



DISSENTING EXPERIENCE, EXPERIENCING DISSENT

**Year 1: Pastors and their Congregations
Saturday 9 November 2013**

9.00: registration and coffee

9.25-9.35:

Welcome address, James Vigus and David Wykes

9.35-9.45:

Presentation of the three-year cycle, Anne Dunan-Page

Morning session: The Presbyterians
Chair: Polly Ha (East Anglia)

9.45-10.15: Elliot Vernon (London)

'Pastors, People and Presbyterianism in Revolutionary England, 1645-1660'

10.15-10.45 Chad van Dixhoorn (Reformed Theological Seminary, Washington)

'Reformed pastors: models of pastoral care and neglect at the Westminster Assembly'

10.45-11.15 Questions

11.15-11.45: Coffee Break

11.45-12.15: Ann Hughes (Keele)

'Maintaining a pastoral identity: Presbyterian Ministers negotiate the Restoration (1660-1672)'

12.15-12.45: Questions

12.45-14.00 Lunch

Afternoon session 1

The Pastoral Office: Case Studies

Chair: John Coffey (Leicester)

14.00-14.30: Crawford Gribben (Queen's University, Belfast)

'John Owen, scholastic theology and congregational life'

14.30-15.00: N. H. Keeble (Stirling)

'The Reformed Pastor as Nonconformist: Richard Baxter after 1662'

15.00-15.30 Questions

15.30-16.00 Coffee break

Afternoon session 2

Finding One's Place: Pastors and their Congregations

Chair: Joel Halcomb (Cambridge)

16.00-16.30 Kathleen Lynch (Folger Institute, Washington)

'Finding a place for dissent in seventeenth-century London'

16.30-17.00 Michael Davies (Liverpool)

'Life After Bunyan: Ebenezer Chandler and the Pastorship of the Bedford Congregation, 1691-1720'

17.00-17.30 Questions

**Michael Davies (Liverpool)****« Life After Bunyan: Ebenezer Chandler and the Pastorship of the Bedford Congregation, 1691-1720 »**

This paper will examine the almost entirely overlooked career of Ebenezer Chandler, John Bunyan's successor as pastor to the Bedford congregation, having joined the church as its leader in 1691 following the death of Bunyan in 1688. The paper will focus upon Ebenezer Chandler's relationship with his congregation during the first decade of what would prove to be, despite toleration, a difficult and trying period of transition, both internally and externally, for the church throughout the 1690s and early 1700s. As the first pastor to be appointed from without the congregation since its establishment in the early 1650s, Chandler faced the considerable task not only of following in Bunyan's footsteps but also of establishing his own identity and pastoral direction within a congregation whose principles had been fixed firmly by the congregation's first pastor, John Gifford, and which were maintained by the church almost as a form of confession of faith or even church covenant. This paper, then, will explore the ongoing and developing dynamics of pastorship within the Bedford congregation from the 1690s onwards, tracing the trials and tribulations experienced by the church under the early leadership of Chandler, and in the light too of the pastoral traditions, principles, and expectations held by the church following the leadership of its earlier pastors, from John Gifford to John Bunyan. As such, this paper will address matters at the heart of the relationship between Dissenting pastors and their congregations in one of the most prominent and well-documented Congregational churches of the period.

Crawford Gribben (Belfast)**« John Owen, scholastic theology and congregational life »**

The recent religious turn in early modern studies has developed alongside an increasing interest in the theology of protestant scholasticism, including that of its foremost English exponent, John Owen (1616-83). In recent years, a large number of studies have begun to document Owen's articulation of various theological loci. Many of these studies develop their arguments in isolation from historical contexts. Very few of these studies consider Owen's theology in its pastoral contexts. And yet Owen's experience of leading congregation seems integral to his career. In his earliest pastoral charges in the 1640s, Owen's preaching in parish centres attracted crowds of several thousands. In the aftermath of the Restoration, he preached to a gathered congregation of around forty survivors of the republican regime. This paper will identify Owen as a pastor-theologian, and will document his articulation of Reformed orthodoxy in terms of the very different congregations in which he ministered.

Ann Hughes**“Maintaining a pastoral identity: Presbyterian Ministers negotiate the Restoration (1660-1672)”**

This paper will explore the dilemmas faced by Presbyterian clergy in the 1660s, as men who had worked for a reformed national church in the 1640s and 1650s found themselves unable to remain in the church as re-established in the early 1660s. What strategies did ministers use both to maintain their own pastoral roles and identities, and to preserve relationships with former parishioners? How did they confront the most painful questions of conformity or separation, retirement or defiance? The paper will consider the use of print as well as preaching and pastoral activities.

N.H. Keeble (Stirling)**« The Reformed Pastor as Nonconformist: Richard Baxter after 1662 »**

A commitment to the cure of souls, practical Christianity and pastoral theology were defining features of ministerial Puritanism. They were exemplified in Richard Baxter, who at the Restoration enjoyed a national reputation for his extraordinarily successful pastorate at Kidderminster, for his treatise on the pastoral office *Gildas Salvianus: The Reformed Pastor* (1656), and for his work for Christian unity, particularly in creating the Worcestershire Association and inspiring the country-wide association movement, which sought to achieve through work at parish level the reformation of the national



church that eluded the successive Interregnum regimes. Following the Act of Uniformity, however, that very commitment to unity prevented Baxter from siding with either conformists or nonconformists. His aspiration was for a more comprehensive and inclusive national church; he would neither accept a bishopric nor minister to any particular nonconformist congregation. As a result, this most committed of pastors was denied a pastorate for the last thirty years of his life. This paper will explore some of the tensions and implications of this predicament, particularly for Baxter's literary career.

Kathleen Lynch (Folger Library, Washington)

« Finding a place for dissent in seventeenth-century London »

Throughout the second half of the seventeenth century, religious dissent solidified into opposition to the established state church. One practical problem the dissenters had to face with some urgency was where to meet. This was highlighted as a problem with the 1642 publication of an anonymous pamphlet, *Reasons humbly offered in justification of the action of letting a room in London-House unto certain peaceable Christians, called Anabaptists*. Clearly, this had been a generous gesture that backfired for the repentant official. I take that publication and the multiple contemporary attempts at “discovery” of nonconformists and their “conventicles” as my starting point. Focusing on several case studies, I will examine the effects of the uncertainty of meeting places on the understanding of “congregation” and on the evolving practices of dissenting communities. Because of the need to avoid surveillance, these are practices that remain resistant to investigation.

Chad van Dixhoorn (Reformed Theological Seminary, Washington)

« Reformed pastors: models of pastoral care and neglect at the Westminster assembly »

In accordance with its mandate from parliament, the one hundred and twenty pastors brought together by the Westminster assembly discussed doctrinal, disciplinary, and liturgical matters. Inevitably members of the gathering also found frequent occasion to disagree about best pastoral practice, not only in their private statements on the subject, but in public debate. This paper uses assembly members as a subject group in a case study on seventeenth-century godly shepherding ideals prior to the publication of Richard Baxter's 1656 manifesto. Naturally the laboratory conditions of a ten-year synod may not offer the best sampling of real-life pastoral perspectives. Thus this paper sources its materials not only from the minutes of the assembly, but also from the personal papers and published works of individual members. It is hoped that a reliable picture will emerge of the range of perspectives on congregational care that obtained at the assembly.

Elliot Vernon (London)

« Pastors, People and Presbyterianism in Revolutionary England, 1645-1660 »

In his sermon to the Long Parliament preached at its opening fast on 17 November 1640, the Essex minister Stephen Marshall called for the rooting up of the unscriptural elements from the Church of England and, in particular, the reform of parochial discipline so that the pastor had the power to prevent the ‘promiscuous multitude’ from polluting the sacrament of the Lord's Supper in the England's parish churches. Ultimately this concern for purity would manifest in the call from the majority of Parliamentarian clergy to complete the English Reformation by the institution of presbyterian discipline. Although presbyterianism was established by numerous parliamentary ordinances between 1645-1648 as the official government of the Church of England, it was never enforced on the nation. Nevertheless presbyterian provinces were set up in London and Lancashire and the discipline was established at the level of the parish in a few areas of England by pastors concerned to institute Reformed discipline in England's churches. These manifestations of presbyterian government suffered from both the chronic economic and administrative problems that had plagued the Church of England since the Reformation as well as being contested at all levels by both adherents of episcopalianism and congregationalism, or simply by those parishioners who found themselves excluded from the new wave of godly reformation. Ultimately the rise of the New Model Army and its military putsch on 6 December 1648 meant that where presbyterian church government did exist, it

was essentially a voluntary movement maintained by individual pastors and those parishioners who supported the discipline rather than the Second Reformation envisaged in the early 1640s. This paper will mainly focus on data from London (although other areas of England will be touched on) exploring the contests between pastors and people at the parochial level for the establishment and continuation of presbyterian discipline as well looking at the theoretical and polemical positions taken by presbyterian clergy and laity to both justify and win over those who opposed the discipline.

