

The Voice of Orange Street



ORANGE STREET CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

**Everyone who is of
the truth hears my
voice John 18:3₇**



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GREETINGS TO ALL MEMBERS AND FRIENDS OF ORANGE STREET CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH. In this second issue of *The Voice*, we continue to present some aspects of the church's illustrious history, not as a record but as a reminder of the rich heritage we have and to which we desire to contribute in our generation.

The church's history is really threefold: first, the Huguenot period of its founding by those who fled the persecutions in France. Second, the brief period of the Anglicans when the Rev Augustus Toplady gave his London witness in the closing years of a short but most meaningful ministry. Third, the period of the Congregational Dissenters, Just over two hundred years ago.

In this issue, we present a history of the life and times of the founder of this period, Rev John Townsend, the first Dissenting Minister of Orange Street.

The Dissenters had played no small part in the year of the Revolution (1688). Previously the Church, anxious for uniformity, had persecuted the dissenters, hoping to force them back into the Established Church. But it had a reverse effect. It fostered rather than crushed their spirits. But because they had rendered assistance, they were rewarded by the

Toleration Act of 1688 which recognized the right of public worship outside the Established Church. In 1779 the Dissenting Ministers Act was passed and Dissenters were allowed to have their own place of meeting and to enjoy their own mode of worship. It was then that a few courageous Nonconformists discovered orange Street.

They reopened the building in 1787, erected an organ, introduced the Liturgy and invited the Rev John Townsend to become their first minister. The Church has remained much the same ever since, controlled by Trustees and in matters spiritual was self controlled.

Rev Townsend remained at Orange Street Chapel for 39 years. He left the church happy and prosperous, and free from debt. He died in 1826 in his seventieth year and is buried at Bunhill Fields.

THE VOICE OF ORANGE STREET --- THE PAPER THAT BACKS THE PROTESTANT TRUTH IN BRITAIN



The Rev Derek Lindfield, Chaplain of Caterham School, contributes a short article about the Rev John Townsend, minister at: Orange Street, 1787 - 1826.

In his letter to me, Paul Fauch concludes, "One would-be historian describes John Townsend as not very gifted. Considering his achievements, such description I find almost offensive!" I cannot help but agree. Just look at his achievements.

In 1792 he was instrumental in starting a fund to set up the Deaf and Dumb Institution. A Committee was formed and a house taken in Bermondsey. It is now housed at Margate under the name of the Royal School for Deaf and Dumb Children.

He was one of the founders and contributed frequently to The Evangelical magazine. The profits from this journal were used to help minister's widows.

Townsend was one of the founders of the London Missionary Society, the Religious Tract Society, and the British and Foreign Bible Society. The Bible Society was given its name by him.

One writer has said, "His energy and devotion were amazing. It is scarcely too much to say that no good work was done in London in which he did not at some time take an active part". So much for the man described as "not very gifted!"

All this is without taking into account his founding role in the Congregational School, Lewisham, now called Caterham School. A thriving independent day and boarding school with links with both the United Reformed and Congregational Churches.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the lot of many Congregational ministers was not a happy one. Poverty dogged them. Of particular concern to Townsend was the education of the children of poor Congregational ministers. "As Dissenters, the sons of ministers were excluded from practically every form of public education at that time, and the fees of private schools were far beyond the resources of ministers."

Townsend issued a circular letter, formed a committee and began collecting subscriptions. It was hard work. A school for the children of Congregational ministers did not have the same public appeal as the Deaf and Dumb Institution. But money was forthcoming and as soon as £220 was raised he set about setting up the Congregational School formally.

In response to an advertisement placed in the Evangelical Revue a number of applications were received for the school. Six boys were chosen. As there was not a site for the school they were placed in the Academy of the Rev J Thomas. For almost four years members of what is now Caterham School were members of Mr Thomas' Academy.

That changed in 1815 when a site in Lewisham was purchased. The school remained on the Lewisham site for almost seventy years when it removed to Caterham where it is presently situated. His interest in the education of children of Dissenting ministers did not, however, stop with the

Congregational School. His diary of 1825 reads: "Assisted at the ceremony of laying the first stone of the grammar school at Mill Hill. if the liberality and energy of the present committee are perpetuated in those who succeed them, this establishment will rank as one of the best public schools in the country.

Sadly, Townsend died on February 7th 1826, having preached just a few days earlier at Orange Street and Jamaica Tor. So died a truly extraordinary man. Hugh Stafford, a former master at Caterham School, wrote of him, "He was not trained for the ministry, but no man was ever more suited for it. His saintly character gradually won for him a position and authority which extended far beyond the limits of the Congregational body."

A marble bust of John Townsend stands in the hall of the he Royal School for Deaf and Dumb Children in Margate. A copy of that bust was made two years ago. It was paid for by a direct descendant of Townsend and was presented to Caterham School. It presently occupies the prominent position of honour it deserves in the School Library in the appropriately named Memorial Hall.

THE COVENANTS - CHURCH AND STATE

Below are excerpts from an address given by Harold E Stough, Pastor of Orange Street Congregational Church, at the annual meeting of the Central School of Religion held at St Jude's Balham on October 12 1991.

There are two references to an "everlasting" Covenant. One speaks of 'the blood' of the Everlasting Covenant and the other, in the old Testament, referring to those who had broken the covenant, by opting out, or refusing the redemptive act. But it is everlasting - the Lamb has been slain and no human act can nullify that. It was an agreement between the Father and the Son to redeem His people and His creation.

It has been taught by Dr Bullinger, Schofield, and most Bible colleges that there were seven covenants. These start with the Adamic, then the Edenic. Perhaps so, but the word 'covenant' does not appear until the

Noahic. The earlier ones were promises which Elohim made concerning man's dominion and the Redeeming line from the Garden pair to the intervention of God in human affairs in the Incarnation as the 'Seed of the Woman' who would bruise Satan's head.

If, nevertheless, we still maintain this belief, what assumptions are now inevitable? Are we not dishonouring God by our unbelief? If God could not fulfil His covenants is He then Omnipotent? If God did not know or realise the extent of Israel's disbelief and turning from Him, is He then Omniscient? If He changed His mind and gave the blessings to another, is He then a God of Truth? His Son, our Lord, said that He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. But Bradlaugh and the Freethinkers thought otherwise.

How much wiser and simpler to take the Bible as it stands, accepting in faith what we don't understand, confident that in His own good time He will make all things clear - when the earth will be filled with the knowledge of God. Why be a 'wicked and adulterous generation' inheriting the curses which follow disobedience, when we can accept His Word, obey His Laws, live our Christian declaration and faith and receive His blessings - and be "a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof"

Special Notice

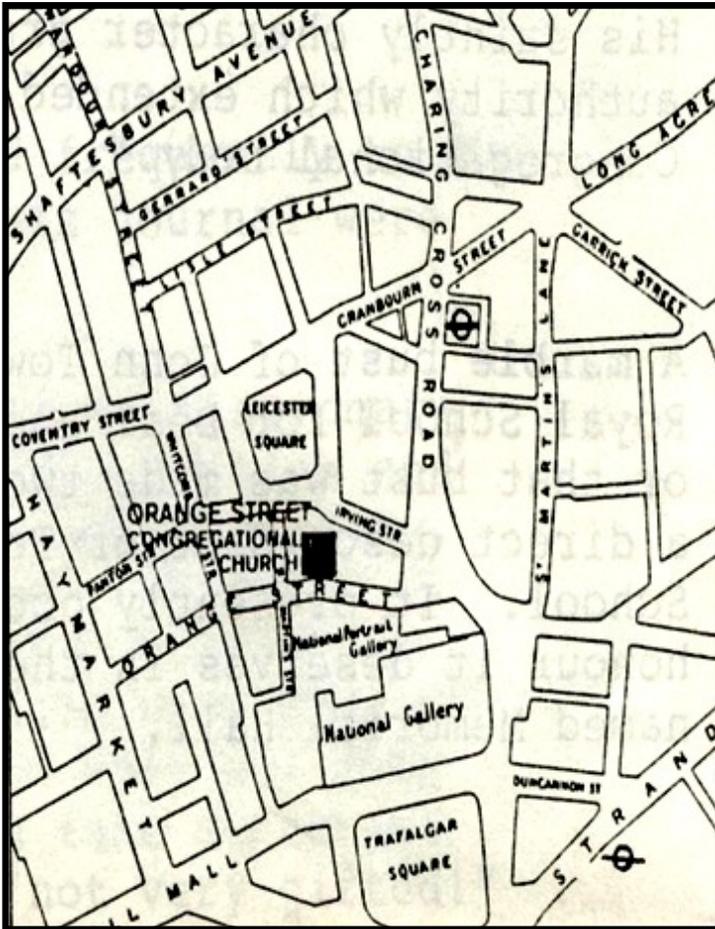
On 15th March the lecture at 3pm, will be given by Rev M Gretason, St Judes, Balham.

A date for your Diary

'The Great Fourty Days' - From the 22nd April - 27th May, a series of six lectures will be conducted by Edgar Dowse, Editor of 'Veritas'. Tea will be served from 5.30 on Wednesdays. Lecture to start at 6.00 p.m. Everybody is most welcome.

EVERY WEDNESDAY evening BETWEEN 6-7 PM Light refreshments will be SERVED from 5pm. Mr. H. E. Stough & friends will take these, studies

Orange Street Chapel's Location



The most direct way of approach is from Charing Cross Road, near the Sir Henry Irving Statue. Orange Street runs from beside the National Portrait Gallery. The Chapel adjoins the Westminster City Public Library. The nearest tube station is Leicester Square.

**THE NEW CHRISTIAN CRUSADE
CHURCH**

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