

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-66777-8 - The Protestant Dissenting Deputies

Bernard Lord Manning Edited by Ormerod Greenwood

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The D. also reported that an Address had been sent to him as Chairman from the Pastors of New England that he had intended to have presented the Committee on a suppliant manner of them to have gone with him to have presented the same to his Majesty But the Duke of Newcastle had told him he had better put it alone or at most not bring more than three with him And therefore he only desired that Mr. Elihu Palmer to accompany him to present the same

Devery also acquainted the Deputies that he had opened a Subscription to defray a sufficient sum of money to defray the yearly charges of the Deputation.

Ordered that the Chairman write to the Ministers of the three Denominations within Ten Miles of London some time in this Month of October to desire them to returne their Deputies for their respective Congregations for the ensuing Year to him by the last Day of November.

Ordered that the first Meeting of the New Deputies be in this place on the second Day of Decr. next And that on that Day a new Committee be chosen by Ballot beginning at 9 in the Morning ending at 3 in the Afternoon - Hereof is accordingly given to the D. Deputies

Ordered that seven of the Committee be a Quorum Adj?

No Committee yet last Wednesday in Oct?

Margin Genl Meeting 8th Oct?

Report from the Comm. to the Deputies. viz.

Relating to the printed And. of Services of the Deputation

Sundries relating to the Carnarvonsh. Riot

Relative to a Freeholder's being Impressed

The Scary of War to be waited on once more

Also the Bishop of Bangor & Mr Bodvil, Members for

A Meeting House settled at Anglesea. Carnarvon

An Address to the King from the Pastors of New England,

A Subscription opened to defray the yearly charges of the Deputation

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BY
BERNARD LORD MANNING

EDITED BY
ORMEROD GREENWOOD



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Vol. I, p. 291. 8 October 1746.

The page has a threefold interest. It records the first visit of the Deputies to court as representatives of New England; it minutes the opening of their permanent funds; and it refers to typical cases of riot and alleged illegal impressment.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

THIS WORK was left uncompleted by its author on his death in 1942. The editor owes it therefore to his readers to describe his own connection with the book, the condition in which its author left it, and the extent of his revision.

In November 1931 the Protestant Dissenting Deputies appointed a sub-committee to discuss with Bernard Manning the preparation of some account of their history for their forthcoming bi-centenary in 1932. It was at first intended that the history should be a short popular account for the Deputies, their constituents, and Nonconformists in general, to be based on the series of Minute Books, which had been preserved since the inception of the Deputies in 1732.

When, however, he had reviewed the material contained in the 7,500 pages of the Minute Books, and the number of important issues which they affected, Manning became convinced that a summary treatment was inadequate; he felt that 'a fully documented history, giving the dates of the Minutes concerned at all important points, ought to be written . . . it is more laborious, but I think that the political importance of the Deputies . . . justifies it . . . the Minutes seem to me too valuable a historical document to warrant a less minute treatment.'¹

A more detailed estimate of the importance of the material is given in a letter which Manning wrote to the Cambridge University Press in 1938:

As far as I am aware no one has ever read these Minutes except for severely practical purposes. They appear to be unknown to 19th-century historians. Even a writer like Halevy has the most sketchy notions about the Deputies. Yet they are the most important of all the keys to an understanding of the political importance of Dissent in the 18th and 19th centuries, because they record the day-to-day activities of

¹ From a letter addressed to the Deputies' Treasurer, 1 May 1938.

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the most active of all the Dissenters. Much has been made of the political activities of the Methodists, of the importance of the Quakers and Unitarians; but the three historic bodies of Dissenters have never taken their natural place in the story. They acted until far into the 19th century mainly through the Dissenting Deputies. The Deputies, as their Minutes shew, were behind nearly all the legislation which is vaguely attributed to the Dissenting Interest and left at that.

After indicating the range of the book, he continues:

I should like to make it clear that the Minutes are of wider interest than denominational or ecclesiastical. There is no feature of 19th-century history in particular which they do not illustrate. They provide a definite example of the way in which public opinion organized and mobilized itself and made itself effective in the Parliamentary government of that age. They shew one form of ecclesiastical opinion modifying general tendencies of legislation. They bring out the peculiar position of the Dissenting Bodies under the Toleration Act with their privileged status on one side and their lack of ordinary rights on the other. In short they illustrate in detail and at close range some unique features of English political thought and practice.

The circumstances of this letter may provoke a suspicion of partiality; it is for the reader to judge whether the claim is too great.

The traditional patience of the Deputies has been exercised over their history. Soon after he had undertaken the work, Manning was unexpectedly called to the Senior Tutorship of his College, a position which left little opportunity for detailed historical research. He discussed the book with me, and I was able to assist him by making an abstract of the Minute Books (which had been deposited in the Guildhall Library of the City of London in 1933), and by making drafts of some sections of the proposed book, in which we hoped at one time to collaborate. Although this did not prove possible, I felt when he died that I was perhaps better placed than others to put the work in order and prepare it for publication.

Manning had spent the greater part of several Long Vacations on the work, and before the end of his life had arranged for the Minute Books to be withdrawn from the Guildhall for closer study. He had completed about two-thirds of the book in revised form in typescript; and there were manuscript drafts of varying

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degrees of completeness for the remaining third. From an outline of the contents which he had left, it was clear that there were no important sections missing; on the other hand it was clear that the manuscript sections, particularly, were not in final form. I have had to take the responsibility of revising, of excising, and sometimes of adding, as I thought necessary. The shape of the book, too, has undergone some alteration.

In its original form, it was proposed to reprint the *Sketch of the History of the Deputies*, published in 1813, as part of the present work. In spite of its charm and interest, this has proved impracticable; among other difficulties, it involved a harassing amount of cross-reference. The long 'Introductory Essay' which Manning wrote for the *Sketch* has therefore been broken up, and the sections assimilated to the later history to make one continuous story.

I have felt free to condense where I could, and to prune roughnesses of style in the unrevised sections; but not to delete expressions of opinion, even where these may sometimes seem too forceful for an academic work. It may well be that the author himself would have modified these; but because to those of us who knew him it is precisely at those moments that Bernard Manning speaks most clearly and with his own accent, I have left them untouched, especially where my own attitude is different. For it is not the only value of this book that it treats of a neglected side of 18th- and 19th-century history: it also reveals a man.

O. G.