

Mission and fission

THE ORGANIZATION OF HUNTINGTONIAN AND CALVINISTIC BAPTIST CAUSES IN SUSSEX IN THE 18TH AND 19TH CENTURIES

by Roger Homan

Sussex has been particularly well endowed with wayside chapels of which a great number survive, whether in religious use or as dwellings. The great number are Strict Baptist or Calvinistic Independent. Within Calvinism there are different affiliations and an attempt is made to identify these and relate local causes to them. Returns to the Religious Census of 1851 indicated denominational allegiance, albeit sometimes imprecisely. For example, there were 43 places of worship declared to be 'Baptist' of which some were 'open' in their communion (and have survived into the 20th century within the Baptist Union) and others, like Rotherfield, Danehill and Dicker were 'strict'. This paper relates to a listing of some 150 such chapels, the greater number of which have existed in the eastern part of the county. It includes those causes in which the baptism of believers was practised: these divide into two major alignments in the late 19th century. It also includes the Calvinistic Independent causes founded in most cases after the missionary sermons of William Huntington; these often became Baptist at a later stage.

FOUNDATIONS

The Calvinistic churches share the view that, while most of mankind will perish in a state of sinfulness and misery, God has elected some into a covenant of Grace by which they will be brought into salvation. Such is the belief that election has been predestined that with rare exceptions the faithful do not spend their time knocking on doors or advertising for more members (Gadsby 1809). Strict Baptists hold the further view, not shared by Calvinistic Independents, that baptism is the door to the church and communion confined to those who are members (Philpot 1840).

Such has been the ecclesiology of a once large number of wayside chapels in Sussex, distinctively modest in scale, neat in complexion and restrained in their witness to the world: their notice-boards are characteristically of black and gold and one will seldom find the more eye-catching type of poster that beckons the passer-by. On the one hand we find the quiet and unassuming elegance of Providence chapel at Chichester or Bethel at Wivelsfield or Zoar at Handcross, on the other the outward austerity of the commodious Jireh chapel at Lewes.

Calvinism in Sussex is in its preaching and organization explicitly rooted in 16th-century puritanism. The commemoration of Protestant martyrs is a regular observance and a principle of collective identity. That there were 33 Protestant martyrdoms in the eastern part of the county and none in the western half has been related to the greater number of Calvinistic causes in East Sussex (Reynolds 1961).

The Calvinist doctrine that God in his own providence will call the elect to himself pre-empt the need for human initiative. Strict Baptists are not evangelical. God convinces his own, often through a study of the Scriptures prompted within other religious movements. By these means individuals coalesce into groups of the faithful on a small scale.

Conviction begets contagion: men with well-developed insights gather local people to themselves for Bible study and prayer. Cottage meetings were established by individuals who had moved to the area and found a gap in Calvinist provision. To East Grinstead in 1876 a Mr Smith moved from Gower Street chapel in London and opened his own home for worship; similarly a Mr Matthews arrived in Halland in 1882, found it 'benighted' (Legerton

1986, 6) and started a Sunday school in his home from which was to grow the Calvinistic Independent cause. The part of women is to support and sponsor by, for example, lending or annexing their cottages. Thus the *Gospel Standard Magazine* for 1860 lists services at 'Miss Stapely's house' at Dallington alongside those at more conventional and established chapels.

The tenor of Calvinist testimonies, often explicit in their titles, is that God intervenes in the lives of those he chooses and rescues them without their prompting. Their story is of 'God's gracious dealings' with those He has chosen (Gibbs 1827; Hailsham Baptist Chapel 1945). In the narrower sense of this world view, human initiative has no place and the faithful consequently withhold their witness: far from proselytizing, they wait reclusively. This withdrawal from a sense of active participation in the divine plan is evidenced in the smallest detail. Henry Young asks as he sets down his own testimony of God's dealings, 'O my pen, how wilt thou be guided?'

Such a passive view is the official reading of Strict Baptist history. But it is also recognized that its foundations in Sussex owe much to a period of

Independent initiative in which many causes were established by missionary endeavour. In due course many of these Huntingtonian churches were constituted or 'formed' on Strict Baptist principles and the Baptist historians of the Sussex churches acknowledge the importance of the Huntingtonian legacy (Chambers 1953, 122).

While this was the normative pattern of development in Sussex Calvinism, its foundation was largely by the endeavours of two itinerant missionaries, William Huntington (1745–1813) (Fig. 1) and George Gilbert (1741–1827). These were men of distinction and strong character.

Huntington's charisma resided largely in the contradictions of his life and character. He was not formally educated but was commended by the laureate Southey for his 'command of language' (Southey 1821, 510). He was, in the words of Mr Philpot, 'the fruit of a double adultery' and he in due course fathered an illegitimate son and had his name changed to elude the quarterly maintenance payments which he could not afford. Yet he was later to marry Lady Sanderson, the widow of a Lord Mayor of London. Such a career was made plausible only by his miraculous conversion, 'the day of jubilee', involving a bright light that shone into his heart if not into his eyes (Huntington 1784, 88–92) and a notion of God's remarkable dealings with poor sinners. Even so, Huntington asked, 'Why, Lord, didst thou not keep me from sin when I was in my youth, as thou knewest what thou hadst preordained me to? Or, if this did not seem meet, why didst thou not hear my many prayers, and hide it from the world, to the honour of thine own name?' (Sant & Ella n.d., 4). He had received the barest of education, yet his writings were to earn him the accolade of 'amazing genius' from a former fellow of Worcester College Oxford (Philpot 1821) and his literary merit was admired even by his despiser Robert Southey. Though normally fearless in public utterance, he was an emotional person who declined to preach at funerals: in a memorial address in 1811 on the first pastor of Jireh Lewes, delivered there a fortnight after the funeral and published the following year as *The Last Fragments of the Rev. J. Jenkins*, Huntington broke down saying 'I don't like this! I can't bear it!' (North 1996, 9). When he could find work he laboured as a gardener and unloaded coal barges at Thames Ditton. But in later life his people bought him a coach bearing on the side the letters 'W.H.S.S.', being his initials and the qualification which he



Fig. 1. William Huntington (1745–1813).

considered to have been conferred upon him, 'Sinner Saved'. To the tradition of Calvinism which both earlier and subsequently has been characterized by its solemnity he introduced a lively, self-effacing and sometimes mischievous humour. The paradoxes of his own life were captured in some of the cryptic titles of his 26 books and more than 90 publications such as *The Modern Plasterer Detected and his Untempered Mortar Discovered* (1787), *The Barber; or, Timothy Priestley Shaved* (1792), *An Answer to Fools and a Word to the Wise* (1792), *Discoveries and Cautions from the Streets of Zion* (1798) and *The Coalheaver's Scraps* (1809 — see Sant & Ella n.d., 25–8, for a full listing of Huntington's works).

The hallmark of Huntington's ministry was his 'experimental' — or experiential — religion. He spoke and wrote from the heart, from the experience of the conviction of sinfulness and of God's dealing with him in his mortal condition. 'I believe the reader will never find that I publish anything but my own divinity, which I had from God', he wrote; and he never looked at biblical commentaries for fear they should quench the Spirit on which he relied (Southey 1821, 495). 'A Disciple of Jesus' (1814, 8), who was as explicit of Huntington's shortcomings as of his merits, ranked his experimental preaching as 'his principal excellency'. He was admired for exposing his spiritual condition, but by the same token was disapproved for dwelling so much upon himself. So dominant a personality did not engender moderate feelings and — with conspicuous exceptions that included his marriage — the response to Huntington by his contemporaries reflected both the social and cultural divisions of his day and a vigilance of the kind of deviations or dissent that might augur a revolution in the wake of the French. For the elevation from the circumstances of his birth and early life to the acclaim he received in the pulpits of London he was condemned as an hypocrite and impostor: Southey (1821) occupied 60 pages of the *Quarterly Review* with a diatribe against Huntington. The faithful found parallels between his birth and that of Pharez and Zarah in Genesis 38 and between his vocation and that of Christ's disciples (Philpot 1856). He died in Tunbridge Wells and a throng of 2000 followed his hearse the 24 miles from there to Jireh chapel in Lewes for his funeral. The epitaph, which he had dictated a little while earlier, captures both the tensions in his own ministry and the segregation of the saved and the unsaved in the world view which

he proclaimed:

Here lies the Coalheaver,
Beloved of his God but abhorred of men.
The Omniscient Judge
at the Great Assize shall ratify and
Confirm this to the
Confusion of many thousands;
For England and its metropolis shall know
That there hath been a prophet
Among them.

Huntington preached at Petworth, Horsham, Maresfield, Bolney and Lewes. By his missionary exertions, Providence chapel at Brighton was built in 1805, Jireh at Lewes was provided for his friend, 'the Welsh apostle' Jenkin Jenkins, and the Golden Square chapel at Petworth was opened by him. The churches which have claimed Huntington as their founder or teacher have related closely to each other, sharing both anniversaries and ministers: distance did not separate Providence at Chichester (Fig. 2) from its namesake at Brighton or Jireh at Lewes, with whom it shared the pastorates of Jenkin Jenkins, William Brook and John Vinall in the early 19th century.

His writings were also promulgated to the unchurched. Henry Young of Newhaven had in his youth been so convinced of his wretchedness that he could not join the praise and thanksgiving in the Church of England, only participating in the words 'Lord have mercy'. But he was drawn to the Huntingtonians by two tracts sold at his door: one was Mr Jenkin's letter to Mr Williams and the other was William Huntington's *An Innocent Game for Babes in Grace* published in 1787.

George Gilbert was born in Rotherfield in 1741 and at the age of 18 was recruited to General Elliott's Light Horse regiment. In the 1760s Elliott engaged him as an estate foreman at Heathfield Park. Having, as the testimonies say, 'come under soul concern', Gilbert launched a crusade against the moral and spiritual conditions of his day. He had some persecutors who used physical violence against him. The opposition at Ticehurst, said to be led by the local clergy (Lemm 1892, 8), included the beating of drums, the ringing of bells and the throwing of mud as he preached. The drum of such an opponent at Bexhill was silenced only by the penknife of one of his female sympathizers. When these tactics did not work, General Elliott was approached by a delegation of his dinner guests asking for Gilbert's dismissal, but he refused (Pryce 1996, 57): though

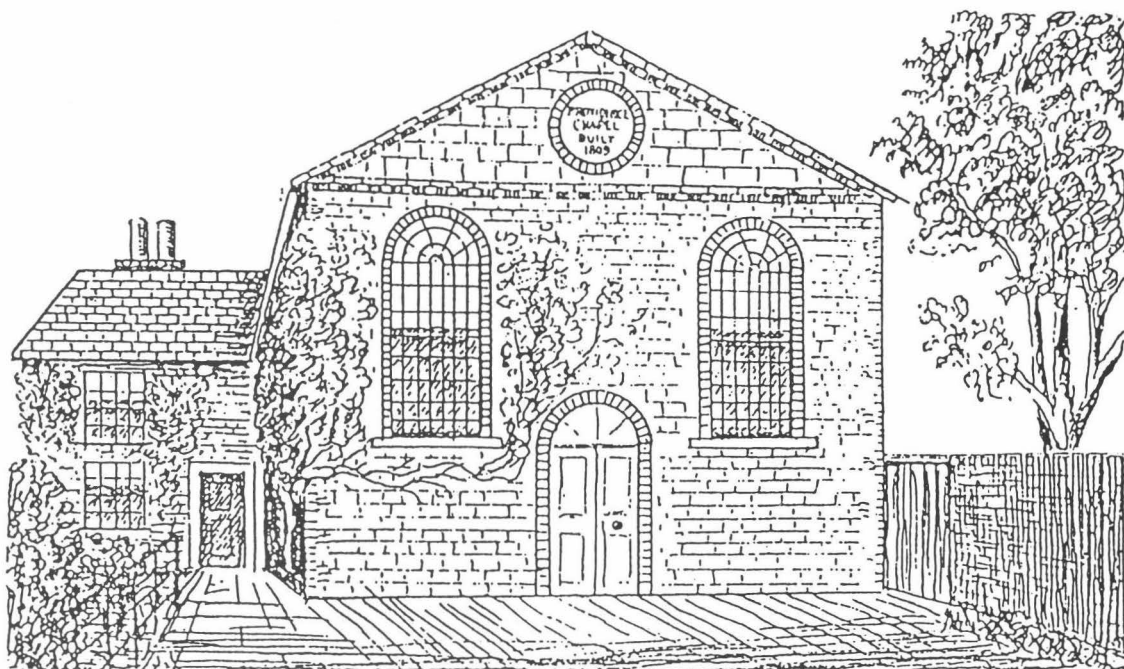


Fig. 2. Providence Chapel, Chichester. (From *The Friendly Companion* 1898.)

indifferent to Gilbert's religion, Elliott had a high regard for his honesty and integrity. Notwithstanding the opposition, he is said to have been active in the foundation of an estimated 40 causes (Chambers 1953, 60; Lemm 1892, 8) in the eastern part of the county and to have visited some 15 towns and villages in rotation (Pryce 1996, 58). So he was dubbed 'the apostle of Sussex'. The first Independent (soon to be Strict Baptist) church at Battle arose from Gilbert's open-air preaching there in 1776–78. In 1886 the pastor of the Independent chapel at Punnett's Town, Josephus Lemm, founded the Gilbert memorial chapel in Alexandra Road, Heathfield.

The 18th century was, therefore, a period of productive missionary activity by a small number of preachers who were Independents rather than Baptists. Their endeavours were to establish the churches which in due time were to become Baptist and in which human initiative was to take a different form. Subsequently God's dealings with his chosen ones were to take the form of convincing them as they sat beneath pulpits in chapels, attentive to the preaching of His ministers, Lord's Day by Lord's Day. It was common practice for individuals introducing themselves by testimony to nominate the preacher

under whom they sat in their formative years. And the days of great preaching were recalled with a measure of nostalgia. So Mr Baxter preaching at Providence Brighton in 1871 pondered:

what a host of faithful servants do we find have been gathered home to everlasting rest and glory. Where are Huntington, Brook, Philpot, Grace and many others, whom some of you have listened to, receiving in power and divine truths that drop from their lips? . . . We may reverence those great men who have preached and written to the glory of God: but we must not idolize them (Providence Chapel 1871).

From the early days Calvinists became used to congregating in large numbers. In 1792 Huntington addressed a packed meeting at Maresfield and it was following this that Five Ash Down chapel was built. In about 1798 Huntington preached to a crowd of over 600 in Mr Blaker's orchard at Bolney. Hadlow Down chapel proved too small for its opening service in 1849 and the sermon was therefore preached outside. Jireh chapel at Lewes (Fig. 3) was built for 1100, Providence Brighton for 850. On census morning in 1851 there were attendances of 233 at the Crowborough chapel, 320 at the Dicker, 650 at



Fig. 3. The pulpit of Jireh chapel, Lewes. (Courtesy of Edward Reeves of Lewes.)

Jireh Lewes, 321 at Punnett's Town, 300 at Chichester Zion and so on. Brighton, which in 1851 had a population of 69,673, supported six Calvinistic causes which had a collective morning attendance of 2350 and 2110 in the evening (Vickers 1989). Salem chapel Brighton had seats for 830. Pell Green chapel at Wadhurst was enlarged in 1828, again in 1831 and again in 1841. The jubilee of Mr Popham's pastorate at Galeed Brighton attracted a crowd of 1400 which had to be accommodated in the Countess of Huntingdon's church in North Street.

Even cottage meetings were not the intimate occasions that may be supposed: the room at Dallington held 90 sittings and was occupied in 1851 by an average congregation of 60; the dwelling house used by Calvinists in Alciston accommodated 156 in the morning and 119 in the afternoon. When 'Argus' (1894) visited Ebenezer chapel at Hastings he expected 'a small and insignificant sect' but

registered his surprise in finding

a temple containing sitting room for some six hundred or more worshippers, and greater still my astonishment to observe shortly after eleven o'clock that nearly every one of the places in the body of the church was occupied, while in the galleries above, running round three sides of the building, were something more than a sprinkling of men, women, and children.

GROUPS AND IDENTITIES

In 1851, returns were made from congregations describing themselves as 'Independents of Calvinistic Principles' (Wisborough Green) and 'Loyal Protestant Dissenters' (Staplefield). Generic labels came later. The term 'Strict Baptist' is used relatively late as a collective ascription with the purpose of organizing

a range of Calvinistic Baptist causes within a denominational identity. 'Independent' and 'Huntingtonian' are similarly general organizing categories which are used less formally and, in the first case, ambiguously.

Some methodological hazards attend the interpretation of self-attributed names. In the 1851 returns the term 'Calvinist' was sometimes used by congregations known to be Calvinistic Independent or Huntingtonian; later in the century, when Kelly's street directories list places of worship in some detail, the term is used to distinguish groups from other Baptists. Likewise, 'Independent' is used in census returns as a description of the Calvinistic Independent churches (for example, Jireh at Lewes, Mayfield, Horsted Keynes), but it was also owned by Congregationalists (Seaside chapel, Eastbourne). 'Huntingtonian' is a description helpfully used in 19th-century street directories but not as a self-description. Some churches operating Strict and/or Particular principles (Zion at Battle, Dallington, Eastbourne) describe themselves as 'Baptist', as do the General Baptist churches from whom they need and want to be distinguished. Self-descriptions in 1851 were conceived within a local frame: Protestant causes needed not to own a national denominational identity but to differentiate themselves from other religious organizations represented in their neighbourhood. Thus at Heathfield a term as general as 'Dissenters' served its purpose whereas in Brighton one of the Ebenezers called itself 'Huntingtonian' to avoid confusion with the other.

The Calvinistic Independents are distinguished historically by their direct inheritance of the theology of William Huntington and his notion of 'experimental religion'. Even those causes such as Providence chapel at Chichester whose origins were among members of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion (Reynolds 1961) claim the identity 'Huntingtonian'. Congregational independence has been so maintained that it is inappropriate to talk of the Huntingtonian churches as a denomination, but they recognized an identity with each other throughout the country and some half of the Calvinistic Independent churches belonged to Sussex. Their formal distance from other Calvinistic churches is marked by their position on baptism and it was on that basis that in due time a number of causes of Independent foundation realigned, usually under the leadership of the pastor. For example, the Ebenezer chapel, Warbleton (latterly known as Bodle

Street), was built for the ministry of James Raynsford who had until the 1830s been pastor of the Independent cause at Horsham called Jireh. It was his desire that on his death he should be succeeded by Cornelius Sharp, but between the utterance of the wish and the death which called for its fulfilment Mr Sharp became involved with Zoar Strict Baptist chapel at the Dicker where he was baptized. Having become a Baptist he made it a condition of his acceptance of the pastorate that Ebenezer be constituted as a Strict Baptist church; that was done on 17 September 1864. Circumstances of this kind have attended the realignment of a number of formerly Independent causes to Strict Baptist and it is acknowledged that many — even a majority of — Strict Baptist causes in Sussex have Independent origins (Chambers 1953, 2).

The labels 'Strict' and 'Particular' mark the Calvinist doctrine that election is specific. What Strict Baptists most disapprove is the doctrine of universalism that offers a calling to all and not just to the chosen ones. This doctrinal position has tempted a number of Strict Baptist causes which are now aligned with the Baptist Union. Such commentators as Mr Chambers deeply lament the straying into 'open paths' of chapels such as Rocks Hall at Uckfield, Mermaid Street at Rye, Eastgate chapel in Lewes and Zion at Battle. In those cases too, it is often the appeal of a candidate for the pastorate which inclines the congregation not to insist upon its customary doctrine.

In the late 1850s and early 1860s a theological controversy over the eternal Sonship of Christ was the focus of a national division among Calvinistic Baptists and two traditions emerged, one aligned with the *Gospel Standard Magazine* and the other expressed in the columns of the *Earthen Vessel*, though not in fact being the position of its editor. The *Gospel Standard* took the orthodox view that Christ was not only in his human, but also in his divine nature, eternally the Son of God and that he was so by begetting and not by office (Paul n.d., 24). That was then considered so central and indispensable a truth that contrary views and those who held them were not to be featured in the columns of the magazine (*Gospel Standard* November 1859, wrapper page 2). *The Christian Pathway*, which succeeded *The Calvinistic Pulpit* and affirmed the eternal Sonship, published a directory of Strict Baptist churches which included those that some years earlier had adopted the contrary position, as

did subsequently the Strict Baptist historian Ralph Chambers. For the *Gospel Standard Magazine*, however, and for the Gospel Standard historian, Mr S. F. Paul, there was a narrower range of interest.

The Gospel Standard churches, those associated with *Grace Magazine* and the Calvinistic Independents survive as three distinctive though allied traditions, each having its respective culture. The *Gospel Standard Magazine* offers a model to its churches by maintaining the complexion and format that it has had for more than a hundred years: it has no photographs, no graphics, no gloss, no modern typeface and news items have always been 'jealously excluded' (Ramsbottom 1985, 15); it reprints sermons that were uttered in the 19th century. A firm editorial line is maintained and it nominates only those preachers who have satisfied strict credal criteria. Members of Gospel Standard churches dress formally and tend to use titles rather than first names. The women are expected to cover their heads and they play no audible part in the meetings except as accompanists to the hymns: rather, their devotion is evident in published testimony (Sharp 1922; Payne n.d.). The worship is solemn: hymns are sung from Gadsby's *Hymnal*. The Grace tradition has in most cases more explicitly assimilated the modern world: its magazine has moved well into the 20th century, its churches make use of modern technology in their worship, and hymns and relationships are often lively. Although in its early days the Huntingtonian tradition was associated with a more expressive culture, it later found a kindred spirit among the sober Gospel Standard group: it seems that after Huntington's death the Independents lost something of his playful humour. Anniversaries are occasions when networks are celebrated and chapels tend to draw visiting parties from churches of their own kind; similarly, there has been a tendency — if not much more — for appointment of trustees, invitations to pastorates and supplies to pulpits to follow party lines.

DISMISSION AND SECESSION

The size of congregations relative to accommodation was a factor in the acquisition and licensing of new premises: 850 believers could hardly have been physically comfortable in the Tabernacle at Brighton. Moreover, the members of some chapels were accustomed to commute considerable distances from home to chapel and to take snacks to sustain themselves between services: for example, lovers of

the doctrines of grace who lived in East Grinstead were wont to walk either to Forest Row or to Crowborough (Chambers 1953, 9–10). It was this habit which favoured the afternoon rather than the evening meeting which persists in the late 20th century in some chapels (Scaynes Hill). In due time groups from particular villages sought 'dismission', an amicable arrangement to release from membership a group of believers to form a church in another place. By these means Shovers Green was formed from Burwash, Rye Old Chapel from Sandhurst in Kent, Cuckfield from Newick, Salem Brighton from Wivelsfield, Ebenezer Brighton from Salem, and Windsor Street Chapel from Ebenezer. Dismission implies the approval of the dismissing church for the destination of its former members: by the same token a church will not dismiss to a church which it disapproves. So on 30 March 1824 Salem in Brighton 'resolved that we as a Church do not dismiss any member or members to those who have formed themselves into a Church in Cavendish street under present circumstances'.

Dismission is a means of keeping relations sweet between one church and another. So when Thomas Wall left the pastorate of Hailsham for that of the Old Baptist church in Mermaid Street, Rye, a letter of dismissal was sought from Hailsham and read to the Rye church in February 1852. It is a procedure that accords with the culture of networks within rural Calvinism. The rupture of a group of believers from its accustomed congregation was offset by the prospect of periodic exchanges for chapel and pastors' anniversaries, with the accompanying teas which Chambers remembered before the days of war and rationing as 'The real Sussex, Sussex at home, and a section of Sussex which can still enjoy a sovereign grace ministry' (Chambers 1953, 5).

However, not all departing groups left chapels with the blessing of their former fellow worshippers. Secession was commonplace, whether prompted by disapproval of the preacher, a dispute over an appointment or a doctrinal disagreement. Pastors leading their churches into 'open paths' were deserted by contingents faithful to the truth they perceived: it was to conserve true doctrine that Galeed Brighton seceded from the Tabernacle, Uckfield from Five Ash Down in c. 1785 and thence to the Foresters Hall in 1820, Wivelsfield from Ditchling in 1763, Sussex Street Brighton from Salem and Brighton Jireh from Cave Adullam.

Conflicts within congregations were often

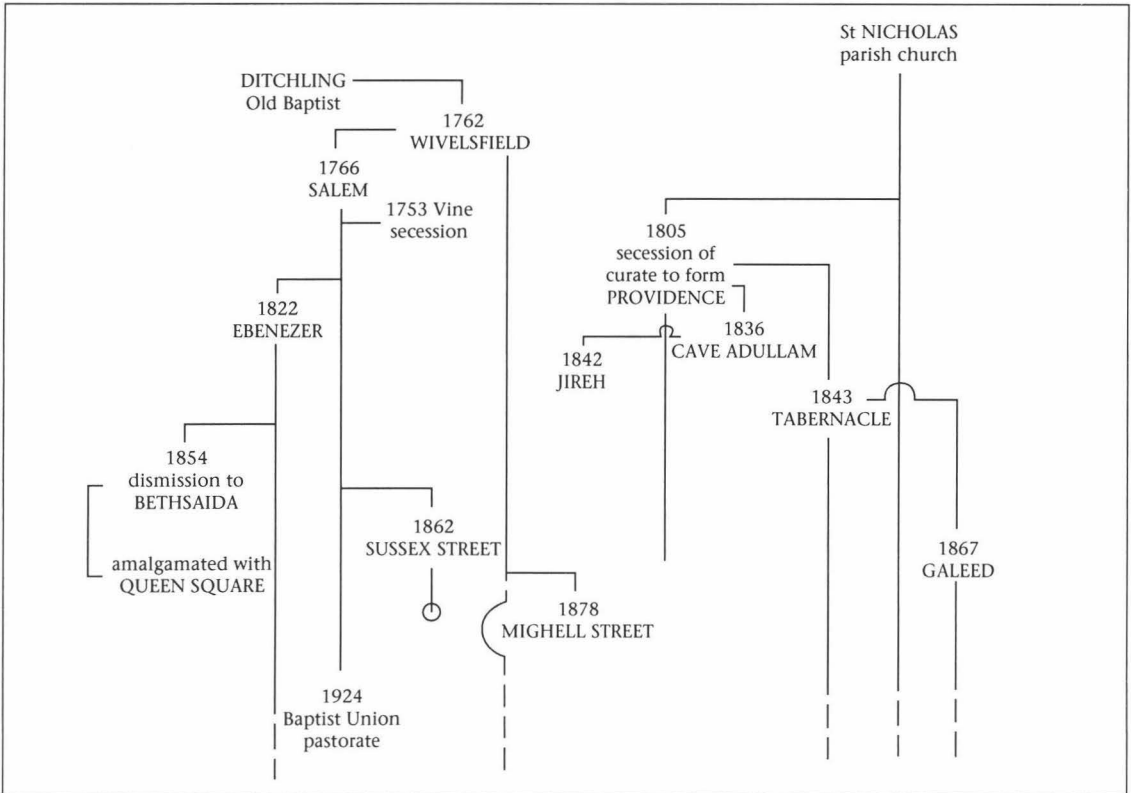


Fig. 4. Some Brighton causes.

acrimonious. James Gibbs (1827) and ten others found themselves locked out of Bethesda chapel in Lewes by one whom Gibbs had invited to supply his own pulpit. Chambers (1953, 103) records that in 1853 Baptists in Rotherfield sealed the new chapel to prevent Mr Russell and his followers from having access to it.

There are normally no half-measures between amicable dismissal and hostile secession, but church rules provide for decent procedures and these are on occasion followed even in circumstances of dissent. So in April 1822 Alex Lambert and 34 members of Salem chapel in Brighton petitioned their church:

We whose names are underwritten, finding we cannot continue in membership with you, for reasons well known to yourselves, wishing to act in conformity to the Churches [of] our denomination, do hereby request to separate ourselves from you that we may unite and form ourselves into a District Church according

to the articles of Faith and Practice agreed to when the Church was first formed, and at the same time, we would express our desire that this separation may be with as much peace and mutual good wishes as possible.

The church minute of 30 April 1822 recognizes the element of dissent:

We deem it advisable, for the sake of peace, to agree to it, which we hereby do . . . but for justice to selves and pastor, they declare invalid the charge of 'equivocation' by Pastor which was made by the separating group. For persecuting the Pastor, the deacons deserve the censure of the Church.

On 21 March 1847 John Grace preached his farewell sermon at Providence Brighton where the pastor, John Vinall, found him incompatible, and took the philosophical view that fission was a means of extending the Kingdom. The perspective of Strict Baptist historians such as Mr Philpot, Mr Paul and Mr Chambers is to stress the importance of correct

doctrine and to interpret fissions of this kind as a matter of keeping the faith. Deviations from orthodox doctrines are frequently lamented by the historians and have been the basis of excommunication by the churches. Jacob Martell was ejected from the Heathfield Independent chapel in 1809 for his leaning toward the doctrine of believers' baptism. 'Sad to say', Chambers reports of Zion at Cuckfield in the 18th century, 'like so many General Baptist churches of those days, the cause drifted into unitarianism and dwindled away until it was finally closed' (Chambers 1953, 111). Later Strict Baptist causes were led by their ministers into 'open paths' or 'universalism'.

In practice, however, fissions may have been rather more personal and partisan. It is likely that preachers were patronized for style as well as content. In an essentially lay ministry, the vocation of preacher was not subject to any educational qualification or national scrutiny, only to the approval of local hearers. Moreover, the Calvinist ethic honoured the lowly quite as much as those esteemed in the secular system. The prospect of approval and respect by a large audience and of relative security were particularly appealing to the economically dispossessed. Of their number several aspired to be preachers. In due time, for example, pulpits were provided for James Weller at Rye, Charles Mathews at Halland, William Roberts at Newick, Mr John Vinall [senior] at Lower Dicker, William Crouch at Pell Green, Thomas Russell at Rotherfield Providence and the former curate of Brighton parish church at Providence Brighton to which newly created chapels some of them took a personal following. The complex relations of local causes is illustrated by the examples of Brighton (Fig. 4) and Warbleton (Fig. 5).

What is distinctive of membership patterns in the Calvinistic churches in the 19th century is that movements were not by gradual attrition but *en bloc*. Affiliation and belief were powerful bonds. Disapproval of a new pastor was a common source of discontent; this is more acute in a democratic system in which the minority party suffers a sense of disappointment than in a system such as that of

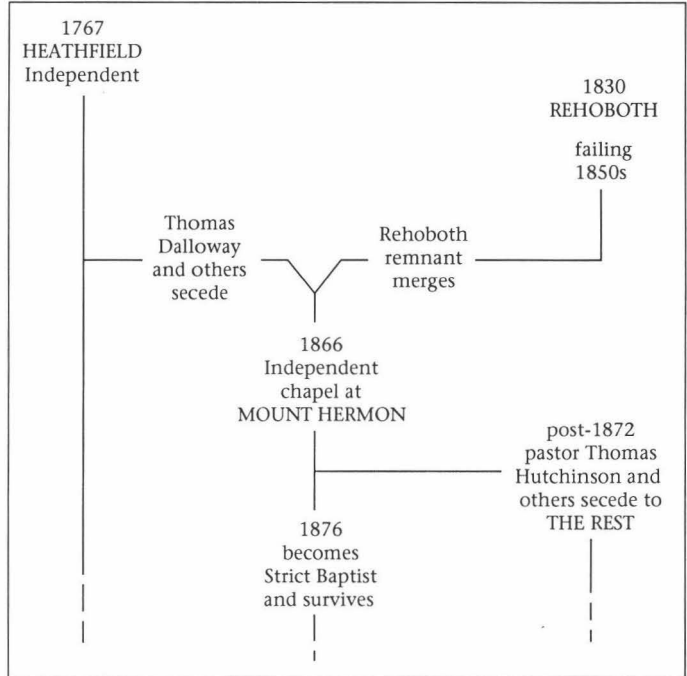


Fig. 5. Calvinistic causes in Warbleton.

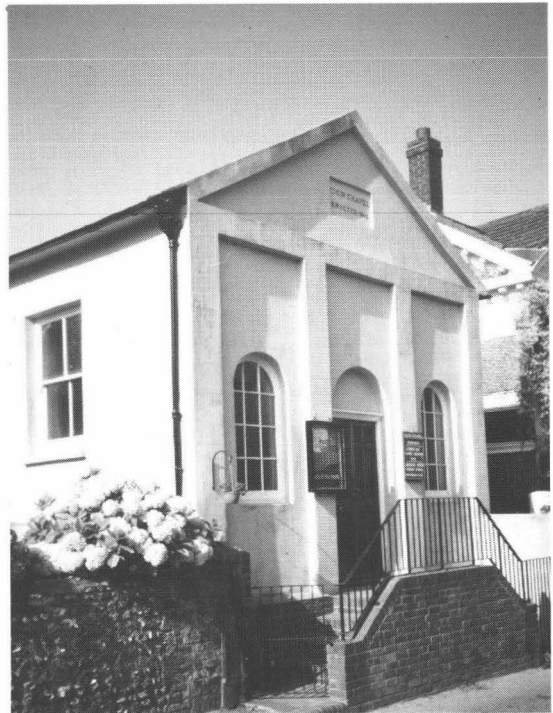


Fig. 6. Zion Chapel erected 1843 at Poynings, West Sussex.

the Church of England in which the congregation as a whole is not invited to have a view in respect of candidates. The minute books scarcely treat issues of fluctuations in membership; they tend rather to be occupied with disciplinary measures taken in individual cases. So members are excluded for immoral conduct and/or 'disorderly walk', adultery, tale-bearing and non-attendance.

There were in the heyday of Sussex Calvinism more aspirants than pulpits and a large number of chapels were originally provided for the benefit not of hearers but of preachers. Among these, Providence chapel in Brighton was built in 1805 for the defecting curate of the parish church and Jireh at Lewes was in the same year erected to provide an audience of 1000 for Jenkin Jenkins. Ebenezer Hastings was built for David Fenner in 1817, Danehill chapel for William Roberts in 1820, Pell Green for William Crouch in 1824, Mayfield was provided for William Burch, the chapel at Hadlow Down for James Hallett in 1849, Ebenezer Broad Oak for George Mockford in 1850 and Bethel at Robertsbridge for James Weller in 1842. A lay ministry to which men are called by divine providence affords a transition from pew to pulpit without having to undergo college training.

In Mr Philpot's assessment at least, ministers of the word were, typically, 'none of them hale and hearty men, but all in varying degrees consumptive invalids, "stricken deer", who laboured on against ill health, and under an ever-present sense of the terrible precariousness of this, their mortal life' (Philpot 1932, 35). So, for example, for the last seven years of his life, William Brown supplied in Brighton on crutches.

For at least a few of those who settled into pulpits there were economic as well as personal rewards. Huntington had been known to pray for new clothes and to receive them forthwith by 'the special interposition of providence': his flock was large and, Southey suspects, 'He may have folded them for the sake of their wool' (Southey 1821, 460, 508). The testimony of James Weller is the story of one who suffered persistent ill health and economic hardships, spending much of his time in debt, before finding security in the pulpit of Robertsbridge.

As it was needful to appear decent when speaking to the people, I sighed and groaned to the Lord to send me some more clothes; and one evening, as I sat by the side of my fire, an impression crossed my mind that the

Lord had heard my prayer . . . Accordingly, when I went the next day to Ulcomb to see my brother, he told me that the same gentleman that allowed me the ten shillings a week during my illness at Margate infirmary, desired me to go down and call upon him... When I was about to leave he asked me if the loan of five pounds for two months would be of any service to me in my trade, and I said it would . . . and then said, 'Stay, I have got some clothes I think will fit you' (Weller 1844, 83-4).

By contrast, as a contemporary chronicler observed, Mr Hull, pastor of Ebenezer Hastings, received an annual stipend from pew rents of over £200, 'a payment considerably in excess of the annual allowance of the majority of Nonconformist ministers, and the possession of which would unquestionably make many a clergyman of the Church of England feel passing rich' ('Argus' 1894). And ministry had its rewards not only in the measure of the stipend but the prestige of patronage: just as Whitefield had enjoyed the support of the Countess of Huntingdon and Huntington had engaged and married Lady Sanderson, John Grace of Brighton for many years found favour with ladies of importance (Philpot 1932, 135). The fortunes of poor James Weller turned in 1839 when his preaching disturbed a certain Mrs Smith of Rye: 'the "great lady" was so blessed under the ministry of this rough countryman that, after slipping a sovereign into his hand, she took him home in her carriage and lodged him for the night' (Chambers 1953, 57).

CONCLUSION

Whether perceived as divine Hand or human agency, the expansion of Sussex Calvinism may be regarded within two phases, more or less corresponding to the 18th and 19th centuries.

The earlier phase was a period of outreach, marked by the magnetic preaching of the Independents, among whom William Huntington was the principal. Audiences were large and personal style, whether in preaching or pamphleteering, was a significant element in the engagement. Thereafter, through the 19th century, new causes were established by cleavages within existing churches and by the dispersal of the faithful. The prevailing ministerial style in this phase had the effect of consolidating the churches and of securing

conformity to correct belief. Norms of doctrine did not now emanate from personal charisma, but were formally invested in the magazines and their editors.

It is tempting to relate the fissiparation of religious organizations in the 19th century to the complexity of contemporary social structures and to economic stratification. In the event, however, the evidence of Sussex Calvinism does not support such an analysis. One of the largest of the Sussex churches, the Independent Providence chapel at Brighton, sustained an economically and socially heterogeneous congregation under John Vinall and John Grace, while village causes at Rotherfield and

Warbleton were each comprised of three factions. The preferred explanation in this paper, therefore, is that the proliferation of causes was proportionate to the number of vocations to pulpits and the aspiration to preach had an economic and social base. Calvinist ministry in the 19th century offered social and economic opportunities which the culturally dispossessed were enabled to claim. While the established church aimed its gospel at an elusive proletariat, there emerged from the rural working class men such as William Huntington, John Grace and James Weller who were able to climb into double-decker pulpits and to look down upon the well-to-do.

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APPENDIX: CALVINISTIC CAUSES IN SUSSEX

NAME	ORIGINS	INITIAL ALIGNMENT	CHAPEL	CHURCH	LATER ALIGNMENT	SURVIVAL/ RECORDS
East Sussex						
001 ALCISTON <i>Providence</i>		Calvinist	1838			Extinct by 1882
002 ALCISTON	Registered 1825	Particular Baptist				Extant 1832
003 BARCOMBE	1809	Particular Baptist		1810		Failed post-1856
004 BARCOMBE <i>Providence</i>	1871	Calvinistic Independent	c. 1890		Grace 1980s	Evangelical Free from 1995
005 BATTLE	1776	Calvinistic Independent				
006 BATTLE <i>Laughton House High Street 'The Room'</i>	Secession 1873	Gospel Standard 1873				Closed 1920
007 BATTLE <i>[Vidler's chapel] Mount Street</i>	Mission	Particular	1780	1789		Open paths 1793
008 BATTLE <i>Zion</i>	Secession 1793		1820			Open paths 1873
009 BEXHILL	Registered 1786	Particular				
010 BLACKBOYS <i>Hope</i>		Gospel Standard	1875	1875		Gospel Standard
011 BODLE STREET <i>Ebenezer</i>	Pulpit	Independent	1835	1864	Gospel Standard 1864	Gospel Standard
012 BREDE	Registered 1792	Particular				
013 BRIGHTON <i>Bethel West Street</i>	Registered 1829	Calvinistic				
014 BRIGHTON <i>Bethesda Church Street</i>	1833	Independent				Extinct by 1851
015 BRIGHTON <i>Bethsaida Hall [Bethesda] [Windsor Street chapel]</i>	Dismission 1854	Baptist				Surviving 1869
016 BRIGHTON <i>Cave Adullam</i>	Secession 1836	Strict	1836			Failed 1880
017 BRIGHTON <i>Ebenezer Union Street</i>		Huntingonian	1810			Surviving 1869
018 BRIGHTON <i>Ebenezer Richmond Street</i>	Dismission 1822	Strict	1825	1824		Grace
019 BRIGHTON <i>Galeed</i>	Secession 1867	Gospel Standard	1868	1869		Gospel Standard
020 BRIGHTON <i>Jireh</i>	Secession 1842	Baptist	1845			Closed c. 1902
021 BRIGHTON <i>Mighell Street</i>		Baptist	1878	1878	with Wivelsfield	Surviving 1907; closed by 1910
022 BRIGHTON <i>Providence</i>	Pulpit/secession	Independent	1805			Extant in West Hill Road

NAME	ORIGINS	INITIAL ALIGNMENT	CHAPEL	CHURCH	LATER ALIGNMENT	SURVIVAL/ RECORDS
023 BRIGHTON <i>Queens Square</i>	Secession	Strict	1856			Open paths 1908
024 BRIGHTON <i>Rehoboth Windsor Street</i>	Dismission 1854	Independent			Gospel Advocate 1874	Extant 1884
025 BRIGHTON <i>Salem</i>	Dismission 1766	Particular	1787	1766		Open paths by 1953
026 BRIGHTON <i>Sussex Street</i>	Secession 1862		1867			Cause failed c. 1895
027 BRIGHTON <i>Tabernacle</i>	Pulpit 1833	Calvinistic Baptist	1834	1834	Strict from 1906	Grace
028 BRIGHTON <i>Zoar Windsor Street</i>		Independent	1841			Surviving 1856; not listed 1862
029 BROAD OAK <i>Ebenezer</i>	Pulpit 1843		1859	1850	Gospel Standard 1890–	Gospel Standard
030 BURWASH <i>Providence</i>		Strict	1829		Gospel Advocate 1872	Closed 1944
031 BURWASH		Particular	1810			Closed ante-1829
032 CHIDDINGLY <i>Pick Hill</i>	ante-1791	Independent			Gospel Standard 1864	Gospel Standard
033 CHILTINGTON, EAST <i>Union</i>	Registered 1805	Independent Calvinist				Extant 1816
034 CROWBOROUGH <i>Branch</i>	Under Forest Fold		c. 1906			Closed 1988 or 1989
035 CROWBOROUGH <i>Forest Fold [Two Chimneys]</i>	Cottage 1832	Particular and Strict	c. 1836	1844	Grace/Gospel Standard	Grace; ESRO
036 CROWBOROUGH <i>Motts Mill</i>	Under Forest Fold		post-1868			Closed 1927
037 DALLINGTON <i>Bethlehem</i>	Cottage 1851	Independent	1866		Gospel Standard 1860–	Closed post-1988
038 DANEHILL <i>Zion</i>	Pulpit 1810	Strict	1815		Gospel Standard by 1894	Closed c. 1967
039 DICKER, LOWER <i>Dunk's chapel [Little Dicker]</i>	Cottage/Pulpit		1812	1813	Gospel Advocate 1871	Open paths; 1980s ESRO
040 DICKER, UPPER <i>Zoar</i>	Pulpit		1838	1839	Gospel Standard 1864–	Gospel Standard; ESRO
041 EASTBOURNE <i>Seaside chapel [Cavendish Place]</i>	Secession 1820	Independent		1857	Grace	Closed 1985; ESRO
042 EASTBOURNE <i>Marsh chapel</i>	c. 1800	Independent				Failed c. 1845
043 EASTBOURNE <i>[Grove Road]</i>	Secession 1840	Strict	1853		Gospel Standard 1857–	Gospel Standard
044 EASTBOURNE <i>North Street</i>	Registered 1823	Calvinist			Gospel Standard by 1894	Ceased post-1953
045 EWHURST	Registered 1786	Particular				

NAME	ORIGINS	INITIAL ALIGNMENT	CHAPEL	CHURCH	LATER ALIGNMENT	SURVIVAL/ RECORDS
046 FALMER	Cottage 1836	Particular			With Salem Brighton	Surviving 1851
047 FISHERSGATE	ante-1887	Strict				Short-lived
048 FIVE ASH DOWN	Mission/cottage 1773	Independent		1784		Independent; ESRO
049 FLETCHING <i>Chelwood Common</i>	1778	Particular				
050 FLETCHING <i>Mawling Down</i>	Registered 1813	High Calvinist				Extant 1829
051 FLIMWELL <i>Providence</i>	Cottage 1824	Baptist	1827		Gospel Standard 1860–1920	Closed c. 1975
052 FOREST ROW	Cottage to 1874		1874		Gospel Standard by 1894; later Grace	Grace; ESRO
053 FRAMFIELD	Registered 1816	Calvinist				Active 1818
	[FRAMFIELD <i>see also</i> BLACKBOYS]					
054 FRANT	Registered 1822	Particular				
055 HADLOW DOWN <i>Providence</i>	Cottage/pulpit 1829	Independent	1849		Gospel Standard 1860–	Hurricane damaged 1987 and closed; ESRO
056 HAILSHAM <i>Providence Terry's Yard</i>		Calvinist	1816			Active 1851
057 HAILSHAM <i>Market Street</i>	Mission 1792	Independent	1794	1795	Strict and Particular	ESRO
058 HALLAND	Cottage 1882	Independent	1892	1886		Independent
059 HARTFIELD	Registered 1785	Particular				Extant 1805
060 HASTINGS <i>Ebenezer [Cow Lodge]</i>	Pulpit 1812	Particular	1817	1818	Gospel Standard 1864	Gospel Standard; ESRO
061 HASTINGS <i>Providence Waterloo Place</i>	c. 1882	Calvinistic				
062 HASTINGS <i>Tabernacle</i>	Pulpit 1854	Independent	1854		Gospel Standard 1894 Calvinistic 1974	Evangelical by 1988
063 HASTINGS <i>Zoar Bourne Road</i>	Registered 1813	Calvinist	1822			Surviving 1851
	[HEATHFIELD Ebenezer <i>see</i> BROAD OAK]					
064 HEATHFIELD <i>Punnett's Town</i>	Pulpit 1767	Independent		1770		Evangelical Free
065 HEATHFIELD <i>Gilbert Memorial Alexandra Road</i>		Independent		1886		Evangelical Free
066 HELLINGLY <i>Providence</i>	Pulpit 1812	Independent	1835			Active 1862
067 HERSTMONCEUX <i>Cowbeech Preaching station</i>	Registered 1800	Independent		1834	Under Heathfield	Extant 1892
068 HOATHLY, EAST <i>Providence</i>		Independent	1849	1869	Strict from 1869	

NAME	ORIGINS	INITIAL ALIGNMENT	CHAPEL	CHURCH	LATER ALIGNMENT	SURVIVAL/ RECORDS
069 HOOE	Registered 1786	Particular				
070 HORAM <i>Ebenezer (Pick Hill)</i>	Pulpit/Cottage					
071 HORSTED KEYNES Cottage		Particular	1861	1863	Gospel Standard 1920	Failed 1947
072 HOVE <i>Providence</i>		Baptist	c. 1887			Closed by 1910
073 IDEN		Strict	1835		Gospel Standard 1860-	Failed after 1909
074 JARVIS BROOK <i>Rehoboth</i>	Secession 1852	Strict	1876		Gospel Standard by 1894	Gospel Stand/Grace
075 LEWES <i>Bethesda St John Street</i>	1813	Calvinistic		1827		Closed 1929; ESRO
076 LEWES <i>Cliffe</i>	Secession 1784	Particular	1819	1784		Open paths; ESRO
077 LEWES <i>Jireh</i>	Pulpit 1805	Huntingtonian	1809	1821		Independent; ESRO
078 LEWES <i>Providence</i>	ante-1851	Independent	1856		Gospel Advocate 1872	Non-Calvinist by 1938
079 LEWES <i>[Bridge rooms]</i>	Post-1838	Independent				United with Jireh 1856
080 LEWES <i>Bridge chapel [sometimes misread as Refuge chapel]</i>	Secession 1856	Calvinistic				United with Jireh 1865
081 LEWES <i>Cliffe</i>	Active 1851	Calvinistic				
082 LITTLE LONDON <i>Bethel</i>		Independent	1879			Closed 1979
083 MAGHAM DOWN <i>Ebenezer</i>		Baptist	1846		with Hailsham	Closed 1994
084 MAYFIELD [Two chapels licensed]	Pulpit 1815	Independent	1850	1871	Gospel Standard/Grace	
085 NETHERFIELD		Baptist	1837			Surviving 1851
086 NEWHAVEN		Calvinistic	1904			Closed c. 1976
087 NEWICK <i>Zion</i>	Pulpit/cottage 1834	Particular	1834	c. 1839		Closed 1987
088 NINFIELD <i>Nazarene</i>	Cottage/with	Independent Bodle Street	1831		Particular by 1851 Gospel Standard 1864-	Failed c. 1971
089 NINFIELD <i>Russell Green</i>	Licensed 1813	Independent Calvinist				
090 PELL GREEN <i>Rehoboth</i>	Pulpit	Calvinistic	1824	1818	Gospel Standard	Closed ante-1987
091 RINGMER <i>Rehoboth</i>		Independent	1834			Closed 1949
092 RIPE <i>Hebron</i>	Cottage	Calvinistic	1830		Strict from 1881 Gospel Standard 1920	Closed 1948

NAME	ORIGINS	INITIAL ALIGNMENT	CHAPEL	CHURCH	LATER ALIGNMENT	SURVIVAL/ RECORDS
093 ROBERTSBRIDGE <i>Bethel</i>	Pulpit		1842	1844	Gospel Standard from 1864	Gospel Standard
094 ROTHERFIELD <i>Bethel</i>	Registered 1710	Particular	1815			Closed 1870s
095 ROTHERFIELD <i>Providence</i>	Secession 1857	Strict	1858	1877	Gospel Standard by 1894	Gospel Standard
096 ROTHERFIELD <i>Upper Chapel</i>	ante-1800	Particular				Surviving 1851
097 RYE <i>Bethel</i>	Pulpit	Strict	1833		Gospel Standard from 1864	Gospel Standard
098 RYE <i>Old Chapel Mermaid Street</i>	Dismission 1750			1754	Open paths c. 1870	ESRO
099 SEAFORD		Calvinistic				Active 1851
100 SHOWERS GREEN	Dismission 1815	Strict	1817	1816	Gospel Standard 1884-	Closed c. 1973; ESRO
101 TICEHURST		Calvinistic Baptist				Active 1851
102 UCKFIELD <i>Rocks Hall</i>	Secession 1785	Particular and Strict	1788			Open paths 1920; ESRO
103 UCKFIELD <i>Foresters Hall</i>	Secession 1920	Gospel Standard				Gospel Standard
104 WADHURST	Registered 1782	Calvinist Baptist				
105 WADHURST	Registered 1809	Particular				Extant 1816
106 WADHURST <i>Town Chapel</i>	Under Shovers Green		post-1851		Gospel Standard by 1920	Closed 1935
[WANNOCK <i>see</i> WILLINGDON]						
107 WARBLETON <i>Mount Hermon</i>	Secession 1866	Independent	1865	1874	Strict from 1876	Grace
108 WARBLETON <i>Rehoboth</i>		'High Calvinist'	1830			United 1865
109 WARBLETON <i>The Rest</i>	Secession 1872	Independent				Brethren
110 WILLINGDON <i>[Wannock]</i>	Cottage	Baptist	1839		Gospel Standard 1880	Closed 1972
WEST SUSSEX						
111 BALCOMBE	Cottage 1845	Baptist	1851	1851		Closed 1914
112 BEEDING, LOWER <i>Bethel Chapel Crabtree</i>		Particular	1835			Failed after 1851
113 BEEDING, UPPER <i>Bethel</i>	Registered 1837	Particular				
114 BOLNEY	Registered 1765	Particular				Extant 1812
115 BOLNEY <i>Providence</i>	Mission 1798 Cottage meetings	Independent	1858		Gospel Standard supplies	Cause failed 1970s
116 BURGESS HILL <i>Providence</i>	Mission	Huntingtonian	1875	1875	Strict from 1875 Gospel Standard by 1894	Gospel Standard ESRO

NAME	ORIGINS	INITIAL ALIGNMENT	CHAPEL	CHURCH	LATER ALIGNMENT	SURVIVAL/ RECORDS
117 CHICHESTER <i>Providence</i>		Independent	1809	1774		Independent/ Grace; WSRO
118 CHICHESTER <i>Zion</i>	1822	Independent				United with Providence 1878
119 CRAWLEY <i>Bethel</i>	1810	Independent	c. 1835		'Reformed Baptist'	Grace
120 CUCKFIELD <i>Zion</i> [<i>Pole Stubbs chapel</i>]	Dismission 1846	Particular	1842	1846		Grace
121 DITCHLING <i>Beulah</i>	1865	With Salem Brighton Strict	1867			Closed 1935-8
122 FERNHURST <i>Ebenezer</i>	Secession 1851	Independent	1852			Surviving 1882
123 FERNHURST <i>Hendly Common</i>		Independent	1848			
124 FERNHURST		Particular	1804			Surviving 1851
125 GRINSTEAD, EAST <i>Providence</i>	Cottage 1876 Closed ante-1967				1894	1890
126 GRINSTEAD, EAST <i>Zion</i>			1810		Sometime Countess of Huntingdon	
127 HANDCROSS <i>Zoar</i>	Cottage 1775 c. 1919	Particular	1782	1780 Never	Gospel Standard 1864	Gospel Standard Gospel Standard
128 HAYWARDS HEATH <i>Jireh</i>		Strict	1879	1879	Gospel Standard 1894	Gospel Standard
129 HENFIELD <i>Rehoboth</i>	Registered 1690 and 1813	Reformed	1897			Grace
130 HOATHLY, WEST <i>Providence</i>		Calvinist	1866	ante-1986	Removed 1986 to Sharpethorne as Evangelical Free	
131 HORSHAM <i>Hope</i>	Cottage 1900	Strict	1903		Gospel Standard	Extant?
132 HORSHAM <i>Jireh</i>		Independent	1814		'Free Baptist' 1882	Active 1897
133 HORSHAM <i>Providence</i>		Calvinistic				Active 1851
134 HORSHAM <i>Rehoboth</i>	Secession 1834	Particular	1834			Grace
135 HURSTPIERPOINT <i>Hope</i>	Established by 1829	Strict	1876	1875		Gospel Standard
136 HURSTPIERPOINT <i>Providence</i>		Independent	1833			Surviving 1851
137 MIDHURST <i>Ebenezer</i>		Calvinist	1840			Closed 1936; WSRO
138 MIDHURST <i>Zion</i>		Baptist	1833			Failed 1886
139 POYNINGS <i>Zion</i>	With Ebenezer, Brighton	Strict	1843			Grace

NAME	ORIGINS	INITIAL ALIGNMENT	CHAPEL	CHURCH	LATER ALIGNMENT	SURVIVAL/ RECORDS
140 PETWORTH <i>Ebenezer</i>		Independent	1887	1911	Gospel Standard by 1894	Gospel Standard
141 PETWORTH <i>Providence</i>	Mission	Independent	1775			Failed ante-1887
142 SCAYNES HILL	Cottage 1864	Strict	1881	1881	Gospel Standard from 1864	Gospel Standard
143 SHOREHAM <i>Providence</i>	Cottage 1860		1867	1880		Gospel Stand/Grace
144 SHOREHAM	Registered 1785	Particular				
145 STAPLEFIELD <i>Providence</i>	Cottage	Independent Calvinistic	1827		'Loyal Protestant Dissenters'	Surviving 1851
146 STOUGHTON	Cottage	Particular				Active 1851
147 WESTBOURNE		Calvinistic Independent				Active 1851
148 WESTBOURNE		Particular				Active 1851
149 WISBOROUGH GREEN <i>Black Bridge</i>		Independent	1847			Short-lived
150 WISBOROUGH GREEN <i>Zoar</i>		Independent	1753		Independent 1851	Evangelical Free
151 WITHYHAM	Registered 1789	Particular				
152 WIVELSFIELD <i>Bethel</i>	Secession 1762	Particular	1780	1763		Grace; ESRO
153 WORTHING <i>Hope</i> <i>'Ebenezer' since 1907</i>	ante-1899	Gospel Standard	1907			Closed 1906 Gospel Standard

KEY

NAME – names by which causes have also been known are given in square brackets

ORIGINS

Cottage – cause arose by small meetings in cottage, part of a house, barn or such

Pulpit – cause founded to establish a preaching place for a particular minister

ALIGNMENTS

Gospel Standard – listing in the *Gospel Standard Magazine* has normally signified official approval and therefore close alignment

Grace – listing in its annual directory signifies alignment, if not formal affiliation

Open paths – alignment with a Baptist church such as the Baptist Union which is not strict in its communion or particular in its baptism

CHAPEL – date chapel built or adapted

CHURCH – date church 'formed' or constituted

RECORDS – most church books and other records are lost; those in East Sussex and West Sussex record offices are marked as ESRO and WSRO

SURVIVAL – in this column are listed the 1996 alignments of causes which have survived and the circumstances in which others have not