

Leeds Friends and the Beaconite Controversy

ONE of the drawbacks of the close-knit community of Friends, the result of numerous intermarriages within the prominent families in the Society, was highlighted during the controversy arising from the publication in 1835 of Isaac Crewdson's *Beacon to the Society of Friends*, in which he stated that the Scriptures were the final and sole authority in religion, while the principle of "inward light" was only a "delusive notion". Families were split and old loyalties broken, and the Society lost some three hundred members within a very short time.

When Maria Hack wrote to her son Stephen on 17 June 1837 an account of her "baptism" at the hands of Isaac Crewdson, at Clapton,¹ she mentioned her return to town by stage coach, in company with Robert Jowitt² of Leeds, and the fact that during the ride to town, "he adverted to the changes taking place among Friends". She had felt compelled to keep her remarks on a general level, out of her esteem for him and for his ministry and her fear of wounding his feelings by an unguarded remark. Robert Jowitt may have been equally anxious to avoid an unguarded remark. His own orthodox stand was made clear in his tract *Thoughts on water baptism* (1837); but he was closely connected by marriage with Isaac Crewdson, and many of the younger generation of his own family were moving away from the accepted position.

During the controversy, when a number of Friends resigned their membership, there was apparently an endeavour by some to maintain an existence as "Evangelical Friends", a fact which points to a disinclination to sever their links completely with the traditions of Friends. Maria Hack seems to have felt the danger of "any overt act which

¹ See "The baptism of Maria Hack, 1837, an episode of the Beacon controversy" in *Jnl. F.H.S.*, 46 (1954), 67-77, where the letter is printed with an introduction by Lawrence Darton on the controversy and on Maria Hack's gradual acceptance of the view that baptism and the Lord's Supper were ordinances which were obligatory on all Christians.

² Robert Jowitt (1784-1862) of Leeds, m. (1810) Rachel (1782-1856) daughter of Thomas and Cicely Crewdson of Kendal. For the Jowitt family see Sandys B. Foster, *The pedigree of Wilson of High Wray and the families connected with them*, 2nd ed., 1890, pp. 167-9, 186-7.

might pledge me to membership with any other Society lest thereby I might become entangled with some other yoke of bondage". Consequently she determined to use her visit to London in 1837 "for learning whether our seceding Friends are likely to remain a distinct body of Christians and whether, if so, I could so fully unite in their views as to consider myself a member of their association".³

It was no doubt appreciated by some of the seceders that full membership of another religious body might involve assent to more articles of belief than they were at first prepared for, and for this reason perhaps Isaac Crewdson's willingness to perform the ceremony of baptism privately was a very welcome service. It is possible that if the numbers of Friends in this country had been greater, and if there had not been other bodies like the Church of England, the Congregationalists, or the Plymouth Brethren, ready to absorb those who left the Society, there might have been a separation similar to that which occurred in America. Perhaps not all those who resigned held the same views as to the authority of scripture, the ceremony of baptism and the partaking of the Lord's Supper, but there is probably not sufficient evidence to allow any division into categories. In any event, numbers were not great enough to form "another Branch" and the seceders were gradually absorbed into other religious bodies.

The effect of the Beaconite controversy on Leeds Meeting was not sudden or dramatic, as it appears to have been in Manchester, and at Kendal, where the Braithwaite family was split and some hundred Friends left the meeting.

In view of the close family connections between the Jowitts of Leeds and the Crewdsons, one might have expected rather more secessions than actually occurred.

Isaac Crewdson of Manchester had married in 1803 Elizabeth Jowitt (1779-1855) daughter of John Jowitt (1750-1814) of Churwell in Batley parish, woolstapler, and his wife Susanna (1752-1820) only child of Joseph Dickinson of Adwalton-in-Birstall. Elizabeth Jowitt's sister Rachel (1791-1826) had married as his first wife, Joseph Crewdson (d. 1844) of Manchester, brother of Isaac. Another sister, Mary Jowitt (1786-1846) married in 1808 Isaac Wilson of

³ *Jnl. F.H.S.*, 46 (1954), 72-3.

Kendal (d. 1844) whose sister Esther was the wife of a prominent Beaconite, John Wilkinson of High Wycombe. Moreover, one of the four sons of John and Susanna Jowitt, Robert (1784–1862) who travelled in the coach with Maria Hack, had married at Kendal in 1810 Rachel Crewdson (1782–1856), sister of Isaac and Joseph Crewdson.

Such close family ties were bound to have an influence, and in Leeds meeting it was the Jowitts and the Arthingtons (with whom they were connected) who were the prominent families chiefly affected by the views put forward by Isaac Crewdson, although Robert Jowitt and his wife Rachel remained faithful to the meeting and to the Society to the end of their days.

Other meetings in Brighouse Monthly Meeting were scarcely affected. In the minutes of Brighouse Monthly Meeting for the years 1835 to 1842⁴ disownments (except for some cases in Leeds with which we shall deal later) were for much the same reasons as had always obtained—marrying out, debts, insolvency, excessive drinking, neglect of meetings and so on. There were a few resignations of persons who had joined the Church of England, or found that their views were no longer in accordance with those of Friends, but as such persons tended to decline an interview or to specify what their views were, it is impossible to say with certainty whether or not they had been affected by the current trends towards evangelicalism.

Although the *Beacon* had appeared in 1835, and resignations from the Society took place fairly soon afterwards, it was not until the following year that Leeds Meeting began to show signs of disturbance.

The first hint of trouble came in June 1836 when the Monthly Meeting received a letter from Maria Arthington⁵ tendering her resignation as a member of the meeting of Ministers and Elders. The meeting took time to consider this,

⁴ Carlton Hill Friends' Meeting House, Woodhouse Lane, Leeds, LS2 9EP, Carlton Hill Archives R6 (Brighouse Monthly Meeting Minute book, 1831–1836); and R7 (Brighouse Monthly Meeting Minute book, 1837–1842). Minutes quoted in the following pages are from these two volumes, except where otherwise specified.

⁵ Maria Arthington (1795–1863) was the daughter of Joseph (1757–1803) and Grace (Firth) Jowitt of Churwell, later of Leeds. In 1816 she had married as his second wife, Robert Arthington (1779–1864), brewer of Hunslet Lane, Leeds.

but in the following month, after the letter had been read again, and the matter seriously considered, "this Meeting, under a feeling of much tenderness and love towards her, reluctantly concludes to accept her resignation as a member of the Meeting of Ministers and Elders".

In August 1836 the Monthly Meeting received a letter from Susanna Arthington (b. 1817), eldest daughter of Robert and Maria Arthington, in which she stated that she had for some time past believed it to be her duty to "attend upon the regular preaching of the Gospel" and that feeling comfort and benefit from it, she wished to resign her membership of the Society of Friends. In October, Robert Jowitt, on behalf of the committee (which included Hannah Broadhead and Esther Seebohm, appointed by the Women's Monthly Meeting) set up to visit her, reported that she had received them kindly and they had made such remarks as occurred to them as suitable, but that she was still desirous of withdrawing from her connection with the Society. After due consideration, the meeting accepted her resignation. One wishes that the minutes gave more specific details of what was said at this and other interviews.

Things then remained quiet until the following year, when it was reported at the Monthly Meeting at Brighouse, 17 February 1837, that a communication had been received from the Overseers of Leeds Meeting

The Overseers of Leeds Meeting sensibly feeling the great responsibility attached to their appointment, think that however painful the circumstance, they cannot consistently withhold from the Monthly Meeting the information that a few of their members have embraced the doctrine of Water Baptism and submitted to that ceremony: and therefore they submit the subject to the Monthly Meeting for its deliberation and advice.

Monthly Meeting was nonplussed, and deferred consideration of the matter until the following month, when it decided to refer the question to the Quarterly Meeting for "its advice and assistance relative to our procedure with reference to this important subject". The Quarterly Meeting sent the ball smartly back into the Monthly Meeting's court, and it was reported at the next Monthly Meeting, at Halifax (21 April 1837), that the Quarterly Meeting "after weightily considering" the request, "does not see its way to proceed further than to encourage the Friends of Brighouse Monthly

Meeting to a patient but faithful discharge of their duty as a Monthly Meeting". The Monthly Meeting, having failed to find any other way of expressing their views, echoed the words of the Quarterly Meeting minute, recommending the Overseers of Leeds meeting "patiently but faithfully to discharge their duty towards the individuals concerned".

At the next Monthly Meeting, at Bradford on 21 July 1837, Leeds Overseers had to report that six members of the meeting had embraced the doctrine of Water Baptism and submitted to the ceremony—Maria Arthington, Margaret Tennant,⁶ Elizabeth Jowitt,⁷ Rachel Jowitt junior,⁸ John Jowitt junior⁹ and Deborah his wife.¹⁰

The meeting contented itself for the time being with reaffirming its adherence "to the well known views which our Society has always upheld on the spirituality of Christian Baptism", and left discussion to a future date.

It will be seen that nothing was done in a hurry. Friends are not always in a rush to get things done. The early minute books of Leeds Preparative Meeting contain frequent references to matters being deferred from month to month. In the present case, it is possible that the ill-advised and unfortunate intervention of a committee sent down to Manchester by Yearly Meeting in 1835 had given Friends to pause. Obviously the Yorkshire Quarterly Meeting and the Brighouse Monthly Meeting did not intend to burn their fingers.

The next Monthly Meeting, at Bradford, on 15 September 1837, appointed a committee consisting of Benjamin See-

⁶ Margaret Tennant had come to Leeds from Kendal in 1829. A Margaret Tennant (1806–1857) daughter of Thomas and Elizabeth (Thistlethwaite) Tennant m. Isaac Crewdson (1818–1877) in 1840. S. B. Foster, p. 126.

⁷ Elizabeth Jowitt b. 19 Dec. 1812 at Leeds, dau. of Robert and Rachel Jowitt; d. unmarried 5 Oct. 1886. S. B. Foster, p. 187.

⁸ Rachel Jowitt jr. b. 20 April 1817 at Leeds, dau. of Robert and Rachel Jowitt; m. Andrew Reed of Norwich and d.s.p. 20 Oct. 1854. S. B. Foster, p. 187.

⁹ John Jowitt jr. b. 15 Sept. 1811 at Kendal, s. of Robert and Rachel Jowitt; m. Deborah Benson of Kendal, 5 May 1836; 1 son, 5 daus.; d. at Harehills, Leeds 30 Dec. 1888.

¹⁰ Deborah Jowitt, b. 10 Sept. 1813 at Kendal, dau. of Robert Benson (1780–1857) of Kendal and his wife Dorothy (Braithwaite); m. at Kendal 5 May 1836 John Jowitt jr. S. B. Foster, p. 107, 187.

bohm,¹¹ Newman Cash,¹² Joseph Tatham¹³ and William Harding¹⁴ to visit John Jowitt junior, and, together with an appointment of the Woman's Meeting (namely Esther Seebohm,¹⁵ Rachel Armistead¹⁶ and Mary Hustler¹⁷) to interview Maria Arthington, Elizabeth Jowitt, Rachel Jowitt junior and Deborah Jowitt. In the meantime Margaret Tennant had gone to live within Tottenham Monthly Meeting and Friends there were requested to visit her. Tottenham Friends, however, hearing that she was about to leave again, made no appointment, and she eventually sent in a letter of resignation, "on the ground of difference of opinion on some important points of doctrine" (as the minute of the Women's Monthly Meeting explained).¹⁸ Her resignation was accepted by Brighouse Monthly Meeting 15 June 1838.

At the December meeting at Bradford Joseph Tatham gave a very full account, on behalf of the committee, of interviews with John Jowitt junior and with Maria Arthington. John Jowitt junior frankly acknowledged that he had received the rite of baptism, and that in so doing "he acted under an apprehension of duty founded on what he conceived to be the doctrine of Scripture upon the point". In reply, the committee, "though fully prepared to recognize the right of private judgment, and that to our own Master we must individually stand or fall . . . felt constrained, under a strong conviction of the doctrinal soundness and the important

¹¹ Benjamin Seebohm (1798–1871), of Bradford. H. R. Hodgson, *The Society of Friends in Bradford*, pp. 46–7.

¹² Newman Cash (1792–1866), of Leeds, s. of John and Elizabeth (Newman) Cash of Coventry.

¹³ Joseph Tatham (d. 1843, aged 76), of Leeds, schoolmaster; s. of John and Ann Tatham of Wray, Lancs.

¹⁴ William Harding (d. 1840, aged 77), of Leeds; came to Leeds from Dublin in 1825.

¹⁵ Esther (Wheeler) Seebohm (d. 1864, aged 66); wife of Benjamin Seebohm.

¹⁶ Rachel Armistead, wife of Joseph Armistead (d. 1840) of Leeds; Rachel Armistead was daughter of Benjamin Haslehurst, farmer, and she married, secondly, Joseph Spence, of Birstwith, 1842, and d. there in 1848, aged 78.

¹⁷ Mary Hustler (d. 1871, York, aged 93, *Annual monitor*) second wife of John Hustler (1768–1842) of Bradford; dau. of Daniel Mildred, banker of London. Hodgson, p. 41.

¹⁸ Carlton Hill Archives, L7 (Brighouse Monthly Meeting of Women Friends Minutes 1832–1841), p. 228.

practical bearing of the views invariably maintained by Friends, in regard to the entire spirituality of Christian baptism, and in the feeling of much love and tender concern for this dear young friend, earnestly to recommend to him a serious re-consideration of his conduct and the sentiments which led thereto". The committee also reported that he had received their remarks very kindly, but had given them no reason to expect a change in his opinions.

The committee found Maria Arthington equally firm in her views; she admitted the fact that she had been through the ceremony of water baptism, and was prepared "to assign in her own apprehension, satisfactory reasons for the step she had taken". The committee made "such observations as the occasion appeared to require" but the interview gave them very little encouragement, and "whilst feeling satisfaction in having endeavoured to discharge a Christian duty towards a beloved friend, they could not but regret to find her views so little harmonising with those of the Society of which she is a member" and they felt that further labour would be of no avail.

This was the most serious case of all, and at the January 1838 Monthly Meeting at Leeds, it was considered separately. The Meeting "feeling the importance of maintaining inviolate the testimonies which our Society has always upheld on the spirituality of the Gospel dispensation" thought it right "to express its entire disunity with the practice of Water Baptism", and having seriously considered the committee's report, felt it to be its painful duty to "testify its disunity with her in her views and practice on this important subject". The meeting appointed Joseph Tatham, William Harding, Benjamin Seebohm and Newman Cash to prepare a minute of disownment for the next meeting, and to inform Maria Arthington of the fact.

The minute of disownment, read 9 February 1838 at the Monthly Meeting at Brighouse, sets out the case quite clearly, and shows how painful Friends found the situation—

Maria Arthington, a Member of this Meeting, having according to her own acknowledgment, adopted opinions at variance with the views of our religious society, and openly manifested her disunity with its well known principles and practice, by submitting to the ceremony of Water Baptism, this Meeting, after the exercise of much patience and unavailing endeavours to restore her to those views of the entire

spirituality of the Gospel dispensation which, as a distinct religious community, we have always thought it right to maintain on this and other subjects, believes itself called upon hereby to declare that having thus virtually separated herself from religious fellowship with us, we no longer consider her as a Member of our Society. Whilst we regret to have thus to part from a friend whom we still love, and for whose present and everlasting welfare we feel a christian concern, we sincerely desire her restoration, and tenderly commend her to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build us up, and to give us an inheritance among all them that are sanctified.

That was not quite the end of the case. After the minute of disownment had been read in Leeds Preparative Meeting, and a copy handed to Maria Arthington, the Monthly Meeting received notice that she intended to appeal to the Quarterly Meeting of Yorkshire, to be held at Leeds on 28 March, against the decision in her case. Benjamin Seebohm, Joseph Tatham, Newman Cash and Benjamin Ecroyd (d. 1857) of Bradford were appointed as Respondents on behalf of the Meeting, and the clerk was directed to inform Maria Arthington of this and to give her copies of all the minutes relating to her case. At the Monthly Meeting at Halifax in April, however, the clerk reported that previous to the Quarterly Meeting he had received a letter from Maria Arthington announcing her decision to abandon her appeal against the Monthly Meeting's decision.

Maria Arthington kept up her connection with Friends even after this, and when Mary Wright (1755–1859) completed her 100th year in 1855, published verses in her honour, and wrote a further tribute a few years later—"Thoughts in verse after attending the funeral of our dear aged Friend Mary Wright, who lived to the age of 103 years, and was interred at Leeds, 20th of 3rd month, 1859". Maria's husband, Robert Arthington the elder (1779–1864) remained in membership and continued to serve as Registering Officer for Brighouse Monthly Meeting until 1859, and to live in the house in Hunslet Lane, Leeds, next to the brewery (though the brewery itself had been closed since the occasion when John Priestman had delivered a spirited temperance lecture at the time of Monthly Meeting in Leeds, and Robert Arthington had felt compelled to give up making beer).

Of the children of Robert and Maria Arthington, Susanna had resigned, as we have seen, in 1836, while Phoebe (b. 26 xi 1820) sent in her resignation in November 1839. The com-

mittee appointed to visit her, "feeling tenderly towards this dear young woman", were anxious for her to take time to reconsider this important step, but she insisted on having the business brought to a conclusion without delay, and her resignation was accepted in December 1839. Her sister Jane Arthington (b. 1828) resigned in 1850; their brother Robert (1823-1900) left the Society in 1848 and in his later years attended a Baptist Church in Leeds. He became a millionaire, and is remembered in Leeds today for his eccentric and miserly habits, and for his generous support of foreign missions.¹⁹

The case of the younger Jowitts was dealt with unhurriedly. At the Monthly Meeting at Leeds, 5 January 1838, Joseph Tatham reported on behalf of the committee appointed to visit them the result of two interviews with Deborah Jowitt, Elizabeth Jowitt and Rachel Jowitt junior. They informed the committee that they had received the rite of water baptism "in compliance with what they apprehended to be an ordinance of Christ". The committee "felt deeply interested on behalf of these dear young Friends, and endeavoured in Christian love to impress upon their minds the importance of those views which, as a distinct religious community, our Society has always maintained on this subject, as in its apprehension most in accordance with the spirituality of the Gospel dispensation". The committee's remarks were kindly received, but the young women stressed the fact that their views remained unchanged.

At the Monthly Meeting at Brighouse, 9 February 1838, at which the minute of disownment of Maria Arthington was read, the Overseers of Leeds Meeting had to report that it had come to their knowledge that John Jowitt junior, Deborah Jowitt, Elizabeth Jowitt and Rachel Jowitt junior "have further manifested their departure from the well known principles of our Society, by participating in what is called the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper", and that Susanna Jowitt had followed the example of her sisters Elizabeth and Rachel, and had gone through the ceremony of water baptism. The committee was asked to visit and report on both cases.

¹⁹ A. M. Chirgwin, *Arthington's million* [1935]; F. R. Spark, *Memories of my life*. 1913, pp. 104-116; F. Beckwith, "The Headingley miser", *The University of Leeds review*, ix (1964), pp. 116-126.

A visit was paid, in conjunction with some women Friends, to John Jowitt junior and his wife Deborah, who frankly acknowledged that they had thought it right to participate in the ceremony of the Lord's Supper, and had found satisfaction in so doing. The committee endeavoured to point out how much this increased departure from the acknowledged principles of friends is "inconsistent with the spirituality of the Christian dispensation, in which Friends believe no shadows have any place".

The young friends, however, seemed so satisfied in their own minds both with regard to the principle and to the practice which they had adopted, that the committee was compelled to acknowledge that "however painful the conclusion, any further labour on their part is not likely to be availing".

A similar interview took place with Elizabeth Jowitt and Rachel Jowitt junior, together with their sister Susanna, whose case was brought forward at the same time, by particular request. The young women expressed their views in terms so decided as to convince the committee that no benefit would result from further labour on their part.

No decision was taken immediately, and the case was deferred for some time, the Monthly Meeting in May 1838 giving the committee liberty to pay another visit if they thought it desirable.

At the July meeting, Joseph Tatham reported that Benjamin Seebohm (who was at the time engaged in religious service in Manchester) had paid another visit, in order to relieve his own mind, and had seen John Jowitt junior and his wife Deborah, and also Elizabeth Jowitt (the two younger sisters being away from home), and found that the sentiments of the young Friends had not in any respect changed. After serious consideration the Meeting came to the conclusion that the young Friends had "virtually separated themselves from religious fellowship with us", and three Friends were appointed to prepare a minute of disownment.

The minute of disownment, drawn up by William Harding, Joseph Tatham and Newman Cash was read twice, and approved at the Monthly Meeting on 17 August 1838:

John Jowitt Junr. and Deborah his wife, also Elizabeth Jowitt, Susanna Jowitt and Rachel Jowitt Junr., all members of this Meeting,

having manifested their disunity with the well known principles and practices of our religious Society, by embracing the doctrine of Water Baptism and what is called the Sacrament of the Lord's supper, and by participating in these rites, several visits have in consequence been paid to them, by appointment of this meeting, to endeavour, in the spirit of meekness to convince them of the scriptural soundness and importance of our christian views, in regard to the entire spirituality of the gospel dispensation, in which we apprehend no merely ceremonial and typical rites have any place, and to restore them to unity with the Society of which they are members. Though the labour from time to time bestowed has appeared to be unavailing, yet, in consideration of the peculiar situation of these dear friends, much patience and long forbearance have been exercised towards them; but since they have virtually withdrawn themselves from religious fellowship with us, and, after a considerable lapse of time, evidenced no desire to return to those views and practices which, as a distinct religious community, we have always deemed it right to uphold, as being in our apprehension in accordance with the doctrines of the gospel recorded in the Holy Scriptures, this meeting thinks it right, under all the circumstances of their case, now to terminate its proceedings in regard to them, and hereby declares that it no longer considers them Members of our religious Society. For these dear friends individually we nevertheless continue to feel a very tender regard; and desiring that grace, mercy and peace may be with them, we affectionately bid them farewell in the Lord.

The minute was read in Leeds Preparative Meeting, and a copy was handed to each of the parties.

A year or two later another of the Jowitt sisters, Mary Ann, sent in her resignation. The Monthly Meeting received her letter in December 1840, and when the appointed committee visited her, she acknowledged her obligation to Friends for their attention to her, but still held to her own views, which she had apparently held for some years. Her resignation was therefore accepted, in January 1841. Esther Maria Jowitt (b. 1825), the youngest of the daughters of Robert and Rachel Jowitt, resigned in 1850; her brother Robert Crewdson Jowitt (1821-47) resigned in 1843.

John Jowitt junior continued to be active in Christian work. In 1835 he had started a Sunday school at the Meeting House, and after leaving Friends he joined the Congregational Church, and for forty years was superintendent of the East Parade Sunday School, Leeds, and became chairman of the first Leeds School Board. He maintained his testimony against war, and joined Leeds and Bradford Friends in supporting Cobden when he spoke at a meeting arranged by

the Peace Society in January 1855.²⁰ In 1864, after the death of his parents, he offered for sale to Friends Carlton House and a portion of the Jowitt estate on Woodhouse Lane, Leeds; the property was purchased by Friends for £2,225, the old Meeting House at Water Lane was given up, and new premises were built at Carlton Hill, where Leeds Friends held their first meeting on 19 January 1868.

Another John Jowitt²¹ (the elder of the name in Leeds Meeting) and his wife Mary Ann of Hanover Square, Leeds, resigned from the Society in 1838. He was a cousin of Robert Jowitt, and had married Mary Ann Norton of Peckham Rye in 1829. In the letter of resignation, received by the Monthly Meeting on 20 July 1838, John Jowitt tendered the resignation of himself and his wife, together with their six infant children. The reason for his resignation is not given in the minutes. The committee appointed to visit the family recommended that the resignations should be accepted, but the Monthly Meeting on 17 August 1838 decided that although they would accept the resignation of John Jowitt and his wife, they judged that "it will not be safe, under the circumstances of the case, to deprive the children of their membership, so long as they are incapable of judging and acting for themselves". The six children all gave up their membership as soon as they were old enough to act independently, and two of the sons later became clergymen in the Church of England.²²

The elder brother of this John Jowitt, Thomas Jowitt (1784–1851) of Chapel Allerton, Leeds, remained in membership, but his son Edward Jowitt (b. 1806) of Thorner, near Leeds, resigned in 1836, declining an interview, so that his views are not recorded.

It may perhaps not be inappropriate to ask whether the activities of Dr. W. F. Hook the zealous and untiring Vicar of Leeds had anything to do with the movement among some Friends away from Friends' traditional views. In the

²⁰ Meeting reported in the Leeds Peace Society minute book (Carlton Hill Archives KK 9, pp. 102ff.); Wilfred Allott, "Leeds Quaker Meeting", *Publications of the Thoresby Society*, 50 (1968), 55; *Reminiscences of John Jowitt*, by his children. Priv. pr. Gloucester [1889].

²¹ John Jowitt (b. 3 May 1790 at Leeds), s. of Joseph Jowitt, wool-stapler, and Grace (Firth).

²² S. B. Foster, *Wilson of High Wray*, 167–8. Three more children were born to John and Mary Ann Jowitt, after they left the Society.

1840s and later, Hook may well have had some influence, but he did not arrive in Leeds until the middle of 1837, by which time some members of Leeds Meeting had already gone through the ceremony of baptism, thus separating themselves from the Society. Hook saw the Methodists as his chief antagonists among the dissenters, but at first his main preoccupation was to get rid of the dirt and indecorum in his own church. He complained that he was encumbered by a "dirty ugly hole of a church, in which it is impossible to perform divine service properly".

In a letter written soon after his arrival in Leeds, he said

I do not oppose Dissenters by disputations and wrangling, but I seek to exhibit to the world the Church in her beauty; let the services of the Church be properly performed, and right-minded people will soon learn to love her.²³

One factor which may have limited Hook's influence to some extent, was that to many Evangelicals, in Leeds and elsewhere, he was suspect as a friend of some of the principal writers of the Oxford Tracts, and in some quarters he was accused of being untrue to the principles of the Reformation.

Nevertheless, increased activity on the part of the clergy of the Church of England in Leeds and in other towns must have had some effect. The case of Ann Lees of Slaithwaite in Huddersfield Meeting illustrates this. It was reported to Brighouse Monthly Meeting of Women Friends, 21 August 1840, that Ann Lees was frequenting services of the Church of England. A committee was appointed by Brighouse Monthly Meeting to visit her, and they reported that she laboured under several disadvantages, both on account of living at some distance from local Friends, and from occasional indisposition which prevented her from attending Meeting. The committee found that "at the instigation of the Minister belonging to the Established Church, she had submitted to the ceremony of Water Baptism, without having given the subject a proper consideration" and she said "that were it not done, she thought she should not do it". The report indicated that she had taken the visit kindly, repeatedly expressed her obligation to Friends, and mani-

²³ W. R. W. Stephens, *The life and letters of Walter Farquhar Hook*, 3rd ed. (1879), i. 405.

fested considerable attachment to the Society, saying that she would be sorry to be separated from it.

The case was left in the care of the Overseers of Huddersfield Meeting, who were requested to bring it forward again when they saw occasion. It seems that in this case, Friends felt that the wanderer might in time return to the fold, whereas in Leeds those who seceded were quite definite in their separation from the traditional views of Friends.

From a peak in 1836 membership in Leeds Meeting had fallen by 1840 from 449 to 403. In Brighouse Monthly Meeting as a whole, Huddersfield also lost 3 net, but the other meetings (Bradford, Brighouse, Halifax and Gildersome) each registered a small increase in numbers, so the final membership figures for the Monthly Meeting in 1840, despite the three per cent fall since 1836, were able to register a gain of 4 per cent over the decade as a whole. Leeds at the end of the period was providing scarcely 50 per cent of the membership in a monthly meeting where in the first half of the 1830s its contribution was in the upper fifties per cent.

Resignations in the Monthly Meeting between 1836 and 1840 numbered 26, of which 15 were in Leeds Meeting; five were due to avowed "Beaconite" influence, but since there were those among the other ten who resigned, who declined to give reasons and refused an interview, it is not possible to give a final figure.

Of the 34 disownments by Monthly Meeting in the same period, 22 were in Leeds Meeting, and six of these were due to the "water baptism" issue; eight of the rest were the result of marriages "out"; and the others were for irregular conduct or prolonged absence from meetings for worship. The commonest reason for disownment at any time before 1850 seems to have been marriage by the priest, and the relatively few in Leeds influenced by Isaac Crewdson's views may not have made much impact on the strength of Leeds Meeting, even though the cases caused dismay at the time.

It is significant, however, that, far from increasing strength along with the great growth in the town's population at the time, Leeds Meeting was in fact declining in numbers. At the same time it may have gained in solidarity, and was quite equal to the responsibility, financial and otherwise, which was presented by the move in 1868 from the old Meeting House in Water Lane to Carlton Hill.

No doubt Evangelical Quakerism crept upon them unawares, like the "linsey woolsey garment" which Thomas Shillitoe accused J. J. Gurney of having spread over the Society, and gradually altered their attitudes; but in respect of baptism and the Lord's Supper, they held their ground and could say with Maria Hack's brother Bernard Barton "a sprinkling, or water-sprinkled, sacrament-taking Quaker is a sort of incongruous medley I can neither classify nor understand".²⁴

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²⁴ *Jnl. F.H.S.*, 46 (1954), 71.