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Oliver Heywood, the writer of the <i>Narrative</i>, was so of the best kind of the early Nonconformist minister that Joseph Hunter made him the central figure of his book <i>The Rise of the Old Dissent, Exemplified in the Life of Oliver Heywood, one Founders of the Presbyterian Congregations in the County of York, 1630-1702</i>, published in 1842. Heywood was born at Little Lever, Bolton, the son of an enterprising business man, Richard Heywood. The date of his birth was not known to him, but he was baptised at Bolton Church on 15 March, 1629, according to his own account,[1] but the entry in the parish register[2] shows that he was baptised in March, 1628/9, the day of the month having been worn away. Amongst his schoolmasters were William Rathband, of Blackley, and George Rudall, of Anderton. He matriculated at Cambridge in 1646, and was admitted a pensioner at Trinity College, 12 June, 1647. He graduated B.A. in 1650.[3] In the same year he became curate of Coley, a chapelry of Halifax, and two years later applied to the Bury Classis for ordination.

His ordination was ordered to be on 4 August, 1652, but there is no record in the Minutes of its actually having taken place,[4] but Heywood himself gives an account of the ordination[5] on that date. At Coley Heywood remained until 29 June, 1662, when he was suspended from exercising his ministry for non-appearance and contempt in a case in the Diocesan Courts. Two months later came the Act of Uniformity which disabled him for the rest of his life. Though dispossessed of Coley Chapel he continued to live in the neighbourhood, preached when he had opportunity, was excommunicated and imprisoned several times. In 1672 he was licensed as a Presbyterian teacher, and when in 1687 illegal

[1] <i>Diaries</i>, i. 150.

[2] Printed by the Lancashire Parish Register Society.

[3] Venn, <i>Alum. Cantab. </i>

[4] Shaw, <i>Bury Classis Minutes</i>, 131.

[5] <i>Diaries</i>, i. 166.

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toleration was granted by James II, became minister of North- Chapel built by or for him and there he first preached in July, 1688. Soon afterwards came legal toleration, and hence- forward Heywood continued his work undisturbed. He did not confine his preaching to his own locality but at all times, whether tolerated or not, travelled in Yorkshire and Lancashire preaching wherever he went. He died at Northowram on 4 May, 1702, and was buried in Halifax parish church. His first wife, the mother of his children, was the daughter of John Angier; his second wife was also of a great puritan family. Heywood was author of many published books, including lives of his father- in-law Angier and his brother Nathaniel Heywood, also one of the ejected ministers. He also left voluminous manuscripts most of which were printed by the late J. Horsfall Turner in Oliver Heywood's Diaries, etc., 1882-85, 4 vols., and The Nonconformist Register, 1881. An unpublished manuscript of Soliloquies is in the Reference Library, Manchester.

The Narrative here reprinted was Heywood's tribute alike to a relation and a revered brother in the gospel. Angier died in September, 1677, and in June, 1678, Heywood began work on the Narrative, though that was not published until seven years later. On 21 June, 1678, Heywood, who had been in Manchester, "rode to Denton, conversed with cozen Angier, lookt at my father Angiers manuscripts." On 18 March, 1678/9, he says, "I stayd at home, had several visitors, my god helpt me in writing part of my father Angiers life wch multiplied in my hands at night." On 27 March, 1679, he again "stayd at home writ my father Angiers Life, and god brought sundry things to my remembrance.” In July of the same year he was still working at the Narrative. In March, 1683/4, he again records that, "I writ my father Angiers life." Though dated 1685 the Narrative was actually published in September, 1684, when Heywood received eight dozen copies, the distribution of which he records, but there is nothing to show whether these were complimentary copies or copies which had been subscribed for.[1]

The long delay in completing and publishing the Narrative may

[1] Heywood, <i>Diaries</i>, ii. 66, 88, 89, 102, 215; <i>Yorkshire Genealogist</i>, 1890, P. 240.

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perhaps have been out of consideration for John Angier, junior, who is severely criticised in the book. He was alive when his father died. The publication may have been deferred until his death, the date of which is unknown.

The original manuscript of the Narrative came into the possession of John Priestley, who presented it to Ralph Thoresby, in whose catalogue of "Manuscripts in Octavo " it is described "No. 243. The Life of Mr. John Angier of Denton Com. Lanc. by Mr. O. Heywood, with notes and additions by Mr. Newcome of Manchester, etc. Sermons of the said Mr. Angier, Mr. Sharp of Leeds, Mr. John Firth of Mansfield, ... and Advice to an only Child, by Mr. James Creswick of Beghall; the originals in their own writing. Don. D. John Priestley. Note the first and last of these are now printed." Thoresby also possessed the manuscript of "The Tryall of Faith. Sermons preached by Mr. John Angier of Denton Com. Lanc. 1643."[1]

The 1685 edition of the Narrative is very scarce. It was reprinted in the first volume of William Vint's edition of Heywood's Whole Works, also now scarce, in 1827.

[1] <i>Museum Thoresbyanum</i>, 1712, PP. 540, 541, included in <i>Ducatus Leodiensis</i>