain was even more restricted in its teaching publications. However, in 1908, there was a second edition of Philip Eldridge's work, Origin, Orders, Organisation and Worship of the REC, (op. cit.). Whilst again being primarily an apologia, rather than a source of original thought, it was a good basic source of information for those both inside and outside the REC, and a good preparatory text for ordination.

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Significantly, the wearing of proper "Choir-habit" as in the Established Church was seen as a matter of some importance in denominations which, all too often, were perceived by the churchgoing population of the country as "second-best". The FCE Convocation of June 1909 agreed that those who did not have a degree or college diploma entitling them to an academic hood might wear the Literate's hood if a Deacon, or the FCE Presbyter's hood if in the senior office.⁷⁷

In the REC, the matter of correct Choir Habit became something of a vexed issue, for evidently some clergy had been wearing unauthorised academic dress. At the General Synod of 1910, it was resolved that no hood might be worn other than that of the LTh of the denomination, or that of a bona-fide degree, or the Literate's hood. The matter was raised again at the 1915 General Synod; and this time, the session agreed that the Bishop of the Diocese might have the authority to confer a distinctive hood for Presbyters of the denomination. This, in fact, brought the REC in Britain into conformity with the USA.

The possession of a degree, or the wearing of a hood, or traditional choir-habit might seem trivial to another age. But it is both interesting and significant that, in this matter, as in others more important (like the

preservation of the traditional episcopate), the style and customs of the Established Church were of continuing importance to the two small denominations which so often rejected, and continued to reject, the description of "dissent". It is almost as if these things conferred (albeit vicariously) the confidence and strength of the "Establishment" itself. There was perhaps more than a hint of the feeling of insecurity in such things.⁷⁸

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Although circumstances made a professionally educated clergy an impossibility, yet the ideal remained clear - certainly to the writer of an article in Work and Worship in October 1902 (possibly Eldridge). In looking at the chaotic state of theological training in Britain, he made the telling comment: "We must not forget that the real power of the Church is to be found in its learning and spiritual character, which should go hand in hand."⁷⁹

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Ecumenism in the denominations, the final break between the FCE and the CHC,
and moves to FCE/REC unity, 1901-1920/21

From the early years of this century, within the lives of Anglican and the Reformed churches alike, there was a new seeking for common roots, and for the possibility of uniting for both work and worship. Most commentators see the effective beginning of this movement in the Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910: J.R.H. Moorman asserts that: "It was in Edinburgh in 1910 that the 'Oecumenical Movement' was born".⁸⁰

J.W. Grant says: "By 1918, the issue of Christian reunion had been put squarely before English Nonconformists. No longer was reunion merely a matter for pious hope or academic debate...." Indeed, the publication in 1918 of The Churches at the Crossroads by the distinguished Baptist minister, J.H. Shakespeare, was a clear indication of the way in which the subject was in the common mind - it was also in itself a powerful spur to the movement. Ernest A. Payne traces how, largely in response to this work, the Federal Council of Evangelical Free Churches was formed in 1919. Later, Methodist union was achieved when the Wesleyans, the United Methodists and the Primitive Methodists formally joined together in 1932. The complex matter of the uniting of the various branches of the Methodists is illustrated by Rupert E. Davies in his useful general survey Methodism.⁸¹ Later, In 1939, at the beginning of the Second World War, the Federal Council and the National Free Church Council united.

But, as had happened so often in the past, both the FCE and the REC were largely uninvolved in major unity schemes with other denominations. As already stated, both denominations stood apart from the Anglican Church by virtue of their similar episcopal polity. On the other hand, the FCE and the REC were also set apart from the other non-conformist churches by reason of their strictly episcopal polity: they themselves rejected the description of dissent. Again, although all the mainstream ministries were recognised as valid, if non-episcopally ordained men joined the FCE or REC, they were accepted as Deacons but subsequently ordained Presbyter.

It is also easy to see how the relatively tiny size of both denominations and their poverty made any great Ecumenical work impossible - the cost of transport for the FCE clergy to their own Convocation was causing enough trouble. From time to time, churches and clergy of the FCE and the REC were involved with other denominations at a local level. Even so, for the main part, the churches

of both denominations were having to put all their efforts simply into survival. Once again, however, it is possible to see a reflection of what was taking place in the wider non-conformist world.

Firstly, because of the historical and close links, there were discussions once more between the FCE and the CHC: these failed. Secondly, the discussions which had started before the beginning of the new century between the FCE and REC continued, albeit fitfully. Thirdly, whereas the 1920 Lambeth "Appeal to All Christian People" largely passed the FCE by, it did find favour with the REC, which, historically had always had the Established Church as a model. In fact, the attraction of the Appeal to many of the clergy nearly split the denomination. It certainly delayed unity with the FCE seriously.

Ecumenism in the FCE and the REC

Although generally "distant", inevitably local ecumenical relations with the Established Churches in England and Scotland depended upon the personalities of the clergy concerned, and the feelings of the area.

In Scotland, in December 1905, Emmanuel FCE in Glasgow was accidentally burned down. But almost immediately, the Session of the local Presbyterian Parish Church offered the use of its church building in order that FCE worship might continue until alternative arrangements were made.⁸²

In England, there is evidence that on great occasions, either nationally or locally, the clergy of the denominations were not only present in the local parish church, but occasionally taking part. In May 1910, there was a United Memorial Service for King Edward VII at Oswaldtwistle Parish Church. It was recorded in the denominational magazine that the minister of Holy Trinity FCE in the town read one of the lessons. Certainly a death of one of the FCE or REC clergy was usually met with a loyal response from his fellow clergy in the locality. When E.J. Boon (FCE Presbyterian at Worcester CHC) died at the close of 1913, it was recorded that all the neighbouring clergy were present at the funeral. When William Troughton died in Morecambe on 23 May 1917, the great local respect in which he and his work were held was most marked. The Mayor and a number of the Corporation of Morecambe were present at the funeral. But also present, together with six FCE clergy, were the Rector of Morecambe and his Curate; there were also no fewer than nine clergy from other denominations.

Moreover, there were occasions when clergy of the Established Church not only attended services but preached in the churches of the denominations. On 15 July 1902, at Aldershot REC, a retired priest, the Reverend Frank Eardley, "late of Ridley Hall, Cambridge", preached both in the morning and evening.⁸³

There were frequent reports of the exchange of pulpits between the churches of the FCE and REC and their non-conformist neighbours, or the attending of each other's social occasions.

In Autumn 1902, at the opening Harvest Festival service in the presence of Bishop Eldridge at Christ Church, Harlesden, the preacher was the Reverend J.C. Smith, a Presbyterian minister. At Christ Church REC, Hemel Hempstead that same year, the special preacher for the Harvest services was the Reverend J.W. Wilson of the Moravian Church. At Workington, local relations with Christ Church REC were very cordial. In January 1911, it was recorded that during a recent visit, Bishop Eldridge had given an address at a Social Evening at which "some of the ministers of the town" were present. Also at Workington, in January 1915, not only was there an exchange of pulpits in the town, but later that month, there was an united Communion Service at the Congregational Church in which the REC took part. In Middlesbrough, local relationships the FCE were good. In January 1915, they announced in the FCE Magazine that, "recently some neighbouring Non-conformist choirs have favoured us with musical services..."

There were many such examples of bridges being built at local level. Nevertheless, the opposition to Rome was implacable. Month by month through these years, Work and Worship contained articles that were militantly anti-Roman Catholic. Even though the FCE Magazine was more restrained in its publications, in January 1911 the Editorial column robustly referred to "the Papal anti-Christ". It is hardly surprising that later, in February 1915, whilst supporting the Day of Humiliation for the Great War set aside "by Royal Authority", the notion of possible Papal intervention was utterly rejected. Clearly Ecumenism would only go so far.⁸⁴

The hope for FCE and CHC unity. Their continuing co-operation in the Mission work at Sierra Leone. The dispute over Sierra Leone, and the final failure of that hope.

Although the Federative Relationship between the FCE and the CHC had long ceased, the hope that unity discussions might be revived remained as long as

there was still a minister living who held dual membership under the original "declaration" regulations. E.J. Boon had taken over the Connexional church in Worcester after the retirement of Thomas Dodd - nevertheless, Boon was an FCE Presbyterian who had moved from the FCE church in Southampton. Another way in which communications had remained open during the years was through the continued involvement of the FCE in the CHC Mission in Sierra Leone - indeed, this had been seen in minds of many as the work of both denominations.

At the Convocation of June 1903, greetings were sent from the CHC Conference, and were cordially returned. At the Convocation of June 1907, a missionary service was held at which "a most interesting sermon was preached by the Rev. W. Groves, MA, Superintendent of The FCE and Countess of Huntingdon's Mission at Sierra Leone". A collection was taken for the funds of the Mission. Evidently the hopes for continued fellowship also continued within the CHC, for in 1908, Bishop Richard Brook Lander was asked to preach at the Annual Conference of the Connexion. But it was in 1911 that these earlier tentative moves came to a climax with the formal hope for unity being expressed by the Primus of the FCE in his Presidential Address at the Convocation in June. It was at this time that there were also high hopes for unity with the REC as well, and Troughton spoke of his hope that, whilst he was still in the position of Bishop Primus, "both federal and organic union should be established between us and these sister churches..."

In fact, in the previous September there had been "a United Meeting of Liturgical Free Churches" at Brighton, and the host had been the Reverend J.B. Figgis. By this time, Bishop Eldridge was at Nathaniel REC in Brighton, and he was the President of the United Movement. Brook Lander had been asked to succeed him in the Presidency. During the 1911 Convocation, it was resolved that the FCE move towards an organic union with both the REC and the CHC.⁸⁵

The year 1913 was the 50th anniversary of the formation of the FCE, and the Annual Convocation was held especially at Spa Fields Chapel. This event must have given considerable impetus to the hopes for unity with the CHC. Even so, there was no significant progress between the two older denominations, and when Boon died at Worcester on 27 November 1913, an important link between the FCE and the CHC disappeared.

Later, in June 1916 an indication as to the reason why matters were no further advanced was given to the Convocation by W.E. Young in his "Council and General

Report": "A meeting has been held also with representatives of the CHC, and we were given to understand that at their Conference in July the advisability of their liturgical churches being associated with the FCE will be discussed." The fact was that, since the 1880s, the Connexion had changed very greatly. Fewer and fewer of their churches had a liturgical form of worship as succeeding years went by. The editorial warnings of Clayton Fuidge in the Connexional Magazine Harbinger during the Autumn of 1906 made it clear that a disunited denomination was continuing to move into Congregationalism. Indeed, the central authority of Conference seems largely to have disappeared. It seems certain that despite the hopes of Troughton and others, not only were there increasingly fewer CHC churches with whom the FCE could have united, but the authority of the CHC Conference to make such a thing a reality was lacking.

But there was an additional factor also, for although there is no documentary evidence, it is clear that the continuing moves towards unity between the FCE and the REC would have made further difficulties in the minds of many in the Connexion. The FCE still had the historical link with the Connexion. But, despite its FCE roots, the REC was far more "Anglican", and its insistence upon episcopal authority and ordination cut across long-established customs and principles of the Connexion. In fact, within the REC there were some hopes for unity involving the CHC, but this seems to have been limited to the conferences of "Free Liturgical Churches" which met at Christ Church, Westminster Bridge Road, in May 1904 and 1905, and later in September 1910. But it is clear that there was little commitment within the REC to the process (see further below).⁸⁶

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The final break between the FCE and the CHC, however, occurred after sharp disagreement over the Sierra Leone Mission - to which the FCE had given generous support since the turn of the century.

In his "Council and General Report" to Convocation on Tuesday 1 July 1919, W.E. Young gave clear indication of problems over the Mission. He referred to the Quarterly Record where "we have unfortunately been made to appear as unpleasantly as possible". Yet, these strains were not new, for he continued: "it is this spirit in the past which has so greatly hindered our united work". His following words however are even more significant: "...and to my mind absolutely prevents it in the future".

He made it clear that the work of mission in general was going forward strongly, and that it had even increased. However, some of the churches had already transferred their support to the China Inland Mission. The Convocation clearly agreed with him, and a resolution was passed stating "regret that the connection hitherto existing with the aforesaid society must now cease." Years later, in the Connexional Magazine The Voice of the CHC and Sierra Leone Mission, more information was given: "...the Free Church of England had worked with the Connexion with regard to the Mission, but in 1918 there was a dissension, the FCE alleging ill-treatment by the Connexion to Mr. Groves [Superintendent of the Mission] and claiming a larger representation on the Committee. This was granted to them but they were not satisfied, and withdrew completely from the Mission..."⁸⁷

The last possible hope for union between the FCE and the Connexion had vanished. But it is worth stressing that it was not because of any major doctrinal or "political" difference. This was the occasion rather than the cause. The fact of the matter was that the FCE and the CHC had moved too far apart - the Connexion into Congregationalism, and the FCE into an "Establishment" pattern which was making it virtually indistinguishable from the REC. To many of the older hard-line Connexional members, therefore, it seemed indistinguishable from the "Establishment" itself. The sharp dispute over Sierra Leone set a seal on what was already fact.

The work towards FCE and REC unity, 1901-1920/21

It is clear that one of Frank Vaughan's main aims, especially after his consecration in 1913, was the completion of the uniting of the FCE and the REC. Indeed, because of the similarity of politics, structures and worship, this was a far more realistic "ecumenical" aim than that of extending relationships with the bigger non-conformist denominations. In any case, the one had been born out of the other, and even before the turn of the century both denominations had declared an interest in seeking unity. However, an examination of the evidence shows these declarations, on times, to have been little more than lip-service.

This impression is supported by Frank Vaughan, who, in his Memories was sweepingly critical of the lack of real commitment within the leadership of both denominations:

"Bishop Eldridge was strongly opposed to it, on legal grounds. Bishop Troughton was not interested, Bishop Lander, only languidly so, having come from Congregationalism in 1903.... Bishop Eldridge had been a Free Church of England

minister, and transferred to the Reformed Episcopal Church and Bishop Gregg; one could understand his reluctance."

At the beginning of the century, Eldridge had made a genuine attempt to carry out a resolution of the General Synod of 1899 which had asked that, under Bishop Eldridge and the Bishop Primus of the FCE, a joint committee meet to discuss the possibilities of unity. But the FCE Primus at the time was Samuel Dicksee, and the evidence shows that he was actually preparing an attempt to abandon the historic episcopate in the denomination (Chapter 7). It is hardly surprising that Eldridge reported to the General Synod in June 1900: "I have been unable to make any arrangements with the Bishop of the Free Church for the holding of such meeting".⁸⁸ Following this, if indeed William Troughton was "not interested" as Vaughan said, it is because, in the early years of the century, his task was to weld together a divided denomination.

During the years 1904 and 1905, the hope for unity within both denominations found a positive outlet in the annual sessions of the "Conference of Liturgical Churches"; and this included not only the FCE and the REC but also the CHC, and representatives from the independent Free Liturgical Churches. The talks were held at Christ Church, Westminster Bridge Road, which, under the ministry of F.B. Meyer, continued to be a focal point for an ecumenical ministry.

In fact, in June 1904 the REC General Synod reacted favourably to the conference which had taken place on 10 May 1904. But the following year, there was no mention of the next session in the REC General Synod. According to the Report of Convocation in the Year Book of the FCE for 1905-06, the aim of the Conference was that of creating a "United Evangelical Liturgical Church". Certainly this would not have met the approval of the REC which was very much on the theological "right-wing" in comparison with delegates from the CHC and some of the independent Free Churches. Even so, two years later, at the General Synod of 1906, a guarded approval was given to "any steps...to secure effective union with other Free and Liturgical Churches".⁸⁹

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It was in the Summer of 1907 that the first positive move towards unity was taken by both FCE and REC. At the FCE Convocation on Tuesday afternoon, 4 June 1907, a Report was presented of a meeting of the united committee from the two Churches which had been held on 18 April 1907 at Bishop Eldridge's house in Trinity Road, Upper Tooting. The proposals resulting from the meeting were,

broadly, that the ministries of the two denominations were to be interchangeable - this was to include the possible election to office of a bishop from either denomination for the other. But clearly, Eldridge was unhappy, for at the session next morning he sent a letter with amended suggestions. Whilst the interchangeability remained the same, the new suggestions implied a tighter control of the minister or bishop concerned by the governing body of whichever Church he was serving. What Eldridge had precisely in mind is unclear, but Vaughan's comment was that Eldridge saw legal problems in the matter of unity.

In fact, the rank and file of the REC were obviously not happy with the recommendations made by the Committee which had met at Eldridge's house, for at the General Synod session on the afternoon of 11 June 1907 the proposals that Eldridge had sent by letter to FCE Convocation were presented to the Synod and were defeated. A special Committee was to be appointed to look into the matter of union with the FCE, and its findings were to be presented to the Synod the following year. In the event however, at the General Synod the following year, there is no record of discussion by the special committee.⁹⁰

Although there is no written evidence, it is evident that a considerable coolness had grown between the denominations. At the FCE Convocation meetings, 29 May - 1 June 1911, a report was made of the meeting of the Conference of Free Liturgical Churches which had taken place at Brighton the previous September. Brook Lander had taken over the Presidency from Eldridge, and the report by the Reverend W.E. Young said frankly "one left the United Conference with the impression that however desirable a union may be, the psychological moment had not yet arrived". The following year, at the General Synod of June 1912, goodwill messages were received from the FCE Convocation. Yet, whilst warm, the message from W.E. Young (Secretary) spoke of hopes of presenting "a more united front to the public". It is in the light of these indications of coolness that an enigmatic comment by Vaughan in his Memories becomes clearer: "The relations between the two Churches were perfectly friendly, tho' each regarded the other with some ill-disguised contempt".⁹¹

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According to Vaughan, "From 1914 onward there seemed to grow up in the Churches a new desire for Union..." - hardly surprising, for he had been consecrated in the REC on 25 April 1913, and he had very clear ideas about the future.

However, in Summer 1916 a joint committee was projected between the REC, the FCE, and the CHC. Together the committee was to draw up a scheme of Federal Union, and, if possible, Corporate Union. The Council and General Report to the FCE Convocation (19-22 June 1916) indicated that considerable preparation had been done for this. But the "cracks" began to appear immediately. At the REC General Synod meeting on 6 June 1916, it was stipulated that the talks were to exclude the Connexion. Although the FCE Convocation agreed to this just over two weeks later, it is hardly surprising that the account showed little enthusiasm on the part of the chairman, Brook Lander. For representatives of the Connexion were actually present at Convocation!⁹²

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From 1916 to 1922 there are no traceable REC publications, but there is an account of the presentation of the findings of the committee to the FCE Convocation meeting at Hoyland from 5-7 November 1917. The suggestions were very positive. In brief: firstly that every church should discuss the matter, and send its decisions in before the next Convocation of 1918. Secondly, there was to be a standardising of representation between the two governing bodies - this was to be as in the FCE. Thirdly, the title of the new united denomination was to be "The Episcopal Free Church". However, it was evident from Lander's Foreward to the 1917-18 FCE Year Book that he had reservations: "...we do well to consider prayerfully what we must retain, while at the same time sacrificing any non-essentials in the interest of unity." Significantly, he added: "The union must be of the Churches: it cannot be accomplished by leaders or committees."

By "leaders" almost certainly meant Vaughan and W.E. Young, General Secretary of the FCE. Evidence of the lack of unanimous support was given by Vaughan in his Memories: "the Scheme as presented by the joint Committee was not supported or approved by the Presiding Bishops of either Church". Even more frankly, and perhaps indiscreetly, he added: "...and definite opposition, some in pamphlet form, was disseminated among the Churches. ." He says no more.⁹³

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Vaughan is coy about the subsequent failure of these union discussions. His History says that "many internal changes and unforeseen events..." such as the death of Troughton on 23 May 1917 and the election of Lander as Primus "...so

engrossed the attention of both Churches, that the scheme for Union had to be left somewhat in abeyance". The unvarnished truth of that time was less palatable. On the one hand the FCE had its troubled relationship with the CHC. On the other, the REC was suffering serious internal disunity (see below).

The work of the Joint Committee continued, but was hampered by lack of communication between the denominations. By the time of the FCE Convocation on 10 and 11 June 1918, the General Synod had not yet met; and again, by the next Convocation on 30 June and 1 July 1919, the hoped-for joint meeting of the clergy and laity of both denominations had not been possible to arrange. Nevertheless, the most recent work of the Joint Committee was presented to the Convocation, and the proposed constitution of the new united denomination was discussed clause by clause. Significantly, the name was now to be "The Free Church of England, otherwise called the Reformed Episcopal Church".⁹⁴

But by the time of the June 1920 Convocation, negotiations had come to an abrupt halt. W.E. Young announced that the Joint Committee had met on 29 April 1920. Following this, the meeting of the General Synod had examined the proposed new constitution "most painstakingly prepared by the Right Rev. Bishop Vaughan", and had accepted it. However, he explained, since then it had become public knowledge that the Northern Synod of the REC wished to join the Church of England as the result of the Lambeth "Appeal to all Christian People". Therefore: "we can take no further steps..." Young then proceeded with the very revealing information: "...especially as we are assured...that the Presiding Bishop of the Reformed Episcopal Church is opposed to Union..."

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Evidently Vaughan had had a formative part in the negotiations. Equally evidently he had disagreed very strongly with Eldridge over the moves towards the Church of England (see below). It is hardly surprising therefore that, after Eldridge's sudden death on 20 March 1921, as soon as Vaughan was Presiding Bishop of the REC, the matter of Unity was put straight back on the agenda. At the General Synod of July 1921 the resolution was put that: "a Union of Co-operation and Fellowship should be forthwith established between the FCE and the REC". It was carried unanimously.⁹⁵

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The Great War - its effect on the FCE and the REC,
and the emergence of a quasi-Erastian feeling at the time

Roger Lloyd says: "In August 1914, all the plans the Church [of England] had been making were effaced for years by the outbreak of the first world war. All lives, and the patterns within which they had been lived, were disturbed, changed, and all too often ended".⁹⁶ The most obvious changes for every church were the conscription of men between the ages of 17 and 55. Thus Youth groups, Men's Associations, choirs, Sunday Schools, Vestries, Churchwardens, younger clergy, many members of congregations - all were affected. Moreover many women who had formerly remained at home now took employment. These changes made a significant difference to the strength of congregations throughout the land. Churches with elderly congregations, or those in heavy industrial areas where most of the men were in reserved occupations, suffered less.

Patterns of life changed greatly. On the East Coast of England regulations for black-out at night were particularly strict. In Skegness, St. Paul's Baptist Church was able to cover the windows, so that the normal pattern of evening services meetings was able to continue. But at the Congregationalist Church in Southernhay in Devon, for the first years of the war the problems of black-out were too great, so that services had to be moved to the afternoons.⁹⁷ Again, civilian building construction was restricted, and in the City of Bath it was noted that "all church building was stopped". Even so, in that same city, the needs for church work were more pressing than ever, for great numbers of troops were stationed there. In Park Street alone 1000 troops were billeted; and St. Mary's Parish Church responded by holding special "Church Parades" for the forces personnel. Again, there were further problems for several of the Bath churches when their clergy left to join the forces as chaplains.⁹⁸

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All these factors affected similarly the FCE and the REC. At the FCE Convocation in June 1914, Bishop Troughton had no doubt of the troubles to come: "Europe is arming as never before. The school has become the training ground for warriors in the coming struggles, weapons of defence and defiance more deadly than ever." In the REC, there was a solemn editorial in Work and Worship for January 1914: "The Dawn of 1914 finds us as a nation surrounded by many dark clouds...The senseless piling up of national armaments...political problems and perils that threaten to become more acute..."

Interestingly, in his Address Troughton saw the total disarray in the world as perhaps the beginning of the parousia. He quoted Apocalyptic writings in scripture, and commented "How near the end we may be!" It is in the light of this belief that his following advice must be seen: "As believers, our duty is plain. As children of the kingdom it is not for us to fight". In fact, the same idea of the parousia was also expressed in Work and Worship in December 1914. Under the heading "The Apocalypse of God", the author (possibly Eldridge) wrote: "Things are coming to pass today just as Our Lord said they would...To many of us it means the coming of Christ to rule upon the earth". The article ended with sympathy for the Quakers, whose pacifist convictions had made them the focus of strong criticism in the land.⁹⁹

Yet clearly the pacifism which the words of Troughton had seemed to indicate in June 1914, and the sympathy for the Quakers expressed in Work and Worship in December 1914, did not in any way indicate a resistance to arms. Amongst a number of dissenting communities there was a strong conscientious objection. The "Peculiar People" who had some 40 churches in the South East advised non-compliance when conscription came in 1916, and members suffered for their convictions.¹⁰⁰ But by contrast, within both the FCE and the REC there was strong support for "King and Country" - indeed, in the FCE, a theocratic view of monarchy is evident. Through the next years this support became almost Erastian in its strength.

Military service was seen as a Christian duty. In August 1914 Bishop Eldridge (REC) wrote: "Our duty as members of the Church of Christ, at this solemn and sad time, is clear. We must give our loyal and hearty support to all lawful authority." The same attitude was even more plainly expressed in the FCE: "Christ's Sanction for War" was the title given to an article in the FCE Diocesan Quarterly (Northern) Magazine for October 1915.

Long before the outbreak of war, the FCE Magazine had announced the death of King Edward VII with the quotation from Psalm 21. 1-6, "...Thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness; Thou settest a crown of fine gold upon his head." This somewhat Theocratic impression was re-inforced in Troughton's sober Convocation Address of June 1914: "Never have our prayers for the High Court of Parliament been more fervent than today, and that wisdom might be given to enact such laws, as should be for the good of the Church, the safety, honour and welfare of our Sovereign and his dominions..."

But the intensely pro-"Establishment" tone of the FCE was less evident in the REC. In Work and Worship for January 1915, one writer was very critical of the clerical jingoism of that time: "From many pulpits today the note of vindication and justification of our cause in the war gets rather tiresome" Nevertheless, the support of the REC for King and Country was absolute; and the writer continued by encouraging all who wished to fight, but for various reasons were unable to join with the others: "But we cannot all fight for our country... Some must continue to supply her material needs; some must educate and train her people...some are needed to heal and help the stricken and sorrowful..."¹⁰¹

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Churches in both denominations set aside times each week for special services to pray for victory.

Once more, in the FCE, the tone was very firm, and very "Establishment". During the latter part of 1914, at Emmanuel, Saltley, two special weekday services were held every week. At Hoyland there was a hope expressed that many would "respond to the call of our King and Country". At the same time, both Oswaldtwistle and Tottington gave strong support to the allied cause; and at Crowborough in October 1914, hopes were expressed that "God may give victory to the allies". At Convocation in June 1915, Troughton beat a very nationalistic tattoo: "It was our national honour that was at stake, our regard for treaties, and the cry of the weak and the invaded...Most nobly and most willingly have our churches responded to the call 'Your King and Country need you'".¹⁰²

In the REC, whilst the tone of official denominational pronouncements were less nationalistic than in the FCE, by the late Summer of 1914, many of the churches had organised special services or prayer meetings each week. Several of the churches did more. By August 1914, Fleetwood had prayer meetings twice weekly, as did St. Jude's, Balham. Carshalton was actually holding a prayer meeting every evening; and in a tradition where churches were not usually open to the public daily, it is interesting to see that in the Autumn of that year, the church at Wigan was open for private prayer from 10 a.m. every day.¹⁰³

Within the FCE a militancy of official support for King and Country continued; and it is interesting to see that the FCE clearly saw itself as part of an Establishment, in which King, Parliament, Armed Forces, Countrymen and churches

were all bound into one. Whilst other non-conformist denominations may well have expressed support for "King and Country", the Erastian tone of some of the words and pronouncements within the FCE are something of a surprise. Indeed, in January 1915, the editor of the denominational magazine re-printed an article "The Ethics of War" which was a distinguished and carefully worded apologetic for the use of force as a last resort. But the author was the Bishop of Carlisle. "Dissent" as an anti-Establishment concept seemed very far away.¹⁰⁴

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The practical difficulties for the churches were many - as they were for all denominations. There were many public fears of attack from the air, and in January 1915, the FCE church at Hoyland spoke movingly of the Zeppelin raids on Scarborough, Hartlepool and Whitby. But there were other problems for places like Broadstairs on the Kent coast, for these were frequently shelled from the enemy occupied coast of France and Belgium. Many were evacuated from the town, and of the two churches closed "for the duration", one was Christ Church FCE in Osborne Road - the newly consecrated permanent church building.¹⁰⁵

Just over the other side of the Thames estuary, at Leigh-on-Sea, the loss of many churchmen seriously affected the services at Christ Church REC. Again, as a strategically placed coastal town, a blackout had been imposed at night to attempt to avoid the Zeppelin raids. Times of weekday services and meetings had been moved to the hours of daylight. Sunday service times had been preserved, but consequently: "the darkened streets account for the absence of many of our usual evening congregation." Even in the North West the problems of the coastal communities were considerable. St. Paul's REC, Fleetwood reported: "the fishing industry being almost at a standstill...there is much distress in the town, especially among the poor". But it was not only the coastal churches which had problems. Hemel Hempstead was also a military area, and the black-out meant that the REC evening service had to move to 3.30 p.m.¹⁰⁶

Particularly notable in the reports from both denominations was the great number of men who were serving in the armed forces. The effect on church life was very marked.

From the FCE, there were numerous reports of the difficulties caused. In April 1915, Emmanuel, Saltley wrote of the problems for the Sunday School where a number of the teachers were serving in the armed forces. In the Convocation of

June 1918, similar problems were reported because of the loss of men from Teddington, Walsall, Saltley, and the Ormond Street Mission nearby (from here alone, 100 men were away).¹⁰⁷

During the earlier part of 1915, Work and Worship published a monthly "Roll of Honour" for REC members serving in the forces. This list also included those who had died in active service. The names of serving men included Sunday School members and teachers, Vestrymen, choir members, and many others. By March 1915, it was recorded that Adlington had 18 men in the forces; Eccles 15; Warrington 24; and Workington 29. By April, Trinity Southend had lost 15 men to the forces. By July 1915, the number from Fleetwood was 80. Again, fighting took its toll; and from the church at Liscard, in June 1915, it was recorded that 4 men had been killed and 2 injured. But there were also more mundane problems. In the same June edition of Work and Worship, it was admitted that the next General Synod, soon to take place, was not likely to be well attended "Owing to the war, and the suspension of many railway facilities." ¹⁰⁸

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The massive movement of troops frequently involved property being commandeered "for the duration", and sometimes social facilities were lacking. Again, there was a shortage of places for parade services. Churches of the FCE stepped in where needed with much practical help. At Willesborough, in February 1915, 1000 soldiers were stationed in the town whilst waiting to go over to France. Many were billeted in houses, others were under canvas. When a storm wrecked mess tents that November, Christ Church was actually cleared to serve as a mess hall until better weather arrived. In Morecambe, during 1915, 5000 soldiers were billeted in the town for training. An extra "Soldiers' Service" was held each Sunday afternoon. Again, at Crowborough where many soldiers were camped, it was announced at the Convocation of 1915 that "a splendid work is being done amongst the soldiers...in the neighbourhood".

The congregations of the REC were similarly practical in their help. At Lewes in Sussex, over 10,000 recruits had been billeted on what was still a small town. The hired hall that was being used by the new REC congregation in Autumn 1914 was taken over by the army, so that the congregation had to move to a smaller hall at the YMCA. Nevertheless, church members had been busy with collections for the Red Cross, and a regular working party making garments for the wounded. In November 1914, it was reported that Christ Church REC in

Aldershot had thrown open its schoolroom, providing games, refreshments, and writing materials for the soldiers in the town. At Gunnersbury in North West London, a church working party was making garments for the local dependents of soldiers and sailors. In December 1915, the church correspondent from the REC at Carshalton recorded that "from two to three battalions of troops have been billeted in this district". At the time, Carshalton was still little more than a large semi-rural village; but a special mission service was being held for the troops each Friday evening at 8 o'clock. ¹⁰⁹

A considerable problem for the country was that of the great numbers invalided from the Front. Many temporary military hospitals were established, and one of the practical needs was for entertainments to be provided. In Autumn 1915, St. John's FCE at Tottington had entertained 100 wounded soldiers from the local military hospital to tea and supper at the church's school. In August 1915 some particularly practical thinking at Christ Church REC, Tue Brook in Liverpool, was recorded. At the Sunday School anniversary on 18 July, "Instead of bringing flowers to the afternoon service, the children brought eggs". Together with others given by the congregation, the total number of 159 eggs was taken the next day to the Military Hospital at Alder Hey for the wounded soldiers.¹¹⁰

These were just a few of the very many stories of practical help for the war effort at the time. But it is also worth remembering that both the FCE and the REC were tiny by comparison with other non-conformist denominations; moreover, not only were the churches generally small, but they were also often situated in the less well-off areas of the towns and villages that they served. Nevertheless, it is evident that the congregations of the two denominations were greatly involved in both the the social and religious needs that the war had brought to what had suddenly become a very fluid population.

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After the end of the war in November 1918, patterns of life had been changed. Moreover, although there is no documentary evidence, it is possible to see that the ultimate losses of Wycliffe Church at Ashton-in-Makerfield and St. Luke's Mission in Blackpool were very probably attributable to the problems created by the massive social upheavals of the Great War. Principally amongst these would have been the shortage of young and middle-aged men to run Vestries and organisations. In the case of Blackpool, the wartime financial shortages for

most church families would have meant that the next step of finding a suitable church site was simply never taken.

Even by the time of the FCE Convocation in June 1920, it is clear from the "Council and General Report" and from the Primus' Foreward to the Year Book, 1920-21, that the life of the country had still not returned to normal. It was only 12 months or less since many men had been "de-mobbed". Again, hundreds of thousands had been injured or killed, so that few households in the country were not bereaved or somehow scarred. A year later, in June 1921, in his Presidential Address to the General Synod of the REC, Vaughan put his finger firmly on some of the reasons for what was still a lack of what would once have been considered "normality" in the way of life of the Country:

"We have emerged from the whirlpool - but things have changed...men do not think in the same way: the sense of values and proportion appears to have been affected: years of familiarity with tragedy and death..."

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The practical problems for the denominations had been many: lighting restrictions, blackout, civilian communications, transport, financial restriction, and the shortage of "non-essential" facilities like printing and paper supplies. But although not fatally damaged by these, nor by radical social changes, yet the growth of both the FCE and the REC had stopped at 1914. The pattern from there on had been one of maintenance. The following years saw the sort of gradual advance that had been seen from 1901 to 1914. Certainly the Union of the FCE and the REC in 1927 was to be a high point in the life-times of both denominations. But what was not to change was the conviction of divine guidance for the allies, and the strong support for "King and Country" that had emerged in 1914.

At the FCE Convocation in June 1919, a special resolution prayed that: "in the future, the Divine blessing resting upon His Majesty the King and the Empire, may be so recognised as that the country shall be characterised by the righteousness which exalteth a nation..."¹¹¹

Although the REC had seemed less militantly pro-Establishment than that of the FCE during the war, there was still a quasi-Erastian feeling to some of the denominational business of the time. In December 1914 Eldridge ordered all REC churches to observe the "National Day of Humiliation and Intercession" on the first Sunday of the New Year. Moreover, later, in May 1915, there was equally

no doubt about publishing an article in Work and Worship, "The War and the Nation". Yet the writer of the article was the Archbishop of York whose authority had so firmly been rejected in past years. Again, at the General Synod of June 1916, following the loss of Kitchener and his staff, a telegram of sympathy was ordered to be sent to the King.

Even after the war in June 1921, the General Synod sent a message of loyal support to the King from the REC, praying: "that the clouds now overshadowing the Empire may be speedily dispersed". From 1924 onwards, each FCE Convocation has sent a "message of loyal and dutiful support" to the monarch - a custom that still continues. Yet this "Establishment" feeling was essentially a legacy of the Great War, and one which has not quite disappeared, even 80 years on.¹¹²

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Financial problems of the FCE and REC: 1901 - 1920/21

There were several major factors within the lives of the two Churches at this time which were not shared by the larger non-conformist denominations.

Principal amongst these was a continuing and disabling financial hardship. A few churches prospered, but the outreach of the denominations was crippled at times simply because most churches could not, or would not make the required contributions to the General funds. Indeed, the financial amounts involved in the main accounts of both denominations were tiny.

The FCE: 1901-1914

In the 1901 accounts the "Treasurer's Account" dealt with publications, travelling for delegates to Convocation, the expenditure on the Convocation itself, expenses for the officers of the denomination, sundries, and also the printing needed. The total amount for the year was just £42-0s-1d, and after outgoings, the balance-in-hand stood at £24-1s-7d. The Sustentation Fund was stronger, with a total of £62-12s-0d. After grants had been made, £37-8s-0d was the balance in hand. But considering the fact that in 1901 these moneys had had to support the central administration for a country-wide denomination of 20 congregations, the financial weakness at the centre was very evident.¹¹³

By 1909, the financial needs had reached crisis point. Many calls had been made upon the General Fund because of the administrative and legal costs involved in creating the Central FCE Trust (see below). At Convocation in June 1909, the Accounts showed that in the General Fund, out of a year's total of £31-7s-3d, the balance left in hand was just £1-16s-7½d. The Sustentation Fund had fared better with a total flow of £50-3s-3d for the year, and a balance in hand of £20-5s-3d. But the point was that the calls which were being made upon the General Fund simply could not be met. In fact, two emergency collections had to be taken from the delegates towards the General Fund. This raised £4-14s-0d, but such reactive measures were utterly unsatisfactory.

At the morning session of Wednesday 9 June 1909 a suggestion from the Synod of the Northern Diocese was discussed. It was resolved that churches might employ any one of three methods for raising monies for the General Fund. Either they might levey a collection of 1/- yearly from regular members; or 2½% of the total yearly church income might be given; or an annual collection might be taken of not less than £2. Finally, in order to clarify financial structures,

from that year onwards there were to be three separate bank accounts: the General Fund, the Sustentation Fund and the Extension Fund.¹¹⁴

Matters improved for the time. But by June 1914 the situation was worse than before, for although the balance in the Sustentation Fund stood at £27-0s-1d, the General Fund showed a deficit of £1-4s-4d. In their Diocesan Reports both the Northern and Diocesan Secretaries made strong appeals for more loyalty towards the needs of the denomination. As A.V. Bland of the Northern Diocese said: "How can we hope to extend when we have no funds for extension work". W.E. Young of the Southern Diocese asked frankly: "Are you giving your full share of the work financially? This is a most serious question."¹¹⁵

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The reluctance to support an administrative structure, from which many in the pews probably felt remote, is understandable. But even for a very special occasion like the Golden Jubilee of the foundation of the FCE in 1913 with the holding of the Convocation at Spa Fields Chapel, the churches seemed unable to raise any enthusiasm. In December 1910, a major appeal was launched for the sum of £1000 "...as the 'Jubilee Effort', with which the work of the Church might be consolidated and extended." But despite a resolution of Convocation in 1912 that every church contribute one Sunday's collection, there is no evidence that the Jubilee Appeal was ever met. Indeed, the 1912/13 accounts showed the Sustentation balance at £27-0s-1d, and that of the General Fund at £4-7s-6d.¹¹⁶

Yet the apparent failure of the Jubilee Appeal and the serious state of the denominational Accounts were not in any way an accurate picture of the way that a number of the churches were managing financially during the years 1901-1914. Indeed it is worth repeating that the overall condition of the denomination was not necessarily demonstrated in all its churches where, sometimes, the Vestry accounts showed sums which were very large. In May 1909, it was published that the annual income for St. John's, Tottington the previous year had been no less than £503-16s-11d. In Teddington, during the years 1900-1902, financial problems were such that part of the minister's stipend had to be raised by special collection. Nevertheless, with a new minister, a Sale of Work in 1905 resulted in £218 towards the Church House. In June 1910, the FCE Magazine reported that the Sunday School Anniversary at Oswaldtwistle had raised £100 in a single day. Again, the FCE Year Book for 1914-15 reported that the total income for the previous year at Great Harwood was £334.¹¹⁷

But, one of the most striking indications of the way in which the chronic shortage of money was enfeebling the FCE was provided by the inability even to pay for the printing of the two important new pamphlets by the Reverend G. Hugh Jones in June 1914: How to prepare for Holy Orders in the FCE, and The Free Church of England: Its Doctrine and Ecclesiastical polity (see above).

Eventually Doctrine and Ecclesiastical Polity had to be published in 1916 as the October edition of the Free Church of England Diocesan Quarterly Magazine. By the midsummer of 1914 times were obviously very hard indeed.¹¹⁸

FCE 1914 - 1920.

The war years were very difficult ones for a number of the churches; and in addition, the great need for money at the centre of the denomination continued. In the editorial column of the FCE Magazine in both April and May 1915, appeals were made for contributions to the General Fund, just to meet the necessary expenses of Convocation. Some Vestries had even objected to paying the rail fares for their clergy to travel to Convocation, and the editor was obliged to quote from the Canons to show their responsibilities.¹¹⁹

In his "Council and General Report", the Reverend W.E. Young highlighted the need for a financial priority:

"If I were asked what are the burning questions, from a business point of view....I should answer without hesitation: 1st. The provision of future ministers for our churches...GIVE US MEN AND THEY WILL MAKE THEIR OWN CHURCHES AND EXTEND THE FCE. 2nd. The establishment of a Central Fund to assist in the preliminary charges incident to the opening up of new work."

The Accounts for June 1915 provided graphic justification for Young's words, for the General Fund, having had a total flow of £46-3s-5d, was actually spent out completely. The situation at ground level seemed to have changed little since the days when Bishop Newman had made the appeal for "Men and Money".¹²⁰

One of the most serious financial casualties at this time was the FCE Magazine which ceased publication in December 1915. The editorial of November 1915 blamed this on increased costs of production, but also the lack of interest in the churches. The final editorial pointed out that, of the 28 churches, 20 neither took the magazine nor contributed to it. The FCE Diocesan Quarterly Magazine also ceased publication at the end of 1916. Once again, it is worth noting the intensely independent nature of so many of the congregations.¹²¹

Although the end of the war made significant sociological changes to the life of the churches, the poverty at the centre of the FCE remained. By June 1920, the total income for the General Fund had been £29-2s-0d, and the balance to start the new financial year was £8-14s-3d. The Sustentation Fund had a balance of just 17s-8d out of a total cash flow of £54-4s-8d.¹²² By contrast, FCE mission contributions were significantly better. Nevertheless, the overall picture of the denomination in 1920 was still one of poverty - little change since 1863!

[For a strange "unaccounted" windfall to the FCE of £5000 in 1915, see below.]

The REC, 1901 - 1914

Through the years of this period, the financial picture of the REC was very much the same as that of the FCE - a persistent and chronic shortage of money for most of the churches, and a central denominational administration which was frequently prevented from working to proper effect by the lack of money.

Although the accounts books probably disappeared in a fire at the denominational Solicitors, Spain Bros., during the London blitz (see note 137), Frank Gregg's own copy of the printed Reports of General Synod actually included the main denominational accounts, 1894-1916; so it is still possible to re-create a picture of the finances of the denomination to 1916. No complete collection has been traced to date (1994).

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In June 1901 when the finances for the previous year were reviewed by Synod, the main REC account was the "Sustentation Fund". There were also four other small accounts: the "College and Extension Fund" (which had remained frozen since the closure of Bishop Renny's Theological College = £65-4s-6d); the "Publication Account" (£26-15s-9d); "Our Daily Prayer Union" (£10-2s-3d); and the "Punjab Mission Account" (£22-11s-6d).

The Sustentation account was used for most of the main denominational outlets: these included grants to churches in need, the Presiding Bishop's Honorarium (£20 p.a.), printing, Officers' expenses, and various travelling expenses. The total cash-flow through the previous year stood at £136-9s-3½d; and after payments had been made, the balance-in-hand stood at £68-10s-9½d. Even so,

although the finances may have been a little stronger than those of the FCE, like its sister denomination, the REC was living "from hand to mouth".¹²³

The first obvious "pressure-points" touched by financial shortage at this time were publications. At the Synod of June 1903, it was decided that the hoped-for revision of the Prayer Book simply could not be afforded. However, a very small new "Suspense Account" had been created as a contingency fund; and when it was decided the following year that the denomination would proceed with the new revised Book, the proceeds of this account were put towards publication. That being done, the next casualty was the denominational magazine itself; and Work and Worship ceased publication from January 1905 until January 1906. Although 1905 General Synod spoke of a lack of support by many of the churches, the main reason was finance; for with a better financial base, the journal would simply have re-formed itself, improved denominational interest through an advertising drive, and waited for better days. But, in fact, finances were generally in a poor state by 1905, for in the same meeting of Synod, Eldridge actually refused at first to take the voted honorarium for his work.¹²⁴

By June 1906, the total annual cash flow in the Sustentation Fund had fallen to £89-5s-7d with a balance of £25-7s-4d. This evidently caused some alarm, for in the January 1907 edition of Work and Worship, "A Reformed Churchman" offered £5 if 99 others did the same before 31 December 1907 - very much the same sort of device that Bishop Gregg had used in the RCE in the 1880s. Together with this, at the General Synod that June the constitution of the accounts was altered so that the "Sustentation Fund" was re-named the "Sustentation and Home Mission Fund" as a public reminder of its basic aim. Even so, the Synod still rejected the proposal that all future churches of the REC remit 5% of offertories to the new fund (S&HMF). By 1908, the S&HMF showed a healthier total of £270-5s-7d (balance, £70-19s-9d), but, clearly, the hopes of "A Reformed Churchman" were no more successful than had been those of Bishop Gregg 20 years before.¹²⁵

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By June 1913, following the costs of the consecration of Frank Vaughan, "the smallest balance-in-hand yet known" stood at precisely 14/3d (total cash-flow, £138-4s-3d). The Reverend Norman Chivers was appointed as Organising Secretary for the S&HMF, to travel around the REC churches to appeal for support. In July plans were announced for a "Thousand pounds Sustentation Fund", and in an interview for the journal, Norman Chivers explained that this was, hopefully,

to be gained in addition to the regular giving of the churches. The main aims of the fund were firstly to give adequate support to the episcopate; secondly to create a Church Estates Trust Fund (to wipe out existing property debts); and finally, to endow a new college for REC ministers and church workers.

In the wake of this, one month later "Reformed Episcopalian" promised £20 per annum for four years if 49 others would do likewise. Yet, in truth, the scheme was unrealistic, for the denomination had set itself far too ambitious a set of projects; it had also made too large a claim on the loyalties of a membership that was quite often from the less wealthy middle class, or more often, artisan. It was evident that, by September, the response hoped-for was simply not being made. In October, "Reformed Episcopalian" claimed that the published figures might be shared by people. His offer to extend the deadline for his contribution by a further six months had the ring of desperation about it.¹²⁶

The scheme was not a success; and in the June edition, there was a forthright rebuke in the column "From our point of view", probably by Eldridge himself. With penetrating insight, it repeated a theme he had taken before - that of the innate independency of the congregations. "...The isolation of the churches naturally leads to independence of action and an almost selfish regard of local interests, and...we need to remember we are parts of a whole." In fact, at the General Synod of June 1914 the treasurer recommended that "certain retrenchments..." be made.¹²⁷ But, just under eight weeks later, all plans were put into doubt; for by midnight on 4/5 August, the Country was at War.

REC 1914-1921

The social disruption of the country, and the instability that was imposed upon most of the congregations meant that it was virtually impossible for the REC to take any major financial initiatives. The result was that by the June of 1916, financial shortages at the centre of the denomination were again very obvious, and the accounts for 1915-16 show a total cash flow of £78-6s-8d, with a balance-in-hand of £21-10s-9d. Again, several churches found it very difficult to provide stipends for their clergy. At Barnstaple, for the year 1914-1915, the Reverend J. Dean received no more than £20. As Eldridge had commented at General Synod of June 1915: "How he lives is a puzzle..." Yet, as with the FCE, poverty was not universal. By way of contrast, Eldridge referred to Liscard, "which has never been in a happier or more prosperous condition".¹²⁸

Details of REC finances after June 1916 are difficult to find because of a lack of sources. Nevertheless, it is clear that financial problems continued, especially in 1917 when there was a costly legal action over the attempt by the Minister, Wardens and Trustees of Trinity, Southend, to take the buildings and the congregation to the Established Church (see below).

Vaughan tells bitterly how their "few funds" had to be merged into a "Trinity Church Defence Fund". Emergency appeals to the REC churches produced a little response, but the wealthy church at Exmouth refused to make any contribution. The Judgement for "the Attorney-General v. Ingram and others" was delivered by Mr. Justice Younger on 17 December 1917. It restrained the transfer of the property (see further below). Nevertheless, it is clear that those few funds which the denomination still had in 1917 had been taken by this costly action. Even at the General Synod of June 1921, it was reported that "an overdraft on the sustentation fund was reduced by promises amounting to £17-17s." The financial situation of the REC was more serious than for many years.¹²⁹

Some brief thoughts and comparisons

Whilst examining the poverty of both the FCE and the REC during the period 1901 to 1920, it is worth noting that this was not the experience of the larger non-conformist denominations. Ernest Payne notes: "Money was more plentiful in Nonconformist pockets, and at the turn of the century, Methodists, Baptists, and Congregationalists were all able to raise large central funds". An example of this may be seen in the foundation of Mansfield College, Oxford; not only were the endowments of Spring Hill College transferred to Mansfield, but no less than £50,000 was collected at special meetings throughout the country.¹³⁰

By contrast, when G. Hugh Jones' two pamphlets were presented to the 1914 FCE Convocation, there was no money to print them. In the REC, when Trinity, Southend, was about to be taken into the Established Church in 1917, there was no adequate fund to pay the legal costs for such an emergency. Vaughan's bitterness over the matter is understandable. But in the last analysis these failures in both the FCE and the REC were not only because of the congregational self-centredness of such churches as Exmouth, but also because the majority of both sets of congregations were just too poor.

The problems of independent Trusts in the FCE and the REC:
1901-1920/21

For many non-conformist churches in the 19th century, the system of closely organised local Trusts was an obvious one. There was no large body like the Ecclesiastical Commissioners to take overall responsibility - especially in the case of locally focussed Congregationalist churches, and the smaller Methodist groups. J.W. Grant says: "The buildings used for Nonconformist worship were commonly provided with trust deeds limiting their use to pastors who 'shall hold, teach, preach, and maintain the doctrines set forth in the schedule hereto.'" Grant quotes R.W. Dale's A Manual of Congregational Principles, and his quotation indicates clearly the two focal-points of actual power - the trust itself and the trustees.¹³¹

A number of smaller denominations suffered problems with trusts, but the closeness of the FCE and the REC to the Church of England made for very special problems. Wherever possible, Trustees were encouraged to specify the denomination in their Deed, in order that the denomination might not change with a change of Trustees. Even so, relationships between some Trusts and the parent denomination was frequently a troubled one. To combat these problems, in 1908 the FCE created its "Central Board of Trustees". This meant that, like the Church Commissioners of England, property was actually legally tied in to the denomination. But this was not always possible, and both denominations suffered a succession of Trust problems taking both time and money to solve. They were also a serious weakening factor within the fabric of the denominations.

A few "proprietary" chapels survive within the Established Church. The most obvious examples are St. John's, Downshire Hill in North London, and St. Mary's, Castle Street, in Reading. St. John's was a "proprietary chapel", founded in 1823, and governed by a group of private trustees. St. Mary's was, and is, a privately owned church, governed by its trustees. Its foundation was in 1796, and its aim was to maintain a strong evangelical presence in the town. But the relationship of these churches to the diocese and to the bishop has traditionally been a very delicate one. On one occasion, at least, within the past 30 years, serious thought was given at Reading to the calling of a minister from outside the Anglican Church - their right in law. Indeed, recently, following the ordination of women to the priesthood in the earlier part of 1994, St. Mary's and its incumbent, the Reverend Dr. David Samuel, have withdrawn from the jurisdiction of both the diocese of Oxford and the

Established Church - again, their right in law. Other surviving Anglican proprietary chapels include Emmanuel, Wimbledon, Trinity Church, Buxton, St. Thomas the Martyr, Newcastle, Christ Church, Westbourne (Bournemouth), St. James, Ryde (Isle of Wight), and Christ Church, Bath.¹³²

But for both the FCE and the REC there was inherent instability in the system, for their style was virtually indistinguishable from that of low-church Anglicanism - particularly at places like St. Mary's, Reading. Therefore, if Trust Deeds were sufficiently open, and if the trustees agreed that a church might be moved to the jurisdiction of the local Anglican diocese, then it might be done - and was done on many occasions. The only safeguard was for the Trust to name the denomination specifically within its Deed.

Trusts and the FCE 1901-1920/21

It was the Trust dispute at Teddington which made it clear to the FCE that a permanent solution had to be found to the insecurity of independent trusts. A brief examination of this dispute also shows how insecure any church could be where there was an "ambiguity" in the background of the church, and its Trust.

The Reverend T. H. Stewart Perfect was appointed as incumbent to a divided Christ Church in April 1894. There was a forceful group who had felt that Sugden's "Establishment style" in services was not sufficiently loyal to that of the FCE. On the other hand, there were many who held it to be important that there should be virtually no difference at all between the worship of Christ Church and that of low church Anglicanism. Indeed, its founders in 1864 had at first hoped that it might be an evangelical parish of the diocese of London. Thus, at Teddington there was a confusion of identities from the start.¹³³

In fact, Perfect's loyalties were drawn more and more towards the Established Church, and in October 1902 he let it be known that he could no longer remain a Presbyter of the FCE. He consequently announced his intention to resign, and he agreed with the Vestry that his farewell sermons would be preached on 14 December. On 6 November 1902, however, the Vestry discussed an alternative suggestion made by Perfect - that Christ Church move to the Established Church.¹³⁴ Clearly the Trust itself was not tied to the FCE.

A circular to members announced a meeting of Seatholders on Monday 24 November, but at that meeting feelings were divided. It was agreed that members of the

congregation would be sent a confidential letter which would set out the present debate simply, at the same time explaining that the original intention of the founders had been for the Christ Church to be within the Church of England. This was also to contain a ballot section.¹³⁵

In fact the ballot showed 100 for severance from the FCE, and 61 against. But at a special meeting on Monday 5 January 1903, the trustees were quite clear that the majority in the vote was far too small for them to withdraw from the FCE. Consequently, the church remained with the FCE. Perfect received a generous "testimonial" of £84-16s-3d, and Richard Brook Lander accepted the living on 14 May 1903. But the events themselves show clearly how easy it was for a church which had a very similar style to that of the Established Church to move across the line - especially if the trustees themselves were insufficiently firm in their convictions, and if the Trust Deeds themselves were not firmly anchored into the FCE by name.¹³⁶

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During the years 1901-20, other trust problems occurred at Putney (1902-14); Crowborough (1905-17); Stapleford (1906); Broadstairs (1907-14); Morecambe (1908-17); Chorlton-cum-Hardy (1909-14); Accrington (1909-1914); Walsall (1909-1910); Emmanuel, Glasgow (1910); Emmanuel, Saltley (1910 and 1920); Exeter (1910); Leicester (1912-1914); Sheffield (1909-10); Trinity, Glasgow (1914-18); and Middlesbrough (1916).¹³⁷

In an attempt to stop the continual problems over trust disputes and changes, the "Central Board of Trustees" was created by resolution of the Convocation of 1908. The intention was that all future properties be vested in it, and that when possible, existing trusts might gradually be transferred. This would be run by principal office holders of the denomination, "ex-officio", and so would give the same sort of stability to the ownership of properties that there was in the Established Church, or in the main centrally organised non-conformist denominations. It was also decided to include a new section into each Annual Convocation at which trusts and trust deeds could be discussed - and the result was a flood of new work every year for the next nine or ten years.¹³⁸

From that year onwards, the annual Convocation Reports show a concerted effort to get as many independent trusts as possible conveyed to the new Central Trust. Corroborative evidence of settlement on a number of properties during

the approximate period of 1912-19 is provided by the manuscript Index of Deeds and Documents. Nevertheless, the matter was both complicated and costly; and despite the good management and skill of the Reverend A.V. Bland, the General Secretary, by 1910 matters were still not satisfactory. Bland told Convocation that although causes had been added in the past from time to time they had been lost: "on account of either disputed Titles or through Mortgages being suddenly called in which were not replaced in time to save the property". He laid the very firm warning before them as to the financial costs involved.¹³⁹

The cost was only too obvious to the Convocation of May/June 1911, for amongst the Trust business was the news that the conveyancing of the Broadstairs deeds to the Central Trust had involved "very considerable litigation, and an appeal to the Charity Commissioners". Again, the records of the Convocations show a welter of other trust problems and negotiations in succeeding years. But most costly of all, in 1914 it was announced that important legal work had had to be carried out on the deeds of the Central Trust itself. By this it was made clear that Convocation had the power to appoint and remove trustees. It also emphasised the legal power of Convocation: "Property therefore placed in Trust with the Central Trust is really placed in Trust with the Convocation, whose representatives the Central Trustees are." This refinement, however, had taken the advice of a KC - a very expensive business for a very poor denomination.¹⁴⁰

But there were many more expenses to be borne at this time, especially over such problems as those at the church in Leicester - which actually left the denomination in early 1914. In fact, at one stage, the church Vestry had been negotiating with the FCE authorities for an interest-free loan of £500.¹⁴¹ And it is in the light of these many and very considerable financial needs and outgoings that a strange problem over a disappearing benefaction may be solved.

The enigma of the £5000 Appeal

It is clear that the 1913 FCE Jubilee Appeal for £1000 had not been successful. The financial problems at the heart of the denomination remained severe, right through until 1920, and beyond. Yet by the early part of 1915, the denomination had enjoyed a substantial "windfall", for in his "Council and General Report", the General Secretary, the Reverend W.E. Young made the following announcement:

"As you well know, for years the FCE has been making efforts to raise a sum of £5000 for extension work. I am happy to state that, through the goodness of

God, during the past year more than this sum has come to us, so that in all our hearts today there ought to be a song of thankfulness and praise".

It is curious however, that there had been no real mention of this appeal in either the Year Book or the FCE Magazine before this time. Moreover, the Reports of the Synods of both February and May made no mention of the monies - neither did the short Report of Convocation in the July edition of the magazine. What is even more curious is that, at Convocation, there is no record of any other mention of this very considerable success by either of the bishops. Again, the General Secretary continued in his Report to speak of the "burning issues" for the FCE as he saw them - the continuing need for clergy and money. Indeed, the published accounts in succeeding years made no mention of such a sum.¹⁴²

The likelihood is that the money was never put to a mainstream Account for the general use of the churches of the FCE, and that therefore it was never seen as necessary to publish accounts. In his acknowledgement, Young says the minimum: "...during the past year more than this sum has come to us"...

Young's words would seem to indicate that the sum of over £5000 was made up, not through very many contribution from the churches countrywide (this would have involved a far more publicised appeal), but probably from one or two major benefactors. This benefaction may well have been through Young's own social and business contacts. Certainly this would account for the fact that it was Young himself, and not one of the bishops, who spoke of the matter at Convocation.

Although he remained as Brook Lander's curate at Teddington throughout the Great War, his position was an honorary one. As he frequently remarked in his Reports, his wide-spread war work did not allow him to spend the time he wished on the work of the denomination. In fact that work ultimately earned him the award of the OBE in the early 1920s. Certainly, the inherited tradition amongst the older members of the denomination is that of a most able businessman who was also adept at dealing with people; one even suggested that he was involved in munitions. In this light, it is not difficult to imagine him using his contacts to gain a major benefaction. Further, the style of the man was such that he would hardly have let it be frittered away by being spread thinly amongst many churches. But he would have permitted it to be used to solve the very pressing problem of those times: the "weeping sore" of the trust disputes.

To establish exactly what happened is virtually impossible. All those involved in negotiations have long been dead - and clearly it was regarded as being a matter for the leadership only. In addition to this, it seems likely that most of the documentation involved was amongst that destroyed in the fire bomb attack at Spain Bros. during the Second War (see note 137). But although there is no written or clear evidence, it is possible to see that a large part of these moneys must have been involved in the legal costs and the compensations involved in the considerable number of trust negotiations of the time.

Certainly the leaders of the FCE may not have seen the money as a matter for open discussion by the Convocation, for this would only have opened the doors to numerous claims by the churches and organisations. The negative side of an essentially congregationalist system meant that the independent-minded churches were very self-centred. To many of the laity and clergy involved, only their church with its trust was central to their vision. The problems of another trust on the other side of the country would have elicited little sympathy: and yet, the continued existence of the denomination as a viable unit depended on such a wider vision.

Following the announcement of the benefaction in 1915, there was work still to be done, especially at Middlesbrough (1916), Morecambe (1917), and Emmanuel, Alum Rock, Saltley in 1920. But the main bulk of work on the Trusts was over, and the Central Trust was securely established and working.

Trusts and the REC 1901-1920/21

Information about the Trusts of the REC churches at this time is more difficult to find. Firstly, neither the Reports of General Synod nor the denominational magazine Work and Worship tended to carry such detail as a matter of course. Secondly, it is also evident that, although the REC made the attempt to set up a central "Board of Trustees" in 1910, the attempt probably failed. Thus, the denomination does not seem to have had a formally constituted Central Trust for its properties as a part of the Synodical structure of the denomination during these years. As in the FCE, it did have the arrangement whereby certain churches were said to be "put in trust for the REC". Here, the REC was specifically mentioned within the Trust Deed itself. But like the FCE, the REC experienced trust problems.

As in the FCE, this period saw a number of churches which left the denomination because their Trusts were either open, or not tied sufficiently strongly into the REC. Again, as with the FCE, problems were very often compounded by other factors - including that of poverty, or simply a failing congregation. Congregations which experienced Trust problems and failed or left the REC during the earlier years of the century, and which did not have a Trust secured to the denomination, included: Birkenhead (1901); Manor Park (1902/3); Furrough Cross, Torquay (1903); and Yeovil (1908-13).

In 1908, the FCE Convocation had addressed the problem by the creation of the FCE "Central Trust". At the REC General Synod of June 1910, the Reverend Dr. Naish proposed a "Central Board of Trustees", "with perpetual succession, in whom the property of the Church may be vested from time to time". The motion was carried unanimously; but it is evident that further political matters were involved. The following proposal - "That all Trust Deeds of the RE churches, where not held as security for mortgages or other charges upon the said properties be deposited with the Registrar of the Church for safe keeping" - was "lost by a large majority, only four votes being given for it". It is obvious that such strong feeling together with probably considerable suspicion would make the creation of a proper Central Trust impossible at that stage.

Subsequent Reports of General Synod show no evidence of a "Central Board" having been implemented.¹⁴³ Thus, it is clear that by 1910, the problems to be solved in the matter of the Trusts within the aegis of the REC were two-fold. Firstly there was not sufficient money to purchase land and property for the denomination, but secondly, there was a strong internal political dimension which made the matter doubly difficult.

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Trust problems continued. In 1912, Bishop Eldridge travelled up to Workington to consecrate the new building for Christ Church, only to find that the property had not been put into a Trust for the REC as had been promised. Despite the promise of church officials to rectify the matter, the place remained under an open Trust and left the denomination in 1922. Further, in the New Year of 1913, there were serious trust problems at Gunnersbury. During the winter of 1912/13, after financial difficulties, the Trustees decided to sell the property. Eldridge stepped in and bought it for the denomination, taking

over liability for a mortgage of £550. The original deed, dated 21 April 1893, was deposited with the Registrar of the REC.¹⁴⁴

Following these difficulties, in July 1913, news was published of the "Thousand-Pounds Sustentation Fund Scheme". One of the three main objectives of the scheme (see above) was to create a Church Estates Trust Fund which would make much more easy any swift "rescue" action (such as with the building and its large mortgage at Gunnersbury). But the project as a whole was too diverse and too ambitious, for its aims also included the founding of a training college for REC ministers and workers, and the creation of a proper financial support scheme for the episcopate. Predictably, the project failed - and with it the hope for a Church Estates Trust Fund.¹⁴⁵

During the years which followed, yet further attempts were made to put some order into the Trust system. At the General Synod of 1916, a Resolution was put which aimed at giving incentives to those clergy and congregations in private trust churches who might be able to secure those trusts for the REC.

Basically, the aim was to create a form of two-tier "class" system whereby non-REC Trust churches would not have the same privileges as those churches which were in specifically REC trusts. Amongst the provisions suggested were: firstly, non-Trust churches wishing to be affiliated with the denomination were to give an undertaking not to allow anything in their church life that was contrary to the Canons and custom of the REC. Secondly, representatives of non-Trust churches would not be allowed to take part in elections to the episcopate, or to vote in the matter of alterations to the Prayer Book or the Canons. Thirdly, ministers of non-Trust churches would not be eligible for election to the episcopate or to membership of the Standing Committee except by unanimous vote of General Synod.

But the resolution was too divisive for a small denomination which had several of its largest churches in local Trusts. In any case, Eldridge ruled it out of order as being contrary to the Canons. Nevertheless it serves to indicate the inherent instability in the denomination - for there was evidently an element in the General Synod whose suspicion and militancy was making the running of an already small and impoverished denomination even more difficult.¹⁴⁶

Perhaps the REC Trust incident in this period which overshadowed almost all others during the history of the denomination was the attempt by Minister, Wardens and Trustees of Trinity Church, Southend, to take the congregation and the property into the Church of England. Any detailed account of this complex action would be out of place here. However, it is worth just outlining the incident in that, like the dispute at Teddington, it illustrates the weakness of the independent Trusts, and the "fragmenting" effect that was all too possible where churches had independent trusts.

In his Memories, Vaughan indicates that relationships first broke down between the Minister of Trinity Church, the Reverend Norman Chivers, and the Presiding Bishop towards the latter part of 1916. Chivers had been in charge of the "Thousand Pounds Sustentation Fund" appeal three years before, and he blamed the leaders of the denomination, but mainly Bishop Eldridge, for its failure. However, this period of Winter 1915/16 was a difficult one for Eldridge, for at the Southend Easter Vestry on 26 April 1916, it was revealed that his wife had recently died, and a message of sympathy was sent.

In June 1916 (probably after the Synod had had its serious financial report), Chivers wrote a very critical letter to Eldridge, claiming that the denomination was bankrupt and failing. It could not have been sent to Eldridge at a worse time, and it is little wonder that the Vestry meeting at Southend on 10 July 1916 considered the reply from the Presiding Bishop "unsatisfactory". By way of response, they instantly rescinded a resolution to send the annual sum to the Sustentation fund of four guineas (a large sum at that time).

Thus there was personal bitterness on all sides - Chivers was bitter because of a perceived lack of support over the Appeal, and Eldridge was bitter because of the criticism of Chivers and the others at Trinity at what was a frankly inappropriate time. It was not only, therefore, a financial matter, but also one where personalities had become deeply involved. Consequently Chivers and the Wardens began negotiations with the Bishop of Chelmsford to transfer to the diocese of Chelmsford.

In his Memories, Vaughan indicates that "Dr. Eldridge...advised to let it go" - this being in marked contrast to Vaughan's own attitude to court action "as a matter of sacred duty". But, in the light of the personal problems of Eldridge at the time, together with the bad feeling involved, it is hardly surprising

that he felt that the battle was not worth it. Although just 70, he seemed, like Sugden long before, prematurely aged.

The Judgement in the case of the Attorney-General v. Ingram and others was delivered by Mr. Justice Younger on 17 December 1917. It supported the authorities of the REC and restrained the transfer of the property. Nevertheless, it is clear that those few funds which the denomination still had in 1917 had been taken by this costly action.¹⁴⁷

In many respects, the disputes at Southend and Teddington showed the same features. Both were the leading churches within their denominations. Both had strong independent trusts - neither being specifically tied in to its denomination by name. Accordingly, the similarity of style to that of the Established Church meant that it was a very easy matter for the balance of loyalty to be tipped from the FCE, or the REC, and towards the Church of England. But, the final judgement in both cases was very costly, both in terms of money and emotions.

Moreover, it is interesting to see the way in which this incident in 1917 displayed the gulf between the two REC bishops: the one, young and aggressive by nature, the other old before his time, and tired. It was clearly Vaughan who had been prepared to put all the denomination's finances towards this one case; and when the Judgement was pronounced on 17 December 1917, it was his victory; and the balance of influence within the denomination passed to Vaughan.

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The Trust problems of both denominations provided, again and again, the strongest possible indications of the Independency that was inherent within the systems. In fact, the problems for the future of the FCE had been minimised by the creation of the Central Board of Trustees in 1908. Although the REC was unable to follow suit in 1910, when the two Churches were united in 1927 the "tighter" property system of the FCE was to prevail. Thus, gradually, many more of the church properties were to pass into the hands of the "Central Trust". This inevitably binds the loyalty of a congregation to the denomination through the ultimate legal control of property. In fact, the Central Trust remains today one of the most politically powerful sections of the FCE.

Finally, another feature of the life of the denominations which is brought to light by the Trust disputes is the special importance of the relationship between the Minister and his people on the one hand, and the Minister and church authorities and the leaders of the denomination, on the other. In so many of the cases during the years 1901-1920/21, Trust problems resulted from the convictions or feelings of the Ministers. This was particularly evident in the cases of Stewart Perfect at Teddington (1902); the minister at Leicester FCE (1912-14); T.H.W. Raspas at Chesterton (1914-15); Basil Allen at Gunnersbury (1914-15); Norman Chivers at Southend (1916-17); and T.H. Whitehouse at Emmanuel FCE, Alum Rock, Saltley, who left for the Established Church in 1920, and nearly succeeded in taking Emmanuel with him (see above).

The initial balance of relationships between minister and congregation was delicate, so that in the case of Raspas and Allen, the clear mismatch was solved by the minister leaving. However, it is interesting to observe that, beyond this initial stage, although the Vestry "called" the Minister, yet generally, that minister was in a far stronger position of "ecclesiastical" authority within his church and congregation than he would have been within the more powerfully hierarchical Church of England, or for that matter within a non-conformist congregation where the deacons held so much power.

The fact was that because of the episcopal polity of the denominations, although a minister was a "Presbyter", his ordination and sacramental responsibilities effectively gave him a position within his congregation indistinguishable from the traditional Anglican Parish Priest. By the same token, because the ultimate authority over the church property lay, not with the bishop or the diocese, but often with a local trust, then, his convictions or unhappiness seemed able to sway the future of his church and congregation. With the support of the Vestry and Trustees behind him, there was little action that the denominational authorities might take against any particular minister. No clearer examples can be seen than the withdrawal of Wigan, Adlington, Workington, and Aspall from the REC and into the "Evangelical Church of England" in 1922.

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Differences between Bishops Vaughan and Eldridge, and a major division within the denomination over the Lambeth "Appeal to all Christian People" of 1920

The 1920 Lambeth Conference demonstrated the search for a new direction and dedication in a world torn apart by the Great War. Roger Lloyd pointed out Randall Davidson's hope that the Conference would "in the providence of God, be a signpost for the tormented world pointing the way to the land of peace". But, perhaps its most important work was to issue "An Appeal to all Christian People". Published in six languages, it was a call to the people of the world for Unity, and out of it came conversations between Anglicans and both Free Churches and the Roman Catholic Church. Alec Vidler says, "nothing very definite came out of either", yet it was a vital focal point for the Ecumenical Movement. Lasting paths for discussion were made and discoveries of common ground, the world over. Even in 1948, J.G. Lockhart said: "It gave impetus to Reunion, the force of which is not yet spent" (Cosmo Gordon Lang).¹⁴⁸

The effect of the Appeal on the two denominations was very different, for whereas it caused virtually no reaction within the FCE, the effect upon the REC was profound. The Appeal itself was the result of preparation over many months with different denominations. Although not in any major group, Philip Eldridge had been involved in several private meetings. But even before the Encyclical was signed on 7 August 1920, the result of these discussions was a division in the REC. The Northern Synod voted for Union with the Church of England: the Southern Synod was opposed.

On the morning of Tuesday 15 June 1920, the Reverend W.E. Young announced dramatically to the FCE Convocation: "You will doubtless have heard from the religious press that the REC has approached the Establishment with a view to being received." His bitterness is evident, for he and Bishop Vaughan were the two prime movers of the scheme for unity between the two denominations. What has never been stated however, was that the roots of the division went back long before the "Appeal", and that it was due to a deep personal animosity between Philip Eldridge, and his younger episcopal colleague Frank Vaughan.¹⁴⁹

Frank Vaughan - a brief background

The problem was that Vaughan was utterly different from his senior colleague. Eldridge was from a Congregationalist background. He had trained at Milton College, and from his first position as Minister of the Independent Church in

Kentish Town, he had moved "up", firstly to the FCE, and then "up" to the REC - ever more into the Anglican mold. Although most able, evidence shows him to have been retiring in manner.

Vaughan on the other hand had moved firmly "down" from the Anglican mold of his birth. According to several who knew him well, he was both forceful, and sometimes aggressive in manner - even in old age. Quite simply, whilst both exercised long and most distinguished episcopates, their "chemistry" was wrong, and neither could work with the other.¹⁵⁰

According to Vaughan's step-daughter, Miss Mildred Catt, he was born in Bristol in 1869, probably at Fishponds. After his father's death, he was brought up by his grandmother at Frome in Somerset. According to some of his papers, he sang as a treble in the choir of St. John's Parish Church, where W.J.E. Bennett had become Vicar after leaving Pimlico because of disputes over his ritualism. In fact, at Bennett's funeral on 17 August 1885, Vaughan was in the choir.

His childhood was not happy, and at 16, he ran away from home and joined the Grenadier Guards. Harry Vaughan, his son, says that he was a Private at 18, and that he eventually became a sergeant. During his five years in the army, he was stationed in Liverpool, and Miss Catt says that it was whilst here that "he was converted...and did some studies at the University there..." In fact Vaughan himself said that he was "converted" at Bradford, and started his studies soon after. He did not take a degree, but passed the the required examinations for a "stipendiary Lay-worker and preacher in the diocese of Liverpool". Here he worked from 1898 until his ordination to the REC diaconate by Bishop Eldridge in 1904. After ordination he subsequently served for six years as minister of the REC at Warrington before moving to Christ Church, Harlesden.¹⁵¹

Vaughan's "progress" therefore was the opposite of that of Eldridge who had moved "up" from Congregationalism. Vaughan had been a member of the Church of England from the beginning, and had had the regular experience of the (then) extreme ritualism of Bennett at Frome. After his conversion he reacted strongly against his "high church" background, and ultimately even against the evangelical Bishop Ryle of Liverpool.

Vaughan's founding of the "Diocesan Association of Northern Churches" in 1909 and then his later work with the new Southern Association has already been noted. He was a man for whom church "politics" was important, and it is

interesting to see him gradually gaining a higher profile through the years. But, it is also important to see that his own considerable ability worked together with his taste for politics. Bishop Forbes-Smith later wrote of "his gifts of speech and pen, of his logical and legal mind, or of his almost photographic memory". Again, although Vaughan never read for a degree, it is worth noting that not only was he one of the main supporters of the work of the new REC "Institute of Theology" in 1907 and 1908, but he was the first to complete the LTh diploma, in 1912.

The many references to him in the Reports of General Synod show a man with an appetite for detail. But they also show someone whose work for the advancement of the REC seemed to possess a boundless energy. In Forbes-Smith's tribute, he made the very revealing comment: "Such a man with decided views and a vigorous advocacy of them was bound from time to time to arouse strong opposition". His consecration in April 1913 brought him into a close working relationship with a senior bishop who could not have been more different. But however good, Eldridge was also prematurely aged, and suffering from the strain of overwork. The result was disastrous.¹⁵²

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One of the reasons why the election of a second bishop had been brought forward to a special Synod on 26 February 1913 was because Eldridge was unable to bear the responsibility for the whole denomination any longer (see above). He had suffered several bouts of illness - indeed after the Synod of June 1912, he had been obliged to go away to Switzerland for several weeks of recuperation. In the edition of Work and Worship for February 1913, it was announced that Bishop Eldridge had asked the Church "to release him from the Episcopal office as far as its more active and jurisdictional duties are concerned".¹⁵³

However, problems arose as soon as Vaughan had been consecrated at the end of April 1913, for by the beginning of June, Eldridge was ill once again, and Vaughan had to chair the General Synod from 9 to 11 June. Mindful of Eldridge's wish to be released from the burdens of responsibility, the Synod elected Vaughan as Diocesan Bishop "for twelve months with a view to giving Bishop Eldridge needed rest and relief".

It is likely that this had not been properly discussed with Eldridge, for he evidently took the matter as a personal slight. In his Memories Vaughan wrote:

"To my intense sorrow that resolution was interpreted as meaning that he was to be dropped, and I was to take his place." Clearly the bad feeling was public, for in Frank Gregg's copy of the Reports of General Synod, the section which emphasised that the appointment was for a limited time to give Eldridge "needed rest and relief" is underscored twice. At the General Synod the following year Eldridge was re-elected Presiding Bishop unanimously, with Vaughan as his Assistant. But the damage had been done, and Vaughan added ominously: "I will not enlarge on what that was to mean to me during the following years".¹⁵⁴

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The bad feeling between both men became particularly bitter during the following year when, at the session on Thursday morning, 15 June 1915, the General Synod voted to divide the denomination into two dioceses "corresponding to the provinces of Canterbury and York at present existing in the Established Church..." During the voting on episcopal jurisdiction Eldridge asked to be excused from undertaking long journeys because of his health and that of his wife. Consequently he was appointed to the Southern Diocese. However, there was clear disagreement about this between the two bishops, for there was still much to be done in creating the administrative bodies and committees in the North, and almost certainly, Vaughan felt that he did not have the experience needed.

In what must have been an embarrassing exchange, Vaughan appealed to Eldridge to take the Northern Diocese. Eldridge declined. "Bishop Vaughan replied that this practically forced his hand, and in that he could not acquiesce." Frank Gregg broke the deadlock by proposing a temporary appointment to the North which would enable the diocesan infrastructure to be created before the matter of full jurisdiction was raised again. Thus, it was on this basis that Eldridge agreed to take the North, and Vaughan the South - for just twelve months.¹⁵⁵

Detailed information at this time is difficult to find. But it seems as if, by the close of that same year, Eldridge was on the verge of retirement or even resignation. The new Northern Synod of the REC held an adjourned meeting on 4 November 1915 at Emmanuel, Warrington; however, Eldridge was ill once again, and Greenhalgh, Minister of Liscard, presided. The house proceeded, under the Canons of the General Synod, with the process for the election of a new diocesan bishop. In fact, although J.P. Hodgkinson of Wigan polled the most votes, because he did not achieve the required majority of two-thirds the election was void. Eldridge was obliged therefore to continue as Northern

Diocesan - and, in fact, at the General Synod of 1916, he actually suggested Vaughan as Bishop of the Southern Diocese while he continued in the North - as he did until his death in 1921.

Nevertheless, evidence indicates that relationships had deteriorated even further between the bishops, for Vaughan was not present at the meetings of General Synod in 1916. The partisan feeling that had grown up is seen in a resolution that, unless there was some strong reason for the absence of a bishop from Synod, his report must be read personally. Again, Eldridge's feeling of insecurity is evident, for he actually insisted on a ballot for the position of Presiding Bishop.¹⁵⁶

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By the Summer of 1916, there was a fairly obvious division between the South and the North. This was to be widened year by year, for as Eldridge had the formation of the administration and structure of the new diocese, so his people took his values as their own - and certainly some of his misgivings about the way in which the denomination was moving towards the FCE, and away from the Church of England. It is unlikely that there was any "Byzantine" conspiracy about this: it is simply that, in the normal run, a respected leader will automatically influence those with whom he has to do by the process of the interaction of his personality with theirs.

Judging by Eldridge's later opposition to the unity scheme which was revealed by Young to the FCE Convocation in June 1920, he was almost certainly acting as a focus of resistance to the scheme much earlier. Certainly evidence shows that, as early as 1912, the Eldridge family saw the end of the REC and its absorption into the Established Church as not being far away. Vaughan revealed that during the 1912 session of the LTh examinations which had been held in London (probably during the May of that year at Harlesden), "a member of the Bishop's family, talking of the future, said that at the death of Bishop Eldridge there would be no Reformed Episcopal Church, it would no longer exist. 'Smash' was the word used."

Almost certainly, the speaker was Eldridge's distinguished son-in-law, Herries Gregory, one of the Faculty of the "Institute of Theology". The words used seem to indicate an angry exchange with Vaughan, a formidable man who had

conscientiously left the "Establishment". Thus, by 1912, there were two distinct lines of policy - both mutually irreconcilable.¹⁵⁷

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The polarisation of these policies was brought to a climax some two or three years later during the period 1914-15, for according to Vaughan, it became known that Eldridge was taking part in private negotiations "with some Anglican leaders". It is likely that the talks were very informal in nature. Even so, Eldridge's folly was very considerable, for not only was Vaughan Bishop of the Southern Diocese by this time, but it is clear that he had not been consulted. On the other hand Vaughan over-reacted most unwisely.

The negotiations were regarded as a serious betrayal of the denomination, and Vaughan arranged a meeting at his home in Wembley at which "The Reformed Church League" was formed. There followed a most unpleasant incident - now forgotten within the denomination - but one which only compounded the division between the two bishops and their dioceses. Vaughan recounts:

"We drew up regulations: we pledged ourselves most solemnly to secrecy, with our hands on the open Bible...It was not against the Bishop personally, it was a solemn combination for the highest purposes, but within 48 hours the Bishop was told all the details and all that had passed...the whole idea failed, giving birth to new suspicions and ill will."

Once more in 1917, both Vaughan and Eldridge were at cross-purposes over the attempt to take Trinity Church, Southend, into the Diocese of Chelmsford (see above). Vaughan recounts: "...Dr. Eldridge was not in favour of resisting the proposal ...and he advised to let it go..." But Vaughan was bitterly opposed to this: "I could not agree with him and the court action was commenced, as a matter of sacred duty".¹⁵⁸

The 1920 Lambeth Appeal to all Christian People

Without doubt, Southend was seen as Vaughan's victory, so that the divisions and ill will continued. But this was compounded in 1920, by the great unity initiative made by the Anglican bishops at the Lambeth Conference. At this point, the division between Vaughan and the Southern Diocese on the one hand, and Eldridge and the Northern Diocese on the other became critical.

Vaughan mentions the events briefly in his Memories and the History; but the problems faced and the events themselves are made much clearer by the

correspondence preserved in volume LC 114 of the 1920 Lambeth Conference Papers. This includes letters by Eldridge, the Bishop of Liverpool (Francis Chavasse), Archbishop Randall Davidson, and G.K.A. Bell (then Davidson's Chaplain). Together with the verbatim transcripts of the proceedings of the Lambeth Unity Committee (1920 Lambeth Conference Papers, volume 108), they make surprising reading.

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The text of the "Appeal to all Christian People" was circulated before the Conference actually took place, and Vaughan tells how it: "deeply stirred the hearts of Christians of every name, everywhere". Eldridge met Vaughan in London, and expressed to him the view that the "witness" of the REC was at an end. He wished to seek terms upon which the REC might return to the Church of England. Vaughan however told Eldridge that whilst he would not stand in his way from making enquiries, he personally would have nothing to do with it. This meeting almost certainly took place in the earlier part of 1920, because he continues with the information that Eldridge "for some time...had been in contact with some Bishops, and I think...with the Archbishop himself".¹⁵⁹

In fact, Eldridge first contacted the Bishop of Liverpool in the previous Autumn. For on 2 October 1919, the Bishop of Liverpool had written to Randall Davidson's secretary, George Bell, to ask that the subject of "The Bishops and the Reformed Church of England" be put on the agenda of the next Bishops' Meeting on 21 and 22 October. He explained that "Some of the Northern Bishops are being pressed to receive into the C of E some of the ministers and whole congregations of this body, and their Bishop (Bishop Eldridge) is coming to see me on the subject". The results of those discussions were revealed later, in a letter of 5 June 1920, from Liverpool to the Archbishop. Apparently, negotiations had included "several letters from P.X.E. and a long conversation with him". Eldridge had offered to hand over the REC churches at Wigan, Warrington and Tue Brook. The terms discussed were: (i) re-ordination (ii) each church to have a separate district assigned to it, and (iii) the Patronage to be put into the hands of an Evangelical Trust.

In his letter, Liverpool also told the Archbishop of Canterbury that he had also consulted Lang at York. But York was unhappy about the lower standards of educational achievement amongst the REC clergy, and also the policy of "planting" churches in ritualist parishes which had caused much trouble. Yet

Liverpool made the revealing comment that Eldridge was "a really good man who has acted throughout with great courtesy".¹⁶⁰

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Taking up the events from the meeting between Vaughan and Eldridge in London, judging from the 1920 Lambeth Conference Correspondence Book L.C. 114, Eldridge had indeed seen a group of Bishops at Chichester on 28 February 1920. Following this he called Vaughan down to Brighton for lunch, and told him that he had "set the ball rolling". The proposals were typewritten. They included re-ordination, the dropping of the reformed Prayer Book, re-confirmation if REC members so desired, and properties to be handed over to an Anglican Evangelical Trust (a copy is included in the Lambeth Correspondence Book). As Vaughan remarked: "In other words, absorbtion by unconditional surrender of all we claimed to stand for since 1873". Vaughan's bitterness is manifest; and he immediately insisted that both Synods be called at the earliest moment.

The Northern Synod, under Eldridge, met at 16 Bold Street, Warrington on 10 April 1920. The resolution was put "That the Bishop be asked to negotiate with the Anglican Bishops with a view to the reception into the Ch. of Eng. of the clergy and congregations of the Ref. Episc. Church, conditionally upon the adoption and maintenance of a distinctly Evangelical Trust or Trusts". The resolution was carried by 11 votes to 7. According to Vaughan, Eldridge was extremely annoyed that the vote was not unanimous, and he apparently stated that he would "take no further steps in the matter".¹⁶¹

The Southern Synod, under Vaughan, met at Harlesden on 4 May 1920; and on 12 May, the Reverend Percy Norris, Secretary to the Southern Synod, sent their Resolution to the Archbishop of Canterbury:

"This Synod...would be prepared to consider the question of the Union of the Reformed Episcopal Church with the Established Church of England, provided that the Ministers of the Reformed Episcopal Church are received as clergy duly ordained in accordance with the Articles of that Church, and that it is allowed to retain its Declaration of Principles unaltered with its Doctrine, Discipline, and Worship, as set forth in its Constitution, Canons and Prayer Book".

The hand of Vaughan can be seen very distinctly, for unlike the resolution of the Northern Diocese, this made demands which the C of E could not possibly have accepted. A most courteous letter from Bell to Norris on 13 May 1920 asked for information as to the latest church statistics. He further requested

information as to the denomination's criteria for considering the validity of orders. Finally, Bell also asked if Norris had written "on behalf of the body as a whole or merely a section of it".

Norris replied on 18 May enclosing Eldridge's booklet The REC Book of Common Prayer and Canons Ecclesiastical. He promised the latest statistics after the General Synod in June, but Bell's question as to whom Norris represented had no answer. In fact the letter was evasive - again, reflecting the feelings of Vaughan, and his unwillingness to take part in negotiation.¹⁶²

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Despite the fact that Eldridge had said "he would take no further steps in the matter", it is clear from Book L.C. 114 of the 1920 Conference that further steps were taken, for he was evidently not willing to accept matters as they stood after the two Synods, and on 29 May 1920, he wrote directly to the Archbishop of Canterbury. He stated that there were clergy and congregations, especially in the North, who were prepared to unite with the Established Church on conditions more acceptable than those laid down by the Southern Synod. These included re-ordination, and the securing of the churches in Evangelical Trusts. Further, he asked to see the Archbishop to discuss the matter personally.

Their meeting took place at Lambeth on 18 June 1920, and Correspondence Book L.C. 114 includes a set of typed minutes - marked "Private". The subjects discussed were once again, re-ordination, the under-qualification of REC clergy, use of the reformed Prayer Book, and the unlikeliness of people in the REC wishing to be re-confirmed. Eldridge was acting as an "honest broker" for congregations in his own REC Northern Diocese. But the fact was that, although the REC had some 25 congregations served by 30 or 40 ministers, yet the hopeless divisions between the two dioceses meant that, politically, Eldridge simply had nothing concrete with which to bargain.¹⁶³

Yet further correspondence took place between the two men. In a letter of 22 July 1920, Eldridge made some modified proposals to Canterbury. But by then the full text of the resolutions of the Lambeth Conference was substantially complete, and was signed by the bishops at Lambeth on 7 August 1920. This made it plain that continued negotiation with the REC was fruitless. What is quite clear however is that Davidson, like Bishop Chavasse, was impressed by Eldridge and liked him. In a kindly letter to him on 13 August, the Archbishop enclosed

a copy of the signed report of the Conference. He wrote gently "I cannot help hoping that we may by degrees bring to an end the division which ought not I think to continue in existence amongst us".

This regard is even more marked in a later exchange when, on 21 September 1920 Eldridge wrote to ask, amongst other things, about the possibility of good REC men being ordained for general duties without having to be ordained strictly "to a title". Davidson replied on 1 November 1920 to say that each diocesan bishop would make his own terms, but again there was a gentle friendliness in his words. He clearly saw the hopes of Eldridge, who was in an impossible situation - but whom he personally liked.¹⁶⁴ Nevertheless, Eldridge's last attempt to find a way forward with the Anglican Church had failed.

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The Lambeth Resolution dealt with the REC in just over 500 words. It set out the "hard-line" official proposal of the Southern Diocesan Synod together with the "less formal proposals of a somewhat different character". Firstly, the Unity Committee could not accept the claim to an episcopal succession. But then followed the other vexed matters: unequal training standards of the REC clergy, Trust Deed complications, and the reformed Prayer Book. The Committee suggested that, as there was a tendency for REC clergy and congregations to move to the Established Church, each case be therefore treated individually. Nevertheless, acceptable clergy might be conditionally ordained, although congregations would have to use the 1662 Book of Common Prayer.

In retrospect, the hard line taken by the Unity Committee at Lambeth is not surprising. The Sub-Committee dealing with the Episcopal Churches contained 12 bishops. Amongst these however were the American Bishops of Harrisburg and Southern Ohio - both of whom would have known that, after the 1888 Conference, the American bishops had declared REC orders invalid. They would have felt bound by that "political" decision.

However, what is evident from the Conference papers is the very cavalier way in which the REC was treated at the Committee stage - the sessions were recorded verbatim by a stenographer. The whole of the final discussion on the REC was dispatched in under four minutes. Possibly one minute was taken by an argument as to whether the REC was founded in 1871 or 1873. A further two minutes were taken with the account of the application of a man to join the Anglican Church

who had avoided mentioning that his orders were those of the REC. In concluding the discussions, the Bishop of Gloucester (A.C. Headlam) then made the embarrassingly indiscrete comment, "It is a body of malcontents and we feel that the only way is to deal with individuals...I need say no more."¹⁶⁵

Gloucester's words were both unguarded and crass; yet they probably summed up what some of those present actually thought. Certainly, if at any time Vaughan did see those Committee minutes, it would certainly explain why, throughout his life, he held to an intense suspicion and dislike of the Established Church.

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The fate of the REC was not that reported to the 1920 Convocation of the FCE. Certainly the denomination was badly split, but Vaughan's work in influencing the Southern Synod to send unacceptable proposals to the Archbishop had ensured that Lambeth would foresee difficulties with future discussion. The Resolution of the American Bishops in 1888 had further blocked the prospects of unity; and the evident impatience of the episcopal Sub-Committee had completed the matter - despite the warmth of feeling for Eldridge on the part of both Liverpool and Canterbury. But, the REC had not seceded to the Church of England.

One of the main problems for the denomination at the end of 1920 was the complete rift between the two bishops. For whilst both remained in charge, there was no chance of any proper co-operation between the two dioceses. However the situation was unexpectedly resolved on 20 March 1921. Eldridge had taken long leave to visit his daughter Emily who was a missionary with the South Africa General Mission in Pondoland. He sailed from Tilbury on board the liner, S.S. Euripides, bound for Capetown. But the strain of the previous 18 months told upon the health of a prematurely enfeebled man, and three days past Teneriffe he suddenly suffered a stroke and died.¹⁶⁶

Several clergy did leave the denomination for the Established Church; others withdrew to form the "Evangelical Church of England" (see below). Nevertheless, Vaughan as the new Presiding Bishop was able to temper the "upward" direction in which Eldridge had taken the REC. He had very clear ideas for the future, and at the General Synod of June 1921 he immediately began the process of healing division, and also of looking once more towards unity with the FCE..

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The FCE and the REC, 1900-1920/21: conclusions summed up

The early 20th century witnessed more profound changes in the the church scene than at probably any other time during the period of study c. 1845 to c. 1927. This was particularly true for the larger non-conformist denominations. Financial security came through the newly wealthy non-conformist entrepreneurs. Political power came with the presence of influential non-conformists in parliament. Again, the opening of the ancient Universities of England to them caused a burgeoning of non-conformist theological scholarship. Finally, the upheavals of the Great War brought profound changes to the life of Britain.

Yet the FCE and the REC were too small and too poor to be able to take part in the changes, and thereby to share the benefits. The powerful social patronage of earlier figures such as Lord Ebury, Lord Sydney, the Honourable and Reverend E.V. Bligh, and Sir Culling Eardley had died with them. Again, by the end of the century the congregations often tended to be drawn from the artisan classes. An important factor in this "loss of caste" was that the interests and concerns of society had changed. Although many deplored the continuing growth of ritual within the Established Church, it was no longer perceived as being almost a "fifth column" for the Roman Catholic Church within the country. The popular dispute over ritual had largely disappeared; and with the increasing tragedy which involved practically every family in the land after August 1914, people had other worries and very different priorities.

Just as in former years their strict Episcopal polity ensured the isolation of both denominations from both the Church of England and the main non-conformist denominations. Whilst it was too close to Anglicanism for Anglican comfort, it was also too Anglican for non-conformist comfort. As if to underline this isolation, whereas the non-conformist denominations declined during the earlier years of the century, both the FCE and the REC experienced a steady growth from 1900 to 1914, and from then until 1920/21, maintained their positions.

The essentially "congregationalist" focus of power within the churches continued to cause problems for the denominations - something which concerned both Bishops Eldridge and Vaughan greatly. Whilst several of the churches in both the FCE and the REC were secure and even prosperous, many churches would neither support the financial needs of a denominational administration nor would they even support a denominational magazine. The poverty of both denominational administrative systems was a continual source of concern, and

seriously inhibited their internal security and actual growth. Thus, a long-established difficulty continued. Evidence shows that the upheavals of the war only heightened these problems.

Even so, the Great War left a strange legacy which has never entirely ceased; that was the very "Establishment" style of support for "King and Country" in both denominations, but especially within the FCE.

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Although for the most part, the isolation of the denominations was as evident as it had been in the years before the turn of the century, yet there were certain ways in which the main elements of change in church life were reflected within the lives and hopes of the denominations.

The great increase in the contribution of non-conformist theological scholarship found a pale reflection in the new regulations for training for the ministry of both denominations. A residential training was impossible for most, but the work of Lander as a private tutor in the FCE, and the work of the "Institute of Theology" of the REC, was a part of the whole move to improve the intellectual training (and standing) of the clergy of the denominations.

At the same time, there was a considerable feeling of insecurity in evidence. Amongst other indications of this was the insistence on correct Choir habit, and the attempt to regularise the wearing of proper and recognised academic hoods by the clergy. In both denominations, but especially the REC, the Established Church was seen clearly to be a model.

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Finally, the new Ecumenical movement which swept through all denominations found a reflection in the FCE and the REC. In fact, because of the strictly Episcopal Polity of both denominations there was little chance of their taking part in any major Ecumenical project. Nevertheless, there was a definite attempt through the years to find some form of federative unity (if not a corporate unity) between the FCE, the REC, and the CHC. Together with this, there were hopes that other non-aligned liturgical churches might be involved.

However, each of the three denominations had been subject to change through the years. At the turn of the century, when the FCE had nearly dispensed with its ancient succession, then there was a realistic hope for some that relations might be forged with the CHC. Nevertheless, although the FCE had moved "down" in churchmanship, the CHC had moved still further "down", and largely into congregationalism. At the same time, the REC had moved "up" under Eldridge.

Thus eventually, although the only realistic hopes for unity were between the FCE and REC, it was then that the 1920 Lambeth "Appeal to all Christian People" polarised the parties in the REC. As Eldridge had moved "up" to Anglicanism, so the vigorously protestant Vaughan had moved "down" from Anglicanism. A major division within the REC was averted because Vaughan's political "arrangements" made it clear to Lambeth that any future unity discussions would be with a split denomination. Indeed his victory in preserving Trinity, Southend, for the REC against seemingly impossible odds gave him the effective balance of power in the denomination. Had he not actually split the REC opinion on the matter of the 1920 Appeal, there is little doubt that the REC would largely have disappeared into the Anglican Church.

As it was, paradoxically, the internal disunity in the denomination ultimately preserved it. In looking at the background to this, again paradoxically it was the disunity over the creation of the two dioceses in 1915 which was the origin of the ultimate success in keeping the REC from absorption into Anglicanism. Had a second diocese not been created, then Vaughan would never have become a diocesan bishop. Had he not become a diocesan bishop, then Eldridge's influence and the tendency towards the Church of England would have prevailed. However, even though the REC was preserved, unity with the FCE was seriously delayed.

The disunity within the REC was still to create problems for several years after 1920. Nevertheless, the influence of Vaughan after the sudden death of Eldridge, together with the fact that his own "low" churchmanship was almost identical with that of the leading proponent for unity in the FCE (William Young, the influential General Secretary of the FCE), meant that the subject of FCE/REC unity was put straight back on the agenda in the Summer of 1921.

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Finally, it is worth repeating a conclusion which is made evident by the study of the Trust problems of the Churches during these years. That is the special

importance of the relationship between the Minister and his people on the one hand, and the Minister together with his church authorities and the leaders of the denomination, on the other. In so many of the cases from 1901 to 1920/21, Trust problems resulted from the convictions of the ministers concerned.

Initially, the relationships between minister and congregation tended to be delicate and even insecure because he had actually been "called" by the Vestry. However, once a minister had established his position and his theological "style" within the local congregation, he was often in a far stronger position than either his Anglican or non-conformist clerical colleagues.

He not only effectively held a position within his congregation which was indistinguishable from that of an Anglican incumbent, but, as long as he had the support of the Vestry and Trustees behind him, the denominational authorities had virtually no power over him. This was shown very clearly when several REC churches in the North withdrew to form the "Evangelical Church of England" in 1922.

It is especially in the light of this fact that the actual strength as opposed to the perceived strength of many of the clergy and churches of both denominations is to be seen. According to the late Neave Knowles (in a private conversation in 1989), during his later days before his death, Bishop Eldridge had contrasted his own position, and that of many REC clergy, with the very different situation enjoyed by most clergy of the Established Church or those in the larger non-conformist denominations. Somewhat bitterly he had spoken of this as "the powerful versus the powerless".

That he was saddened by his own disappointments is without doubt. But the fact is that, for all the poverty and weakness of the denomination as an administrative unit, the clergy who were firmly situated in their churches were more secure and more influential than their brethren in other denominations. Perhaps it is this factor which accounts for the growth (1900-1914) and then the maintenance (1914-1920/21) of both denominations when others were significantly losing members.

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Further details of the new churches in the denominations during the years 1900 to 1920-21 are shown in a chart-survey in the Appendix, pp. 593 ff.