

DR DANIEL WILLIAMS and HIS WILL

It is conjectured that Daniel Williams was born in 1643 \pm 1, in or near Wrexham, possibly the village of Gresford. Nothing is known of his parents or of his education on both of which he was reticent if not apologetic. The sermon preached at his funeral gives no details but refers to "Some disadvantages in his education at first setting out." He started preaching locally in 1662 when he was 19. In view of conditions attending Puritans in the year of the Great Ejection and the years immediately following it, it is not surprising that he accepted an invitation to Ireland (Drogheda) as domestic chaplain to the Countess of Meath in 1664. In 1667 he became one of the two Ministers of the Wood Street (Presbyterian) Congregation in Dublin, marrying a widowed sister of the Countess of Meath in 1675 thereby laying the foundation of his fortune. He remained in Dublin until 1687 when he returned to England to make his mark in London. He presumably came with a reputation for he was well received being invited to preach before the Lord Mayor almost on his arrival. That December, according to Herford and Jones (1915) or two years later according to Payne (1979), he became minister of the Presbyterian Congregation in Hand Alley, Bishopsgate and remained there until his death in January 1716 (New Style). His first wife died in 1698 and Williams married a second wealthy widow in 1701. She survived him but there were no children of either marriage.

In London, Williams advanced rapidly as a preacher and man of affairs whose 20 years in Ireland made him an authority to be consulted by King William. In 1702 it was Williams who led the 'Three Denominations' when they presented their loyal address on the accession of Queen Anne and again in 1714 for George I. His leadership of the London Dissenters probably dated from his opposition to the acceptance of the Indulgence (Declaration of Liberty) offered by James II.

As was common throughout the 18th century, his doctorate was honoris causa from Glasgow and then a second one from Edinburgh (cf. Joseph Priestley.) He was not, at any rate on the surface, as grateful to Glasgow as is the normal recipient of an h.c. degree. He argued that such degrees might do harm, might promote class distinctions among ministers, "it will very much irritate our enemies, and heighten their rancours." His elevation to Doctor Williams inspired the publisher of his numerous pamphlets to a long poem called 'The Dissenting Doctors' from which Jones (1948) quotes;

The first Dissenter then I'll here display
 Is Daniel, Doctor Williams I should say.
 Muse, crown his brow, but make his laurel wreath
 As mild and sweet as morning roses breathe,
 He clemency to courage reconciles,
 And in his face delighted Nature smiles,
 For Presbyterian Bishop he may pass
 (Being Head or Chief, of the Dissenting Race),

And this indeed was his standing, taking over from the Salopian Richard Baxter who died in 1691 and this also provides Thomas (1964) with his ironical sub-title: Daniel Williams: "Presbyterian Bishop".

THEOLOGY

Williams was not properly prepared for the ministry and was self-educated. It is the more surprising therefore that he was accepted by the Presbyterians who set great store by an educated ministry (hence, when the Universities were barred, the foundation of the Dissenting Academies), and not by the Independents. The reason for this was, undoubtedly, his theology. He followed Baxter, and although he never espoused Arianism nor Socinianism, he was Arminian. (See note at end for an explanation of these terms.) Most people regarded the latter as a back-door entrance to Arian, Socinian or Deistic doctrines. Because of this, and his outright attacks on the reprinting of Tobias Crisp's book (and by implication the very popular but objectional Richard Davis who preached an extreme Antinomianism) he was severely criticised by an extreme Calvinistic wing of the Dissenters and this lost him an appointment of the (Independent or Congregational) Church at Paved Alley, later to become the City Temple. It also led to a charge of (sexual) immorality of which he was acquitted after an investigatory hearing in the presence of 60 ministers.

LAST WILL and TESTAMENT

I Daniel Williams of Hoxton near London Doctor of Divinity being sound in mind for which I thank my blessed God yet sensible of mortality do make this my last Will and Testament.....

He made provision for his widow together with the house and "all gardens", "jewels and plate..... all household goods, except coppers and cisterns, which I order to go with my dwelling house at all times" (i.e., he would not her interfere with the fabric or fixtures of the house!) There were various

personal bequests...£40 to the poor of his old Dublin ministry; to poor French refugees, £100 to be distributed by his widow at her discretion... etc., etc. Gifts were made to various charitable institutions and some property left to the University of Glasgow to found scholarships for students of south Britain for entry to the ministry. These were the source of the well-known divinity scholarships. Finally, the residue of the estate was placed in the hands of 23 Trustees chosen from ministers and laymen from the Presbyterian Meeting Houses in and around London. According to Watts (1978) Williams left a total of £50,000, but I have not been able to check the source of this estimate. It is repeated by Payne (1979).

In directing his Trustees how to dispose of the available income Williams

Directed $\frac{1}{5}$ th for grants to poor ministers,
 $\frac{1}{10}$ th to ministers' widows,
 $\frac{1}{8}$ th to books for the poor,
 $\frac{1}{8}$ th to divinity students,
 $\frac{1}{8}$ th to schools,
 $\frac{1}{8}$ th for binding apprentices.

The remaining $\frac{1}{5}$ th (20%) "shall be paid by my said Trustees to such educated persons of sound judgment and sober principles, as they shall nominate to preach the Word of God in Wales; a third in South Wales, the other two parts in North Wales."

The $\frac{1}{8}$ th to schools was originally applied to supporting the salaries of schoolmasters, especially in Wales. Each teacher, when the scheme started, received a stipend of £8 p.a. to teach 20 poor children to read and to instruct them in the Christian religion. In Wrexham the stipend was £15 and the children, 25. By 1875 the total paid out in stipends had risen to £220 p.a. and the cost of books given to the pupils to £5 p.a. In that year, under the Endowed Schools Commission, a scheme amalgamated the $\frac{1}{8}$ th to schools with the $\frac{1}{8}$ th for binding apprentices and from the income thus obtained £55 p.a. was to be paid to a teacher in Wrexham and the remainder to a girls' school to be established at Dolgellau to be called "Dr Williams's School".

The £55 paid in Wrexham was for a time applied to the support of the British School and after its closure it secured free places for scholars in the Board School. When these schools were made free, the funds provided Exhibitions for boys and girls going from the Elementary to the Secondary School. The Girls' School at Dolgellau was enlarged from time to time but the source of this money is not mentioned in the 1917 account from which this is derived. The income of the Trust up to 1917 came from property in the shape of farms and houses in the occupation of 30 - 40 tenants situated

in Denbighshire, Essex, Suffolk, London and Westminster. As leases fell in they were renegotiated, particularly those in London and Westminster. It will have been noticed that the famous library has not been mentioned. The nucleus of this was the library of Dr Bates, a Cambridge scholar who held the wealthy living of St Dunstan's during the Commonwealth and was yet appointed chaplain to Charles II though he chose ejection in 1662. On his death in 1699 Williams purchased his library. Williams himself left instructions about his books but totally inadequate provision for the building and librarian he directed his Trustees to appoint. It may be due to Daniel Defoe (himself educated at a Dissenting Academy) who ^{wrote} Williams's Memoires that the Trustees themselves laid the true foundation of the maintenance of the library but since then various schemes of the Courts and then the Charity Commission have altered the financing of the library.

W.C.W.

Notes

Arianism: This was based on the teaching of the 4th century 'heretic' Arius. The Arians, following John's Gospel, believed Christ to have existed before his incarnation as Jesus who was regarded in some sense divine but not 'God'. They accepted the doctrine of the atonement but their beliefs were definitely anti-trinitarian.

Socinianism: Following the Italian/Polish leader of the 16th century, this was a more extreme form of anti-trinitarianism than Arianism. Both the divinity of Jesus and the doctrine of the atonement were rejected. It approximates to 19th century Unitarianism.

Antinomianism: This was an extreme form of Calvinism in which the predestination of the 'Chosen' was assumed to be irrespective of behaviour. It was the belief of the Independents rather than the Presbyterians and was feared to undermine order and morality (as it undoubtedly did in Cromwell's army).

Arminianism: This body of belief called after Arminius (d.1609) contrasted with antinomianism. It involved the teaching that all who showed repentance and good works would be saved. i.e., It rejected predestination. It was associated with latitude in other theological beliefs.

Bibliography

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