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ISSN 0965-6235

Congregational
History Society
Magazine

Volume 6 Number 5
Spring 2012

**THE
CONGREGATIONAL
HISTORY
SOCIETY
MAGAZINE**

Volume 6 No 5 Spring 2012

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EDITORIAL

This issue of the magazine includes a paper from the tireless historian of Scottish Congregationalism, Willie McNaughton, who turns his attention to the links between early Congregationalism in Scotland and itinerancy. CHS members might note how many ministers from south of the border spent preaching tours in Scotland at that time.

As most CHS members will already know, this year marks the 350th anniversary of the Restoration settlement of the English church in 1662, and the consequent ejections of nonconformist clergy. In response, we consider the commemorations, made by English Congregationalists and others in 1962, to the tercentenary of the Great Ejection.

We also welcome Lesley Dean's unusual article which arises from a discovery found in her late mother's papers. It is known that British churches gave clothing and other aid to churches in Europe soon after the Second World War and institutional links were forged. However the personal links which existed, and survived the war, have received little attention. Yet it is likely that others in the churches had contacts with people in newly liberated Europe. The story of such friendships should be recovered, if possible.

NEWS AND VIEWS

This year marks a plethora of anniversaries and festivals of various kinds and importance. It is Queen Elizabeth II's diamond jubilee year and, whatever our views on the monarchy as an institution, we should note that no churches in Britain ignored her accession to the throne in February 1952, following the death of her father, King George VI. Several of our readers, like the editor, or relatives of our readers, might recall being given commemorative cups, saucers, plates etc, at the Coronation in 1953.

Congregationalists might in particular remember that the campaigning journalist, W T Stead, who was the son of a Congregational minister, died a century ago. He was among the 1500, drowned on the RMS Titanic on 15 April 1912.

In addition, those with sporting interests especially might reflect, in a year when the Olympic Games come to London, on the continuing interest shown in the outstanding Scottish Olympian athlete and Congregationalist, Eric Liddell, who died in the service of the London Missionary Society in China.

It is also 40 years since the United Reformed Church and the

Congregational Federation made their first appearances. We are pleased that increasingly these bodies find it possible to co-operate and offer each other's members mutual respect and friendship. Most hopefully, individuals from all the branches of Congregationalism have maintained and developed friendships, effectively transcending (and perhaps undermining) institutional divisions.

CORRESPONDENCE

Recently some members have offered appreciative comments on the *CHS Magazine*. Among them we have received a gracious note (on a beautiful card of Chinley Chapel, in Derbyshire—a thoughtful touch) from Nigel Lemon who has written, after having received our last magazine, Autumn 2011. He confesses his intention for some time to acknowledge his pleasure with the *CHS Mag*. He writes that “as ever” the contents are “interesting, illuminating and stimulating”, especially noting Nigel Smith’s reflections of Geoffrey Nuttall whom he comments “is always a fascinating subject”. We thank Nigel Lemon for his encouragement and wish him well with his researches. He is considering undertaking work on that unusual 18th century itinerant preacher, Captain Jonathan Scott.

In addition, Raymond Brown has written to the editor from Cambridge to say that he too enjoys the CHS’s “excellent magazine” and is “really happy to be one of its grateful subscribers”. He appreciates the “informative articles” and “splendid book reviews” but also had overlooked the fact that last November marked the centenary of Geoffrey Nuttall’s birth. As a result he found “Nigel Smith’s article ... a choice reminder of all we both owe to him”. Raymond preached movingly at Geoffrey’s funeral and his support is welcome too.

None of those involved in the production of the *CHS Mag* are foolish enough to think that such comments prove that our magazine needs no improvement, but favourable notices and constructive criticism from informed observers are always helpful.

NOTES FROM THE SECRETARY

Celebrating Dissent in an Anniversary Year

As the editor has noted, this is a year of anniversaries and 2012 is a significant year of anniversaries for anyone associated with a society interested in Congregational history. Not long ago I found myself in Cheltenham’s synagogue. Built when Queen Victoria came to the throne, it is furnished with items from a

then disused synagogue in London which makes the furnishings of Cheltenham's Regency Synagogue among the oldest in the country. To mark the occasion, a Jewish historian and raconteur entertained the congregation with an account of the experience of Jewish people in Britain. Full of fun, his was nonetheless a dark humour. He told a tale of persecution, expulsion and prejudice. Many of those present had experienced the holocaust, all the Jewish people there had family members who had been victims of that holocaust.

One particular comment made me stop and listen more attentively than before. In his whistle-stop tour of Jewish history in these islands, the speaker told of the moment when the Jews returned to this country, not long before the furnishings of the Cheltenham synagogue were originally designed. It was, of course, during the Commonwealth, at the instigation of Oliver Cromwell, that Jews were permitted to return.

As we mark the 350th anniversary of 1662 and the Great Ejectment, it would be all too easy to mark a moment of intolerance. Better, maybe, to seek something else in our dissenting heritage. Should we not look to the commitment to freedom of speech, articulated by John Milton in his *Areopagitica*? Should we not look also to the openness of John Bunyan on the question of baptism?

It is 400 years since the Baptist Thomas Helwys, returning to London, from the much freer Holland where the exiled Separatists had sought refuge, made his momentous statement on the freedom of religious belief. In 1612 Helwys wrote that the king of England "is but an earthly king ...: for men's religion to God is betwixt God and themselves; the king shall not answer for it, neither may the king be judge between God and man. Let them be heretics, Turks, Jews or whatsoever, it appertains not to the earthly power to punish them in the least measure."

Stirring words indeed. And the seeds of a toleration that would slowly come into its own, as the seventeenth century passed into the eighteenth. In this 350th anniversary year of 1662, we mark the 200th anniversary of the ultimate repeal of the Five Mile Act and the Conventicle Act, in what came to be known as 'the Little Toleration Act' of 1812.

That was a significant year in our history for another reason for it was the year of Charles Dickens' birth. Commentators on Dickens in this bi-centenary year, have found it difficult to know what to make of his religious affiliations. Rejecting the established church and drawn to a Unitarian church, people find him difficult to pin down. It behoves us to seek out in Dickens the dissenter and echo in our age his commitment to dissent.

Written in 1849 but not published until 1934, Dickens' 'The Life of our Lord' reflects a lifelong allegiance to Christ. Indeed in its final words it outlines Dickens' understanding of Christianity.

“Remember! It is Christianity TO DO GOOD always—even to those who do evil to us. It is Christianity to love our neighbour as ourself, and to do to all men as we would have them Do to us. It is Christianity to be gentle, merciful, and forgiving, and to keep those qualities quiet in our own hearts, and never make a boast of them, or of our prayers or of our love of God, but always to shew that we love Him by humbly trying to do right in everything. If we do this, and remember the life and lessons of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and try to act up to them, we may confidently hope that God will forgive us our sins and mistakes, and enable us to live and die in Peace.”

One insight, apparent in his novels very early on, is his impatience with the hypocrisy of much organised religion. Indeed, in the preface to the first of those novels, *Pickwick Papers*, Dickens, at great length, defends his satirical comment on church people. We might well take this to heart as we reaffirm the importance of dissent in this anniversary year. He draws a distinction between “religion and the cant of religion, piety and the pretence of piety, a humble reverence for the great truths of Scripture and an audacious and offensive obtrusion of its letter and not its spirit in the commonest dissensions and meanest affairs of life. ... It is always the latter, and never the former which is satirized here.”

Dickens recognised no bars to the way he satirised hypocrisy at every level, not least in the church of whatever hue.

“Further, that the latter is here satirized as being, according to all experience, inconsistent with the former, impossible of union with it, and one of the most evil and mischievous falsehoods existent in society—whether it establish its headquarters, for the time being in Exeter Hall or Ebenezer Chapel, or both.”

He protested “against that coarse familiarity with sacred things which is busy on the lip, and idle in the heart”. It is, however, to the final comment of that keynote paragraph that dissenters should pay particular attention. In this anniversary year we should do well to aspire to the ideal that Dickens finds in an earlier novelist, Jonathan Swift.

“It is never out of season,” Dickens maintained, “to protest against the confounding of Christianity with any class of persons who, in the words of Swift, have just enough religion to make them hate, and not enough to make them love, one another.”

In a 21st century which has seen a resurgence of fundamentalisms in different religions, we should do well to turn back to before the coining of the word ‘fundamentalism’ to the 200th, 350th and 400th anniversaries that we can mark this year and protest as vigorously as ever against those “who have just enough religion to make them hate, and not enough to make them love one another.”

THE CHS VISIT TO CARRS LANE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH, BIRMINGHAM: 13 MAY 2011

I had wanted for some time to find out more about this church, having heard much about it, so I was very pleased that the History Society had decided on Carrs Lane as its venue for the May outing and for its Annual General Meeting.

It seems that the present congregation, based in this modern church building at the heart of the city, the third successor to the earliest church on this site, which dates from 1748, continues to carry on that tradition of contributing in a significant way to society and civic life in Birmingham. The current minister, Neil Riches, gave us a great welcome, with a talk on the church's life and took us on a tour of the building. The site is unusual, being on a hill so there are entrances at various levels. There is a whole warren of rooms underneath and next to the chapel, well-equipped for all sorts of community uses. The church has given careful consideration to its lettings policy. It was also good to see that the building hosts a Christian bookshop, not so common in the present economic climate. The chapel itself is asymmetrical, a very flexible space with a gallery and facilities for different worship styles. We had both our lunch and our meeting and talks in that same space.

Dr Alan Argent spoke in the afternoon (followed by a lively questions and answers session) on R W Dale, J H Jowett and several of the other former ministers of Carrs Lane, all of them significant in their day, although he does not think the history of this or any church should be told only through the ministers. Dr Dale is probably the most famous of the former ministers and was very well-known, not least for his strong ethical input into the life of Birmingham and for his campaigning on many issues, including, topically, his opposition to religious education in schools. It seems that many of the important industrialists in that growing city in the nineteenth century attended Carrs Lane and membership peaked, twelve years after Dale's death in 1907 when the figure was 1253. The minister then was the modest J H Jowett who moved, amid huge media interest, in 1911 to New York as pastor of Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church and then returned in 1918 to England as minister of Westminster Chapel. Earlier in the nineteenth century, Dale's predecessor, to whom he had been the assistant, John Angell James, was minister at Carrs Lane for 54 years from 1805. He had played a big role in the setting up of the Congregational Union of England and Wales and was a supporter of the campaign against slavery. Other ministers who were famous in and beyond Congregational circles include the combative pacifist Leyton Richards, Sidney Berry, who proved to be a masterful and diplomatic administrator in the Congregational Union, and Leslie Tizard, still remembered as a fine preacher and sensitive pastor, who died aged 55 in 1957.

The collection of photographs at Carrs Lane included pictures of the former chapels on the site and also of the Digbeth Institute (near the famous coach station) which the church, realizing Jowett's vision, opened in 1908 for educational purposes and for further outreach to the community. It fulfilled a great educational and social need until it closed in the 1950s. (A group of us felt impelled before leaving Birmingham to visit the building which is now converted into a night club and to make ourselves known to the staff there, as we sat and chatted over a drink.)

The visit to the church in May 2011 prompted me to pick up and read *The Cross and the City*, a series of essays commemorating Dr Dale's life and work, which was published to mark the centenary of his death in 1995, and which many CHS members probably read when it came out as a supplement to the regular magazine in 1999. I can discern the great influence of Dr Dale on other Congregational thinkers.

Christine Denwood

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COMMEMORATING THE 1662 EJECTIONS IN 1962

In 1961, John Huxtable was elected to the chair of the Congregational Union of England and Wales (CUEW) which meant that he would serve in that office for the year from May 1962. The CUEW's secretary had reported to the annual assembly, in Westminster Chapel, on 15 May 1961, that all the other nominees for the chairmanship had withdrawn in favour of Huxtable who was declared to be duly elected. He acknowledged his election.¹

Huxtable was then among the most prominent figures in English Congregationalism, although at that point he did not exercise the singular influence which he would in later years. He was one of two representatives of the CUEW, with Dr C H Dodd, on the board then responsible for translating the New English Bible, and had spoken on the progress of their work to the assembly.² The secretary of the CUEW at that time was the testy Howard Stanley who, on coming to office in 1956, had quickly reversed his former attitudes and in London had adopted a more positive approach to ecumenism than he had held when serving as secretary to the Lancashire Congregational Union and moderator of the Lancashire province 1945–1956. As a result of his 'next ten years' policy in the CUEW, Stanley had set up several commissions to enquire into the state of Congregationalism and to recommend changes.³

Huxtable had himself been involved in many of these initiatives (he was the chairman of commission 1 on church unity) and his easy charm and friendliness had enhanced his considerable popularity among ministers and church members throughout the country. Crucially his appointment as CUEW chairman ensured that the tercentenary of the ejections of nonconformist clergy, part of King Charles II's Restoration church settlement, would not become a celebration of contemporary religious dissent. In 1862, the nonconformists of 1662 had been commemorated with "acrimonious pamphlets and uncharitable speeches", as the distinguished Anglican historian, Owen Chadwick, had observed. Given the ecumenical climate of the early 1960s, Huxtable and many others in the CUEW were anxious not only that a repeat of that acrimony should be avoided but also that the commemorations would not in any way damage the warmer relations

1 *Congregational Year Book* (1962) 72–3.

2 Ibid 74. The distinguished Dodd was the director of this enterprise which had published earlier that year its translation of the New Testament. He had preached at a service in Westminster Abbey in March 1961 to commemorate this event.

3 Ibid (1960) 78.

with the Church of England especially, but also with other denominations, like the Methodists who had themselves little reason directly to commemorate 1662.

John Huxtable

In 1961 William John Fairchild Huxtable was principal of New College, London, having held that position since 1953. New College, in Finchley Road, was one of the colleges where students for the Congregational ministry trained until its closure in the mid-1970s. Having himself studied at Western College, Bristol, gaining a BA from Bristol University, and then having moved to Mansfield College, Oxford, acquiring an Oxford MA, Huxtable had been minister of the Congregational churches in Newton Abbot, in Devon 1937–42, and at Palmers Green, in north London 1943–54. In Oxford, like many others, he had fallen under the spell of the Mansfield principal, the urbane poet, theologian and essayist, Nathaniel Micklem, who remained his lifelong friend and adviser. His move to New College as principal, encouraged by Micklem, was unexpected but showed that he was a rising star in the denomination, although he was not a natural academic. Rather he was a gifted preacher and broadcaster, as his many radio talks had amply demonstrated.

In only a few years Huxtable was to succeed Howard Stanley as CUEW secretary and, from that position, he would lead the denomination even more in the direction of organic (or structural) church unity. He was to be one of the principal architects, if not the principal architect, of the United Reformed Church.

Planning the Commemorations

Many commemorations were planned from the late 1950s, including a number of publications—“a surge of literature, most of it sound and good”, judged the editor of the *Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society*.⁴ This included a standard history of Congregationalism by Tudur Jones (full and detailed, over 500 pages in all) and a shorter account by Erik Routley (the story “Briefly Told”, as its subtitle announced when it appeared). Both these works were published in 1962.

Jones, an erudite Welsh scholar, comprehensively covered the period 1662–1962. His book was commissioned in May 1957 to commemorate the tercentenary, although arguably 1662 is not of such significance for Congregationalists, Baptists and Quakers, as for Presbyterians and Unitarians, or, for different reasons, for the Church of England. However Congregationalists by the mid-twentieth century had come to see themselves as the main body of

⁴ *Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society* (hereafter *TCHS*) (May 1962) XIX, no 4, 174.

English dissent, that is the inheritors of the traditions of the ejected ministers of the Restoration, of whom less than 200 were Independents.

Tudur Jones was then a young historian to have been given such an important commission. In his book, he acknowledged his debt to Geoffrey Nuttall who had, he wrote in 1961, “favoured him with his guidance in many historical matters” and also had allowed him “to quote from his notes and transcripts as the footnotes to the text” suggest.⁵ Nuttall reviewed Jones’ book finding it “a prosopographical tour de force” (prosopography is the description of a person or personal appearance, now used for biographical studies) which is “full of out-of-the-way information” and concluded that “its lists of names and full documentation will make it of permanent use as a work of reference”. However he did not find it entirely satisfactory. As Jones “ploughs on”, he wrote, “1962 clearly cast its shadow before too soon, leaving blemishes which, with time, so thorough a workman would have removed”. Then Nuttall proceeded to list a number of errors and infelicities. Charles Surman in his review noted that the “price of this volume is high, but so is its value”. It was priced at 63 shillings (3 guineas or £3 3s—in today’s money £3.15).⁶

In addition, a series of thirty or so inexpensive pamphlets (priced at 2 shillings each), or ‘heritage’ biographies of leading nonconformist figures from history, were published by Independent Press, the CUEW’s own publishing house, in the early 1960s. These were short, mostly well written and proved popular with the general reader. The series did not restrict its subjects to those who had suffered in the mid-17th century but extended its range back to Barrowe, Greenwood and Penry and forwards to include Isaac Watts, Philip Doddridge, R W Dale and Joseph Parker, among others. Of the contributors, the Welsh scholar Pennar Davies wrote a moving life of John Penry and Robert S Paul, Oliver Cromwell’s biographer, contributed a useful summary of his hero.⁷

In 1958 a joint committee of the Three Denominations, that is the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland, the CUEW, and the Presbyterian Church of England, was formed to consider appropriate ways to celebrate the tercentenary of the Great Ejectment. A representative of the Free Church Federal Council was invited to join the committee, as was an observer appointed by the Methodist Church. The hope was expressed that the commemoration would result in “better mutual understanding and closer relationships” between all the churches in the UK.

The publication of a symposium of scholarly essays was planned but, learning

5 R T Jones *Congregationalism in England 1662–1962* (1962) 11.

6 *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* (1963) vol 14, 109–111, *TCHS* (Oct 1962) XIX, no 3, 165.

7 *Congregational Monthly* (February 1962) 39.

that the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge intended a book to commemorate the restoration of the Church of England, it was agreed to produce a joint volume. This was originally to be edited by Norman Sykes, the dean of Winchester, and Geoffrey Nuttall but Sykes died in 1960, aged 63, and Owen Chadwick replaced him.⁸ The editors had hoped that the reclusive scholar and Congregational minister, A G Matthews, the historian of both the deprived Anglican clergy of the Civil War and interregnum and of the nonconformists of 1660–62, would contribute to the symposium but he was aged and failing energies prevented him from complying with their wishes.

Significantly Huxtable asked in his contribution, “Why has there been no ... broadly-based reunion” in England? He concluded that if “episcopalians and non-episcopalians” would consider what is “Christ’s will that his Church should become, then the Holy Spirit will ... bring us to the place where Christ is all in all”.⁹

When the symposium appeared, it was judged by Gordon Robinson to be “a worthy memorial”, making it sound like a statue. It was, he wrote, “neither exciting nor thrilling” but “sober, fair-minded and instructive”. Although Christians had moved “far from the days of recrimination into the days of a desire for co-operation and understanding and a deep searching of heart”, the problems of formal recognition remained, he truthfully observed.¹⁰

The joint committee felt that a need existed for a cheaper book, “more suitable for general reading”. Consequently the Presbyterian, F G Healey, wrote *Rooted in Faith* (1961) which firstly reviewed the significance of 1662 and secondly expounded that significance for the churches of the mid-20th century and for the ecumenical movement.¹¹

In addition to these works the Methodist scholar, John T Wilkinson, published *1662 and After: Three Centuries of Nonconformity* in 1962. It was reviewed as “a sound summary of the past” and “an assessment of moves towards unity” in the 20th century and “most readable”.¹²

The joint committee also indicated that a commemorative service, involving Christians from as many denominations as possible, should be held and this was arranged for St Bartholomew’s Day, 24 August 1962, at The City Temple, in Holborn, London.

8 *TCHS* (August 1960) XIX, no 1, 1, F G Healey *Rooted in Faith* (1961) 7–8, Jones op cit 9, E Routley *The Story of Congregationalism* (1961) 5–6, G F Nuttall and O Chadwick (eds) *From Uniformity to Unity 1662–1962* (1962) 3. This volume emerged from this broader co-operation.

9 G F Nuttall “A G Matthews” in *TCHS* (May 1963) XIX, 176, Nuttall and Chadwick op cit 4, 400–401.

10 *TCHS* *ibid* 200–201.

11 Healey op cit 7–10.

12 *Congregational Monthly* (December 1962) 237.

A Century Earlier

In August 1960 the editor of the *Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society*, John H Taylor, published an article in his journal on ‘The Bicentenary of 1862’. He began his paper with the question “Will the Tercentenary of 1662 hinder the work of reconciliation between denominations?” which suggests that this fear was not merely restricted to Huxtable and others at the centre of CUEW affairs but was shared by many. Taylor continued, “Congregationalists, particularly all who claim to love their history and at the same time to look forward to an age of fuller fellowship between Christians, must feel some anxieties as 1962 approaches”. He saw the 1862 Congregationalists as “helplessly” drifting into “displays of unedifying controversy”, especially fuelled by the demand for the disestablishment of the Church of England, and he felt that “potential dangers” still existed.

Yet the 1862 commemorations had led to “a surge of Chapel building, the largest in all Congregational history” while money flowed in only slowly for the Congregational Library and Memorial Hall in London. A serious historical work like John Stoughton’s *Church and State Two Hundred Years Ago* was admired for its scholarship but criticised for being too moderate. In contrast the power of popular publications was made evident in that F S Williams’s pamphlet *The Story of Black Bartholomew* sold an impressive 50,000 copies in three weeks in 1862. “Let not this Celebration exhale itself away in sighs and sentiments and admiration”, wrote Williams. No wonder then that Huxtable and his colleagues were fearful a century later!

Taylor concluded that the bicentenary of 1862 had helped the CUEW by enabling men and women to be proud of their denomination. It served to remind them of the principles which underlay their dissent. However he too was concerned that controversy should not be encouraged in 1962 by the mass media because such religious controversy would not be readily understood by the public at large.¹³

The 1962 Commemorations

The danger, which Huxtable and others had identified in the early 1960s, was that the tercentenary remembrances of the 1662 ejections might reinforce the differences between modern nonconformists and the established Church and, therefore, set back the progress of ecumenism. That Huxtable in 1961 had been unopposed for the position of CUEW chairman presented an unusual situation, although, for someone as acute as him, his later claim that this had surprised him

¹³ J H Taylor “The Bicentenary of 1662” in *TCHS* (August 1960) XIX, 18–25, F S Williams *The Story of Black Bartholomew* (1862) 8.

is a mite disingenuous.¹⁴ Rather his becoming CUEW chairman revealed his own careful, strategic planning for, as the CUEW's champion of church unity, he could not allow another CUEW chairman to praise uncritically the ejected heroes of 1662 and thus provide reasons why modern nonconformists should be suspicious of, and remain apart from, other Christians.

Thirty years later in his autobiography, Huxtable again admitted that he had been "anxious" that the commemorations should not become "divisive ... but ... appropriate to the ecumenical spirit of the times". In similar fashion in August 1961, the editor of the denomination's popular magazine *The Congregational Monthly* defended the coming celebration of 1662 but warned that to resurrect old conflicts, when churches needed unity, was unhelpful. This fear was not restricted to Congregationalists for Ernest Payne (1902–80), the distinguished secretary of the Baptist Union 1951–67, also expressed the hope that the 1962 celebrations would stress "the improved relations between the churches".¹⁵

The May Assembly 1962

The CUEW assembly in May 1962, meeting in Westminster Chapel, opened with devotions led by Huxtable's minister from his childhood days in Devon, G H K Chick.¹⁶ In his chairman's address, entitled *The Tradition of Our Fathers* (a title which cleverly evoked not only the nonconformists of 1662 but also his own father who had died when Huxtable was a boy,¹⁷ as well as Chick, Micklem, the apostolic fathers, and the Lord's Prayer—quite a feat to bring together such varied elements), Huxtable described the nonconformists' stand for conscience in 1662 as "noble" but he detected still in it both "limitation and mistake". He warned his hearers against looking back wistfully—"remember Lot's wife!"—and maintained that Congregationalists in 1962 were "in the piquant position of commemorating the tercentenary of a schism in an ecumenical atmosphere!" To embrace the changes, which Howard Stanley's commissions were then commending, he claimed, would "most truly" serve God for, "Whatever justification there was for division in the past ... does not permit us to evade the challenge of God's will to unity" now.¹⁸ When the delegates emerged from Westminster Chapel, some students from New College, London

14 Huxtable op cit 39, G F Nuttall and O Chadwick (eds) *From Uniformity to Unity* (1962) 4.

15 Huxtable loc cit, *Congregational Monthly* (June 1960) 88–9, (August 1961) 114, for Payne see *Oxford DNB*.

16 *CYB* (1962) 83.

17 Huxtable *ibid* 39. His father was in his thoughts as he prepared his address.

18 *Ibid* 39, J Huxtable *The Tradition of the Fathers* (1962) 6, 7, 9, 17, 18–19, 20, 24.

had displayed a banner across the street bearing the legend 'Hux for Dux'.¹⁹ Huxtable's masterly address was not really a tribute to the nonconformists of 1662, yet to have ignored the tercentenary would have damaged his cause. Instead Huxtable made the past serve the present, that is it served his preferred policy for the Congregational churches of that time.

Other Tercentenary Commemorations

During the May assembly in 1962 a devotional service was held on Tuesday May 15th in Westminster Chapel. Its theme was 'The Tercentenary of 1662' and the speaker was Ernest Payne, an accomplished historian in his own right who delivered an "excellent" paper.²⁰ The meeting agreed unanimously on a formal and impressive 'Affirmation' which stated that those present

"desire to express our gratitude to Almighty God .. for all that He has done for us during three centuries.

We rejoice that we ourselves are no longer bound by the Act of Uniformity, that the Church of England itself has modified some of its provisions in a direction that our forefathers would have desired, and that there now exists among the churches of our land so large a measure of tolerance, goodwill and co-operation.

In the hope that we ourselves may make a contribution out of our past history to such better understanding we record, for our help and for our brethren in other churches, the things that we believe that we have been taught of God during our separation.

- (1) That the authority of the visible church in matters concerning its Faith and Order is distinct from, and not subordinate to, the civil authority.
- (2) That the revelation of God recorded in the Scriptures is the supreme standard within the church in matters of Faith and Order.
- (3) That the historic episcopate is not a divinely required constituent of the visible church and that the validity of the spiritual oversight and ministry of the Word and Sacraments exercised by ministers duly ordained, in harmony with the word of God as recorded in the Scriptures, should be recognised.
- (4) That the orderly public worship of God should not be required exclusively to follow the patterns laid down by a particular book.

We deeply regret the long period of bitter controversy which followed the Ejection of 1662. Our hope is that this commemoration will not lead to any such controversy but rather to better mutual understanding between all the churches in this country.

We acknowledge with many of our brethren in other churches that God is

19 *Reformed Quarterly* op cit 4. Dux is Latin for leader.

20 *TCHS* (Oct 1963) XIX, no 3, 105.

calling all His people to seek such unity of spirit and purpose that together they may bring the people of this country and of the whole world into a new unity in the Church in acknowledging Jesus Christ as the Saviour and Lord of all men.”²¹

This long affirmation (approved unanimously) of the commemoration of the Great Ejectment, which called Christians to “a new unity of the Church”, again served the aims of those Congregationalists, like Huxtable, who sought broad ecumenical progress rather than denominational or nonconformist developments. The affirmation was followed by a loyal message to the Queen which alluded to “the deep convictions of our fathers” which “led them to dissent” from the Act of Uniformity, although the assembly delegates in 1962 hoped for a time “when all your Majesty’s subjects will be gathered within a single fellowship of witness and service, in one Church of Jesus Christ”. In addition a message was sent to the Archbishops of Canterbury and York which reiterated much of the Affirmation and looked forward to “an increase of mutual understanding” so that all “Churches” might be led “into a single fellowship”.²²

An Awkwardness

One difficulty, which arose from the joint committee of the Three Denominations, was its decision to exclude the Unitarians both from any representation on their committee and also from other inter-denominational schemes for the coming commemoration, despite the fact that 98 Unitarian churches in England then, and others in Wales and Ireland, traced their origins to the 1662 ejections. The Unitarians denounced this as “religious intolerance”, arguing that “the great lessons of charity, forbearance and toleration ... have ... been completely ignored”. Huxtable, who chaired that committee, overseeing the tercentenary celebrations, replied that the “difference between freedom and freedom within the Gospel” informed the decision, implying that he, at least, and perhaps others on his committee, saw the Unitarians as not properly Christian and this doctrinal division was sufficient justification to shun them. In the event the Unitarians received only one invitation to the St Bartholomew’s day service, in 1962, at The City Temple, although the Methodists, who had not existed in 1662, were asked to send “a much bigger representation”.

The Unitarians declined to send anyone, judging the celebrations “steps towards re-union rather than a commemoration” of dissent, “and that such re-union must involve a large measure of conformity and Episcopacy; a curious way to celebrate ... the Ejected ministers”. A leading Quaker thought it “tragic ... to harden the divisions”, and urged Friends to support the Unitarians.²³ Thus

21 *CYB* (1962) 87–88.

22 *Ibid* (1962) 88–89.

23 *The Inquirer* (January 27, 1962) 278, (February 10, 1962) 295–6.

Huxtable excluded dissenters of whom he disapproved and included Christians, like the Methodists and Anglicans, to whom he wished to draw closer.

Huxtable's influence may have lain behind Howard Stanley's comment, at the St Bartholomew's Day service in The City Temple, with the Archbishop of Canterbury present, that the 1662 nonconformists would be "surprised and grieved" that their spiritual children remained separate from the Church of England, a view Stanley repeated in *The Congregational Monthly*. Even the Lancashire Congregationalist, Gordon Robinson, who was known for his pride in nonconformity, ended an article on the injustices meted out to the sufferers of 1662 by remarking that "dwelling on past wrongs" was not the right way to remember 1662. Rather, he wrote, "True celebration lies in recalling their principles and the costly stand they took for them and in charity stepping forward into the future".²⁴

In October 1962 a tercentenary rally was held at The Royal Albert Hall, in London, sponsored by some, but not all, of the "reformed churches of England". This proved not as successful as had been hoped, for "there were too many empty seats"²⁵

The Tercentenary Judged

In December 1962 Colin Bell, the deputy editor of *The Congregational Monthly*, wrote rather dismissively, but with obvious satisfaction, that the year had begun with people "knowing very little about 1662" and was closing with their "knowing very little more". His article was entitled "1662—Here Ends the History Lesson—1962". He confessed that in 1963 he was grateful that "there will be no need to pretend interest any longer". He felt that those who had tried to whip up "some kind of interest in the Great Ejectment" had done so "all in vain".

Bell stated that in more than 35 years' experience of church anniversaries he had never heard "any reference at all to 1662".²⁶

John Taylor, as editor of the *Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society*, wrote in May 1963 that the tercentenary commemorations had "been successfully completed". He continued, "Fears that the new-found friendship between Anglicans and Free Churchmen might receive a set-back" had proved unfounded. Not only had the Archbishop of Canterbury attended The City Temple service on St Bartholomew's Day but, throughout the country, Free Church folk had joined Anglicans to "commemorate the tercentenary of the Book of Common Prayer". Although he recognised that churches "proudly

24 *The Congregational Monthly* (December 1962) 223, 224, 231.

25 *Ibid* 224, *TCHS* (May 1963) XIX, no 4, 173-4.

26 *Cong Monthly* 223.

claiming a 1662 pedigree” had held popular celebrations, he also conceded “there had been plenty of evidence that the Great Ejection held no interest for perhaps a majority of congregations”. Yet, unlike Bell, Taylor took no pleasure in this. Rather he reminded his readers that “all the churches, and indeed the nation, owe an immeasurable debt to those who suffered for religious liberties” and that the “ignorance” of many Congregationalists is “nothing ... to be proud of”. He concluded that the “lesson of the tercentenary” is the same as that to be drawn from “ecumenical encounters”, namely one should be a good church person “educated in one’s own tradition”.²⁷

Omissions

The 1962 commemorations were notable also for what did not happen. No new statements of Congregational principles were published and no defences of the Congregational way appeared, although the Independent Press had reissued E J Price’s *A Handbook of Congregationalism* in 1957 and Francis Gibbons’s *What Every Congregationalist Should Know* in 1956. The absence of any defence of religious dissent testified to a loosening of ties with Independency. That this occurred, without protest, suggested that the churches in general might be willing to make further compromises, especially if these appeared in the guise of theological principle.

A G Matthews, Thomas Richards and 1662

This year marks not only the 350th anniversary of the mass ejections of nonconformist clergymen from the Church of England but also the 50th anniversary of the death of the historian of those ministers, A G Matthews, and also of the death of the historian of Welsh puritanism and nonconformity, Thomas Richards. Although Matthews’ work, in particular, is regularly consulted by scholars, the man himself remains an enigma.

On 6 December 1962 Arnold Gwynne Matthews (1881–1962) died in Oxted in Surrey. He was little known, had never married and had few close friends to mourn his passing. With cool detachment, he had anticipated his own death and had even placed a small stone bearing his name and the year of his birth next to his brother’s stone in the cemetery at Elmer’s End in south London (after his brother’s own death two years earlier). Yet scholars still, some 78 and 63 years after their publication, consult his two seminal works on 17th century religious history with gratitude, that is *Calamy Revised* (1934) and *Walker Revised* (1948), which were both re-issued with addenda and corrigenda in 1988. These “two great volumes” (as the famously sparing Geoffrey Nuttall called them) by this amateur but meticulous historian offer the only reason why this shy, obscure

27 TCHS (May 1962) XIX, no 4, 174.

man might be remembered today. He was not included in the published *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Indeed, although Nuttall regarded him as the “most distinguished historian” among the Congregational Historical Society’s members in 1962, and he had been president of that society 1951–57, he was virtually unrecognised. He had deliberately shunned the limelight and, having been the minister of the Congregational church in Oxted, had chosen to retire in 1927 well before his age necessitated such a step. That in only six years he had finished his revision of Calamy is a mark of his discipline and industry.

The titles of his two substantial works are “really misnomers”, reflecting Matthews’ modesty, for he collected far more material from a variety of sources than he found in either Calamy or Walker. His “enormously laborious work” for these books provided and still provide “bricks for others to build with”. Yet, as Nuttall pointed out, for a scholar to devote the same amount of energy and commitment to Walker’s Anglicans, as he had previously to Calamy’s ejected puritans, shows that Matthews, in his own quiet way, was “a worker in the ecumenical field as well as the historical”. Indeed he had pleaded with church historians of the 17th century to give “most careful consideration” to the unejected because, he wrote, “these men were faithful to the Englishman’s inveterate belief that the religion of all sensible men is always one of compromise”. Certainly all students of 17th century church history, Anglicans as much as nonconformists, “now lean on him and trust his work as unprejudiced and reliable”.²⁸

In contrast to Matthews, Thomas Richards (1878–1962) was an out-going, convivial man. He was a schoolteacher, historian and librarian who published, among numerous other works in Welsh and English, four painstaking and prize winning books on his main field of interest—*The Puritan Movement in Wales, 1639–1653* (1920), *Religious Developments in Wales, 1654–1662* (1923), *Wales under the Penal Code, 1662–1687* (1925) and *Wales under the Indulgence, 1672–1675* (1928). He was a loyal Baptist, a natural raconteur, and a popular lecturer and broadcaster. From 1926–46 he was librarian of his old college, in Bangor. In 1958 he was awarded the medal of the Honourable Society of Cymrodorion and in 1959 an honorary LL.D of the University of Wales. In 1961 Tudur Jones wrote of the “great advantage” he had had, when preparing his book for the tercentenary, in being able “to turn constantly” to his “old teacher, Dr Thomas Richards, for advice and guidance and especially so in the field of Puritan studies where he is such an acknowledged master”.²⁹

²⁸ TCHS (May 1962) XIX, no 4, 176–178, A Argent *JURCHS* (1990) 4,7, pp 418–438, J C J Binfield and J Taylor (eds) *Who They Were* (Donington 2007) 149–150.

²⁹ *Dictionary of Welsh Biography 1941–1970* 223, R T Jones *Congregationalism in England 1662–1962* (1962) 10.

Conclusion

Although Richards was a figure of some weight in Wales, and his passing was noted there, Matthews' death on 6th December 1962, was not judged of wide significance. Twenty years before, he had quoted B L Manning's sensitive words that reveal how, for Matthews, the study of history and his Christian faith were integrated. "The main value of history is for the heart. It keeps the heart tender, as only a study of our own poor humanity can."³⁰

As we recall the stand for conscience made by the Bartholomeans, we may be encouraged to believe that our principles have ongoing validity, and that we too should decide what is vital and necessary and what is secondary and may be surrendered or sacrificed, for a greater good. Such a stand is, by definition, not easy and we shall probably not need to make such decisions often. However the spirit and courage shown in 1662 may so inform us that we are better able to make our decisions. Although we may admire the Bartholomeans, we know that our convictions are not in all respects identical with theirs. Whatever we decide, we shall need to retain some self-respect and dignity. We might also, like Richard Baxter (1615–91), himself deprived in 1662 from the parish of Kidderminster, in Worcestershire, want to profess and sing our trust in God's forgiveness and reconciliation, as he did in his poem "The Resolution" (dated December 3rd, 1663) which, in his words, was "Written when I was silenced and cast out".

“As for my friends, they are not lost:
 The several vessels of thy fleet
 Though parted now, by tempests tossed,
 Shall safely in the haven meet.
 We still are centred all in thee,
 Though distant, members of one Head;
 Within one family we be,
 And by one faith and spirit led.”

Alan Argent

30 G F Nuttall "A G Matthews" in *TCHS* (May 1963) XIX, no 4, 176–178.

SCOTTISH CONGREGATIONALISM AND ITINERANCY

At the close of the eighteenth century the need to revitalise the spiritual life of Scotland and the inability of ordinary church agencies to meet this need did not go unnoticed. Hence, two laymen, James Haldane¹ and John Aikman,² along with divinity student Joseph Rate,³ embarked on an evangelistic tour despite the general belief that only the ordained should preach. They set out in July 1797, not to convert to this or that sect, but to encourage others not to rest in an empty profession of religion.⁴ They covered over 1,000 miles in four months, visiting Orkney and Shetland in the process, preaching sometimes to handfuls, often to immense crowds. Their tour was the subject of controversy from the outset and their Journal,⁵ containing their findings on the state of religion and criticism of the ministry, appeared to many “to be a declaration of war against the Established Church”,⁶ and attempts were made to discredit the evangelistic endeavour. But the trio had reported what they had seen and heard and done, and the conscience of every religious denomination in Scotland had been challenged.

The Society for Propagating the Gospel at Home

Men of the evangelists’ mettle were not easily disheartened or overwhelmed. By the age of twenty-five, Haldane had made four voyages to Bengal, Bombay and China, and, while in command of the East Indiaman Melville Castle in 1793, suppressed a mutiny on board the Dutton near Spithead.⁷ Aikman was a former West Indies merchant who had attended the Divinity Hall in Edinburgh for a time but had “felt the importance of preaching the gospel immediately, without waiting longer for the completion of the period required by ecclesiastical

1 For James Alexander Haldane (1768–1851) see W D McNaughton *The Scottish Congregational Ministry 1794–1993* (Glasgow 1993) 60.

2 For John Aikman (1770–1834) see *ibid* 4.

3 For Joseph Rate (d1846) see *ibid* 131.

4 *Missionary Magazine* (1797) 336. NB A few days before the tour’s commencement, the Relief Church sent the Rev Niel Douglas to Kintyre. see N Douglas *Journal of a Mission to part of the Highlands of Scotland* (Edinburgh 1799).

5 J A Haldane, J Aikman and J Rate *Journal of a Tour Through the Northern Counties of Scotland and the Orkney Isles in Autumn 1797* (Edinburgh 1798).

6 N Gray “Greville Ewing Architect of Scottish Congregationalism” 2 Vols (unpublished PhD thesis Edinburgh 1961) Vol 1 p 136.

7 A Haldane *Memoirs of the Lives of Robert Haldane of Aithrey, and His Brother, James Alexander Haldane* (London 1852).

authority for previous study, and without submitting to be confined to the walls of a chapel or of a parish-church".⁸ Hence, shortly after the itinerants' return, the SPGH was inaugurated. Interdenominational and with twelve laymen as directors, the society employed two classes of agent. The first were catechists: pious young men sent to plant, superintend and teach evening schools in villages, confining the children's attention to religion. The second were ministers of known character, who worked under the Society's direction.⁹

The SPGH decided to commence its operations in Orkney where the evangelists had itinerated extensively,¹⁰ preaching in fifteen of the isles which had been for many years "considered as one of the most desolate places, in respect of Christianity"; indeed, in one parish, "before the incumbency of the present minister, the Lord's Supper had been dispensed only twice, in FIFTY-FOUR YEARS". The evangelists' recent visit, however, had coincided with a revival of religion begun some months earlier when numbers of people in different parts of the country began to meet regularly every Sunday when they had no sermon in the parish, and the opening of a place of worship in Kirkwall supplied by ministers of the Secession.¹¹ This revival had been "considerably promoted by the itinerary exertions" of the evangelists¹² who had made a lively impression on the minds of many, several of whom had connected themselves with the Antiburghers,¹³ and it was a member of the Associate Congregation of Kirkwall, Magnus Anderson, who was recommended by some SPGH members to be its catechist in Orkney. However, Anderson, who had "for some time past gone through different islands, reading the Holy Scriptures, the Confession of Faith, and other religious books to the illiterate", as well as catechising, decided to accept a similar appointment in Orkney under the inspection of the Associate Presbytery of Edinburgh. "This completely suited the views of the Society. If Christ be made known to sinners, they are not over anxious to enquire to what particular denomination they may attach themselves".¹⁴

That Anderson read to the illiterate is worthy of note, as is the fact that when its agents began to itinerate, the SPGH took steps to ensure that they did not go out empty handed. Five thousand each of the following tracts were ordered to be printed in 1798, to be distributed *gratis* by the Society's preachers and catechists:

8 R. Kinniburgh (ed) *Fathers of Independency in Scotland; or, Biographical Sketches of Early Congregational Ministers. AD 1798-1851* (Edinburgh 1851) 154.

9 *An Account of the Proceedings of the Society for Propagating the Gospel at Home, From their Commencement, Dec 28 1797, to May 16 1799* (Hereafter *SPGH*) (Edinburgh 1799).

10 A Haldane *op cit* 170-172.

11 *Missionary Magazine* (1797) 190-191.

12 *ibid* (1799) 189.

13 *Christian Herald* (1819) 350.

14 *SPGH op cit* 15-16 & *Missionary Magazine* (1798) 237.

'Address from a Stranger', 'Plain Truths', 'Friendly Advice', 'Address to Children who attend Sabbath-evening schools', and 'Short Addresses to Young Persons who attend Sabbath evening-schools',¹⁵ and as the work of evangelisation progressed the taste for reading increased. Anderson's replacement, William Tulloch,¹⁶ was a native of North Ronaldsay who appears to have been a guide on Haldane's visit to Orkney and greatly impressed him. Appointed in June 1798,¹⁷ Tulloch, besides imparting religious instruction to children and others, was instructed to spend as much time as possible teaching poor children to read; a practice which was to be recommended to all the Society's catechists. Two months later, two other catechists were engaged by the SPGH. One was sent to Peterhead and the neighbouring country and the other to Castle Douglas and its neighbourhood.¹⁸

Both the Society's agents and literature were to prove a threat to some. Joseph Rate, who preached in most of the towns and villages of Fife between 2nd May and 31st July, 1798, was relatively well received despite the fact that in Kinghorn he had to allay the magistrate's concern and in St Andrews his preaching and distribution of tracts caused no small alarm.¹⁹ Dr Bryce, minister of Aberdour, viewed SPGH agents "as incendiaries and promoters of principles similar to those of the French Revolutionaries" and threatened John Elder,²⁰ who followed Rate, with violence. "Mr Murray of Auchterdearn and Mr Guild of Auchtertool were equally hostile, though not quite so rude." A few weeks later, James Bennet from England arrived in Aberdour and engaged the common crier with a hand bell to advertise his intention to preach. Dr Bryce met her in the street and confiscated the bell. Whereupon, Bennet "immediately furnished her with a new bell, with the injunction that if the Minister offered to take it from her, she was to tell him that it belonged to Mr Bennet and certain persons in Edinburgh, and that if he took it, he would have to answer for his conduct, ... Dr Bryce ever after continued unfriendly to Evangelical Religion".²¹

Elsewhere, William Watson²² recalled hearing Haldane and Aikman preach at the cross of Ayr in June 1798: "Haldane preached first, but ere he had concluded, the officers came, by command of the authorities of the place, dragged them down from the position which they occupied, and took them before these

15 *SPGH op cit* 41–42.

16 For William Tulloch see McNaughton *op cit* 163.

17 *SPGH* 60.

18 *ibid* 64.

19 *Missionary Magazine* (1798) 332–334.

20 For John Elder (1771–1834) see McNaughton *op cit* 42.

21 "General Account of Congregationalism in Scotland from 1798 to 1848 and Particular Accounts Referring to Separate Counties" (hereafter GACS) [Typescript of questionnaire replies c1848] in possession of W D McNaughton Section 4 pp2–4.

22 For William Watson see McNaughton *op cit* 167.

authorities, who commanded them to preach no more in that place; but, instead of stopping the progress of the truth, they had assisted it; for they went in the evening to another part near, over which these authorities had no control, where Mr Aikman preached to an immense multitude,—and there he had heard words which were blessed to his soul”.²³

A blessing to many, the activities of the SPGH were a source of concern to the churches. Even the Relief Synod, noted for its liberal attitude in other respects, passed a resolution in 1798 forbidding any Relief minister from permitting “his pulpit to be given to any person who has not attended a regular course of philosophy and divinity in some of the universities of the nation, and who has not been regularly licensed to preach the Gospel”.²⁴ And at some stage the SPGH found it necessary to issue each of their preachers with a signed certificate, as they “were frequently interrupted in their labours by opposers asking to see their authority to preach”.²⁵

Some were friendly to evangelical religion and in December 1798 six young men were sent by different routes, “through several towns along the coast of Fife, &c. to establish schools, and endeavour to find serious people, who should take charge of them”. A good many schools were begun,²⁶ and James Hill²⁷ and George Douglas,²⁸ having travelled through Fife, Angus, Mearns, and Aberdeenshire, came as far as Fraserburgh. Here Hill remained, while Douglas proceeded to Elgin. Six months later, both returned to undertake studies at Dundee “that they might be qualified for more extensive usefulness”.²⁹ John Elder also travelled through the North as a catechist prior to being admitted to the class at Dundee in January 1800. David Davidson³⁰ states,

the catechists were called to endure many privations and sufferings for the truth’s sake. From their known connection with Messrs. Haldane, they were suspected men, whom the General Assembly denounced as enemies of Church and State, and of course enemies of Christianity itself. Few had the courage to receive them, and such as did shared with them in their sufferings, sometimes to the loss of goods, and almost always to the loss of a good name. The catechists were obstructed in their labours not only by the clergy, but also by the civil authorities, some of whom threatened them with imprisonment as disorderly or seditious persons; and to silence these accusers, the Directors of the Society judged it expedient that they should take the oath of allegiance to government,

23 *Christian Herald* (1834) 177.

24 J McKerrow *History of the Secession Church* (Revised and enlarged edition 1845) 384.

25 Kinniburgh *op cit* 106.

26 *SPGH* 66.

27 For James Hill (1773–1812) see McNaughton *op cit* 65.

28 For George Douglas (1772–1838) see *ibid* 37.

29 *Missionary Magazine* (1812) 122.

30 For David Davidson (c1781–1858) see McNaughton *op cit* 33.

and register in the Sheriff's books, in the counties where they laboured, the houses in which they assembled for public worship or for teaching children.³¹

Paranoia seems to have been the order of the day at a time when "prayer-meetings were so discountenanced and opposed by the clergy, that the members of them, in order to keep out spies and informers, were admitted by tickets".³²

May 1798 saw the appointment of the Gaelic speaking Alexander McKenzie³³ as a catechist, to travel extensively through the northern Highlands promoting Sabbath schools.³⁴ By November he had covered a considerable part of the district, distributing Gaelic tracts and advocating Sabbath schools and, having submitted an account of the extreme ignorance of many of the places visited,³⁵ McKenzie was sent to the Western Isles, where he was reported to be labouring in 1799.³⁶ As the operations of the Society were thus extended to the Highlands, it became necessary to have more Gaelic tracts. 'Friendly Advice', 'Address from a Stranger', 'Plain Truths', and the 'Address to Children', were accordingly translated, and 5000 copies of each printed. The Society also ordered 5000 of the Shorter Catechism in Gaelic to be printed and a gentleman gifted a further 5000 more to the Society.³⁷ All were distributed *gratis*. Donald Galbraith³⁸ was to recall how as a youth he used to read such treatises as 'Dyer's famous Titles of Christ' and 'The Dairyman's Daughter', both of which were translated into the Gaelic by Malcolm Maclaurin,³⁹ pastor of the Independent church in Islay, and that others besides Congregationalists had played their part in such work; for example, Peter Grant, pastor of the Baptist church at Granton, who, "preaching apart", did much for his countrymen in the way of composing hymns "distinguished for simplicity and pathos, and richness in evangelical sentiment".⁴⁰

A nondenominational body

Elsewhere, James Bennet of Romsey, having arrived in Edinburgh, on his way to Aberdeen to open the newly erected George Street Independent Chapel on 2nd September, 1798, was requested to preach in the principal towns on his way

31 Kinniburgh *op cit* 211–212.

32 *ibid* 210.

33 For Alexander McKenzie see McNaughton *op cit* 94.

34 *SPGH* 59–60.

35 *Missionary Magazine* (1798) 525.

36 *SPGH* 60. In July 1800, it was asserted that a SPGH catechist was stationed in the Western Isles at the request of one of the principal proprietors. See *Missionary Magazine* (1800) 309.

37 *SPGH* 60.

38 For Donald Galbraith see McNaughton *op cit* 50.

39 For (John) Malcolm Maclaurin (1785–1859) see McNaughton *op cit* 98.

40 *Scottish Congregational Magazine* (1858) 181–182.

there and to itinerate in the neighbouring country during his stay in Aberdeen,⁴¹ and Mr Ward, minister of the Episcopal chapel, Old Deer, agreed to itinerate in his neighbourhood under the SPGH's inspection. Later in October, Mr Loader, minister of Fordingbridge in Hampshire, on his way to Aberdeen, was requested to do as Bennet had done. The following month brought an application from some of the members of a former Relief congregation in Kirriemuir that a preacher be sent to them. The Society answered that it would do all in its power for the town and neighbourhood but on no account would it "intermeddle with party differences".⁴² In December, Josiah Slatterie of Chatham, having arrived in Edinburgh to preach in the Circus, was requested to itinerate in the country around, so far as his Sunday labours permitted. Falkirk, Linlithgow, Queensferry, Dundee, Arbroath, Aberdeen and Old Meldrum were among the places visited and the following year both Thomas Taylor of Ossett and Edward Parsons of Leeds itinerated for several weeks while in Scotland.⁴³

The Circus

As their agents began to itinerate, James Haldane's brother, Robert,⁴⁴ and others associated with the SPGH decided to extend their work in Edinburgh, by opening a Tabernacle, where the poor could hear the Gospel free of charge from a variety of preachers. Robert Haldane purchased the Circus, a former variety theatre, in Little King Street, "to be served by occasional ministers from England" and the first of these, Rowland Hill, preached to large congregations on 29th July, 1798. The following Sunday, he preached morning and forenoon in the Circus and in the evening on Calton hill, "to a congregation there of not less than 8000 persons". Hill spent a month in Scotland, preaching in the Circus on Sundays and itinerating on weekdays from the Clyde to the Tay.⁴⁵ Such was the success of the Circus venture that Robert Haldane resolved to use his wealth to promote similar preaching stations in centres of population throughout Scotland⁴⁶ and Tabernacles were eventually erected in Glasgow, Dundee, Perth and Elgin.

While the Edinburgh Tabernacle's promoters initially remained members of the Church of Scotland, a change in denominational loyalty became apparent with Greville Ewing's⁴⁷ resignation from that body in December 1798. Thereafter, around twelve of the individuals principally involved in the

41 *SPGH* 61.

42 *ibid* 64–65.

43 *ibid* 67–70, 76–79.

44 Robert Haldane (1764–1842).

45 *Missionary Magazine* (1798) 382. A Haldane *op cit* 218–221.

46 *The Edinburgh Quarterly Review* Vol I (1798) 315.

47 For Greville Ewing (1767–1841) see McNaughton *op cit* 43.

Tabernacle and SPGH resolved to form themselves into a Congregational Church, to which James Haldane was ordained and inducted in February 1799. Shortly after, as it was supposed by some that the Circus and the SPGH were connected because those who preached in the Circus were engaged to itinerate by the SPGH, the Society was at pains to assert in May 1799 that they were totally distinct and that the “Society would be equally happy to defray the expenses of other ministers, whether of the Establishment or Secession, who should offer their services”. This stance was reflected in the SPGH’s response to a request for preaching, “from a Society of Christians in Paisley of the Congregational persuasion”, who were informed that it was “no part of the design of the Society to support any particular connection”.⁴⁸ Similar applications had been received from other quarters and the same answer returned.

Such was the success of the SPGH’s agents that in February 1799 it was resolved to expand greatly the Society’s operations by organising the labours of the catechists in such a way that every town in Scotland would be visited during the course of the ensuing summer, with each catechist being assigned six towns they could visit frequently. Ten catechists had been engaged for those districts where only English was understood and five for the Highlands. The possibility of engaging several other catechists existed and the Society “already had experience of the eligibility of the scheme”.⁴⁹

Pastoral Admonition

Interdenominational missionary societies, Sabbath schools independent of official church supervision, lay preaching, the SPGH, the Tabernacle, a more personalised expression of the Christian faith, did not enthuse everyone. The General Assembly attempted to crush the movement in May 1799 by closing the livings of the Church of Scotland to all but its own licentiates, forbidding any communion with, or granting of the pulpit to, any except those regularly licensed, and the investigation of the legal position of “vagrant teachers and Sunday schools”.⁵⁰ The Assembly also issued a *Pastoral Admonition*, which the clergy were ordered to read from their pulpits. This document gave full vent to the hostility felt towards the SPGH and played upon the fear of the new and the unknown prevalent in society; drawing attention to the fact that, at a time when the French were diffusing their revolutionary and atheistic ideas, a set of men had appeared whose activities threatened no small disorder to the country.

We mean those who, assuming the name of missionaries from what they call the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel at Home, ... are at present going

48 *SPGH* 79.

49 *ibid.*

50 *Acts of the General Assembly* (Edinburgh 1799).

through the land ... intruding themselves into parishes ... committing the religious instruction of youth to ignorant persons ... or to persons notoriously disaffected to the civil constitution of the country; and connecting those schools to certain secret meetings ... You see men ... pouring forth their loose harangues ... censuring the doctrine or character of the minister of the parish; studying to alienate the affections of the people from their own pastors; and engaging them to join this new sect, as if they alone were possessed of some secret method of bringing men to heaven. ... Much reason there is to suspect that those who openly profess their enmity to our ecclesiastical establishment are no friends to our civil constitution; and that the name of liberty is abused by them as it has been by others into a cover for secret democracy and anarchy.⁵¹

A copy of the Admonition was sent to the Sheriffs-depute of counties and the chief magistrates of all burghs and the distinct possibility of Parliamentary action prompted Robert Haldane to publish his *Address to the Public, concerning Political Opinions and Plans Lately Adopted to Promote Religion in Scotland* in 1800. That the various Scottish churches were equally narrow and exclusive with regard to each other did not inhibit every effort being made all over the land, by individuals and Church courts, to put an end to the labours of those associated with the SPGH. Many spurious arguments were employed against the Society and its agents, despite the legality of their endeavours. They were persecuted at times in a petty manner, at others in a serious way. Likewise, those recognised as having countenanced in any way the work of the SPGH and its agents were persecuted to a greater or lesser extent. Nevertheless, all over Scotland, people continued to be drawn to the missionary preachers, finding in their preaching that which they did not get from their own ministers.

Haldane and Aikman's second tour to the North

A few days before the *Admonition's* issue, James Haldane embarked on a second tour to the north. Having visited Dunfermline, Kinross and Perth, he arrived in Dundee and while there visited Kirriemuir, Forfar, Glamis, Brechin, Montrose and Arbroath. The congregations "were in general small, partly owing to the weather, and partly perhaps from the indifference of many as to the Gospel, which leads some to consider week-day preaching as superfluous. In some of these places, however, a considerable desire to hear prevailed". He met William Innes⁵² at Dundee and preached by request at Inchtute where in the afternoon, "although the warning had been short, there were about 1000 people". In the evening he preached out of doors to several thousand in Dundee. The evangelists were joined by Aikman at Arbroath and proceeded to Aberdeen where they preached forenoon and afternoon in the new George Street Chapel on 26th

⁵¹ *Pastoral Admonition, Addressed by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, met at Edinburgh, May 23, 1799, to all the people under their charge* (Edinburgh 3 June 1799).

⁵² For William Innes (1770–1855) see McNaughton *op cit* 71.

May, while William Stephens,⁵³ who was then supplying the chapel, went to the country: “He, as well as the other English ministers, considered it his duty and privilege to itinerate through the week”. In the evening they preached to a large congregation without. Setting off from Aberdeen the itinerants preached at Ellon, Old Deer, Peterhead, Strichen, Fraserburgh and Banff, before arriving in Huntly where they preached a good deal in the neighbourhood.⁵⁴

The Antiburghers at Clola, however, had little sympathy for the evangelists and did all in their power to deter others from being influenced by them. Three of their number were brought before the session where it was decreed that “although an Independent minister should preach at their very doors they were not to hear him.” As a result they resigned their church membership and formed a prayer meeting. Thereafter, along with nine converts of John Ward of Old Deer, they successfully petitioned Haldane for a supply of preachers.⁵⁵ Elsewhere, George Reid,⁵⁶ a young man of about twenty-seven years, “from mere curiosity”, went with others to Elgin to hear “what these field preachers, or *missionaries* as they were then called, had to say”. Aikman gave a lecture on part of the eighth chapter of Acts, which led to Reid’s conversion, training for the ministry and on completion of his preparatory studies being sent to Shetland by SPGH in July, 1806, along with Isaac Nicol,⁵⁷ another preacher.⁵⁸

Haldane and Aikman’s itinerancy and Reid’s ministry in Shetland were to play a major part in the life of John Yell, later senior deacon of Walls Congregational Church. A native of the parish of Walls, Yell was regular in his attendance at the parish church but “knew nothing of the nature of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ” until Haldane landed on Foula one Sunday evening in the course of his tour. Attending the Ling fishing, Yell went with his boat’s crew to hear the stranger and came under the conviction “that his soul was not safe for eternity”. He later remarked that Haldane’s sermon was the first sermon he had ever truly heard. “His conviction of sin was afterwards much deepened by hearing Mr. Tulloch⁵⁹ and Mr. Reid preach in something like the same earnest and awakening style”.⁶⁰

Making their way north, prior to visiting Shetland and Orkney, the itinerants met with “an uncommonly strong desire to hear the Gospel, all the way from Elgin

53 For William Stephens (1765–1839) see *ibid* 154.

54 *Missionary Magazine* (1799) 460–462.

55 R Duthie *A Northern Light. The Story of the Mid Street Congregational Church in Fraserburgh* (Banff 1947) 57–58. H Escott *A History of Scottish Congregationalism* (1960) 257–258.

56 For George Reid (1772–1845) see McNaughton *op cit* 132.

57 For Isaac Nicol (d1822) see *ibid* 120.

58 *Scottish Congregational Magazine* (1846) 300–301.

59 For James Tulloch (1770–1863) see McNaughton *op cit* 162.

60 *Scottish Congregational Magazine* (1846) 385.

to Inverness. The congregations were large and attentive. They preached at Auldearn, Nairn, Campbellton, and some country-places, and on Friday, June 22, arrived at Inverness, where two of them spent the following Sabbath, and the other at Dingwall. They heard the Assembly's Bull read in the church of Inverness, and afterwards preached on the hill to a large congregation, from the words of a vagrant preacher formerly well known in Judea, Matt. lii. 10. They again met at Invergordon, preached there, at Cromarty and Drummond, and arrived at Tain. The county of Sutherland affords little opportunity without the Gaelic, and they preached no more until they came to Wick".⁶¹ There is no indication as to whether the reading of the *Pastoral Admonition* at Inverness was accompanied, as in many other places, by a fiery harangue against *vagrant teachers*. But no doubt its reading prejudiced some individuals against itinerants, while producing in others curiosity to hear one of the preaching *vagrants*. Around this time, John Brown and John King undertook a mission to the north on behalf of the Burgher Synod and one of them notes, "We received no ill usage or the least insult in any place, but were most kindly received ... and had many more invitations to preach than we were able to answer. Our audiences on week-days, but especially on Sabbath-day, were numerous ... This was the more remarkable, as the country has been much alarmed by the recent reading of the Pastoral Admonition from the General Assembly, and the imprisonment of a catechist in Aberdeen, merely for doing the duties of his station".⁶²

There is no such thing as bad publicity

For his part Rowland Hill assailed the General Assembly with all the ridicule and sarcasm he could muster, asserting that "three reasons alone can be assigned for their conduct; these are madness, malice, or an attempt to discover our treasonable plots; and the first of these reasons should seem the most probable, the pastoral admonition being dated on the day of the full moon!" Nevertheless, Hill was astute enough to appreciate that those associated with the work of the SPGH would "shine all the brighter for the scrubbing" they had received from the General Assembly, as would appear to have been the case in the eyes of many.⁶³ The itinerant's enthusiasm was undiminished and the September 1799 issue of the *Missionary Magazine* reported that Haldane and Innes had returned from Shetland to Orkney, where they had rejoined Aikman, all three were now in Caithness and everywhere they had "been received with much affection, and been attended by great audiences".⁶⁴

61 *Missionary Magazine* (1799) 462.

62 *ibid* 528.

63 R Hill *A Series of Letters, occasioned by the late Pastoral Admonition of the Church of Scotland, as also Their Attempts to Suppress the Establishment of Sabbath Schools, addressed to The Society For Propagating The Gospel At Home* (Edinburgh 1799). A Haldane *op cit* 258.

64 *Missionary Magazine* (1799) 432.

Thrown into a blaze

Gavin Struthers states, “Before the close of 1799, nearly forty catechists were travelling throughout the length and breadth of the land, thirty or forty thousand tracts had been distributed and the whole of the north of Scotland was thrown into a blaze. The Established clergy complained that the world was going out of its place, and the old land-marks of things, both civil and sacred, were fast disappearing”. He adds, “The missionaries, as they were called, were found preaching in every village and Highland glen, and in every locality they had their schools and their lay agency, which trenched on Presbyterian order, and clerical superintendence. Church courts, both dissenting and established, took alarm, and brought their antagonistic power and influence to bear on them”.⁶⁵ “Thrown into a blaze” may be something of an exaggeration, but the SPGH’s agents did tend to make a considerable impact. Compared with the cold dissertations of others on morality, the preaching of the itinerants felt like a new gospel. Crowds gathered to hear them, men and women were led to accept Christ. Individuals were moved to meet together for prayer and to read the scriptures and out of this sharing, and their evangelical zeal, there arose the desire to establish a fellowship of believers where purity of communion might be enjoyed.

Robert Haldane’s Theological Seminary

Meanwhile, Robert Haldane was led to embark on educating young men for the ministry due to the need to maintain a suitable supply of ministers for the Tabernacle, the possibility of other such ventures, and the need of evangelists for the SPGH. With no clear picture of the precise role his seminary would come to play, Haldane founded the institution that was to be crucial in meeting the needs of the SPGH and many, as yet unborn, Independent churches. A class was formed in January 1799, of twenty-eight students⁶⁶ under the care of Greville Ewing. They were all Presbyterian in sentiment but, by the completion of their studies in December 1800, all had become “decided and intelligent Congregationalists”⁶⁷ under the charge of the SPGH.

Not pastors of churches, but preachers of the Gospel

Requests for preachers having been received from various parts of the country, the SPGH stated that although it would like to accommodate all, they considered it proper to have “some general Itinerants, while all their preachers will itinerate in their own districts”. Three preachers were to go to Ireland, and

65 G Struthers *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Principles of the Relief Church* (Glasgow 1843) 402.

66 *Missionary Magazine* (1800) 531. *Scottish Congregational Magazine* (1855) 28.

67 A Haldane *op cit* 248.

the rest were to labour in Scotland.⁶⁸ A Gaelic speaker was appointed to itinerate in Kintyre, at the Society's expense, and two others received appointments where preaching in Gaelic was needed.⁶⁹ And the twenty-eight were reminded that "During this year, while you are under our charge, you are not pastors of churches, but preachers of the Gospel. You must not therefore on any account agitate questions on church-government". They each received a written note of the rotation of their preaching on Lord's days and were further instructed:

During the summer-months, from the beginning of May to the end of August, you will preach out of doors on Sabbath evenings. Keep always on private property, or, if this cannot be got, on some common, where you will give no interruption to roads, streets, &c. You will consider the villages for ten miles round your station as your district, in which you will be as diligent as possible in spreading the knowledge of the gospel, preaching at least three times between Sabbaths, and occasionally recommending the Evangelical and Missionary Magazines ... We recommend to you to pay particular attention to the visitation of the sick, to the religious instruction of youth, by encouraging Sabbath Schools; ... Keep a concise journal, noting the items and places where you preach, and any remarkable occurrence, such as, effects of the word in conversions, deaths, &c."⁷⁰

Shortly after they sent out, requests came from the places where they were sent, requesting the preachers be allowed to continue among them, a request with which the Society, in almost every case, complied. One such request states that, were it granted, "many may be yet added to the church ... there is no small stir among the people here, and so far as we know through the other parts of this country, but the district he constantly travels is so great, that he cannot be with us so often as we would wish, and many in this glen, particularly the aged people, cannot reach the ordinary place of worship, being at a distance of 7 or 8 miles from the church, and in the winter-season the storms will frequently be so great, that very few of us can travel to church".⁷¹

The work continued apace as the SPGH report of December 1801 demonstrates:

Besides the labours of those in stated service of the Society, they have enjoyed as usual, the occasional assistance of ministers from England, and this year two from Ireland, who have itinerated, as far as their labours on the Lord's day admitted. The expenses of several ministers in different parts of the country itinerating in their neighbourhoods, have also been defrayed by the Society ... they pay the travelling charges of evangelical ministers of various denominations, who engage in this labour ... The Society continue to distribute *gratis* large quantities of Catechisms and Tracts in Gaelic and English. ... They have the

68 *Missionary Magazine* (1800) 531.

69 *ibid* (1802) 5.

70 *ibid* (1801) 12–14.

71 *ibid* 130.

prospect, by the beginning of March next, of engaging a very considerable number of additional labourers. Of these it is intended to send a considerable number to Ireland. Above thirty new applications for Preachers have been received from various parts of Scotland, which the Society intend to answer. It is their wish, however, to employ as many as possible as general itinerants, whom they may send, at their own expense, to the most destitute parts of Scotland. One of these has already been sent to Shetland, another to Orkney, and a third to Banffshire. ... In sending out preachers, however, the Society wish it to be understood, that they by no means usurp the undoubted privilege of all Christians to choose their own pastors. They exercise the best of their judgment in sending them out, not as pastors of churches, but simply as preachers, to those places which appear best adapted to their different talents. ... They are under the direction of the Society only for one year. During that period, the people have full opportunity of trying the temper and gifts of those sent among them; and at the termination of the year, have it in their power to make that choice which may seem best.⁷²

The SPGH sent fifteen missionaries to Ireland around March 1802 and thirty-seven into different parts of Scotland. "Some of them, being acquainted with the Gaelic language, were stationed in the Highlands", and in July 1802, "eighteen others were taken into the Society's service; so that the whole number sent out, then exceeded one hundred, of whom ninety-eight had received education for the ministry".⁷³

Itinerant and pastor

The advent of small independent churches with pastors impacted on the nature of the itinerancy undertaken. In a letter published in July 1804, one individual appears to be concerned about contemporary itinerancy. He recalls the *modus operandi* of the first itinerants and asks, "Why are these itinerancies discontinued, or but very seldom undertaken? Circumstances are not so far changed as to render a continuance of them unnecessary ... The churches which have been recently organized, might also derive signal benefit. Infant societies of Christians have much to learn. Cases occur of difficult decision, in which advice would be very acceptable. For this purpose I would have men of some experience and standing in the faith, as well as of abilities for commanding attention, prevailed on to set out on these expeditions".⁷⁴

The *modus operandi* had indeed changed as small fellowships sprang up but the SPGH continued to send out agents. Twenty-one missionaries were sent out on 1st July 1804 to itinerate for three months in Scotland and Ireland. They made no collections among the people, lest their usefulness should be hindered, and were wholly supported by the Society. One was about to proceed to the Isle

72 *ibid* (1802) 6–7.

73 *SPGH* 3–4.

74 *Missionary Magazine* (1804) 301–303.

of Man, “a country extremely destitute of the means of grace”. The Society also intended to send out at the beginning of October, about twenty other preachers to different stations; and although they would not be obliged to support these entirely, they proposed to give them assistance as they need it, “especially at their first going out”.⁷⁵ The twenty-one missionaries and twenty or so other preachers no doubt belonged to the third and fourth classes in Haldane’s seminary. The third class’s studies had been seriously interrupted when the students were sent out to supply stations at the end of their first year and only returned to finish their studies in 1804.⁷⁶

A rough diamond

The following anecdote is told of the evangelist Matthew Wilks who formed a strong attachment to Francis Dick,⁷⁷ a former salmon fisher and member of the third class.

A lady ... being in company with Mr. Wilks, said to him, “Pray, Mr. Wilks, don’t you think now that our young men are sent out rather too soon to preach, and that a little more training would fit them better to compete with the educated clergy of the country?” “Madam,” said old Matthew, drawing down his brows, and speaking with that nasal snarl which was peculiar to him, “I’ll give you leave to collect all the educated clergy, as you call them, in this city [Edinburgh], in one great line along the North Bridge, and I will place my young friend, Francis Dick, alone over against them, and, take my word for it, he’ll preach the whole of them black and blue.” “Oh! Mr. Wilks, but Mr. Dick is *so* rough.” “Rough! Madam, what of that? A rough diamond against polished glass any day!”⁷⁸

Demise of the Society for Propagating the Gospel at Home

The SPGH’s agents preached by the hedges and highways, in barns and kilns, in school-houses and farm kitchens, in cottages and chapels, and as a result, between 1798 and 1807, eighty-five churches were formed in Scotland and had pastors over them. Earlier forms of Independency however had sought to revive the fellowship of the apostolic church by imitating every practice to be found in the New Testament churches, all of which resulted in division, and such forces began to make themselves felt among the young churches around 1804. In the seminary, the “writings of Sandeman, Ecking, and Glas were ... industriously circulated among the students”.⁷⁹ If Robert Haldane was not actively involved at this time, he soon became involved. According to Ewing, one of the greatest

75 *ibid* 429.

76 *Jubilee Memorial of the Scottish Congregational Churches* (Edinburgh 1849) 69.

77 For Francis Dick (1770–1847) see McNaughton *op cit* 36.

78 *Scottish Congregational Magazine* (1848) 40.

79 W L Alexander *Memoir of the Rev John Watson* (Edinburgh 1845) 44

injuries which the young churches received from Haldane was “his clandestine endeavours to win over the students ... to views of church government subversive to the churches”.⁸⁰ One of the students of the 1805 class, having been dealt with in the manner described, was sent to labour in Perth with instructions from Haldane to “converse in private with the members on the subjects which we have been discussing, and endeavour to bring them forward”.⁸¹ The *new views* spread rapidly among the churches and bitter disputes and divisions followed. Anarchy prevailed in the churches and in some cases wrought havoc. “The pious of other bodies, who were inclined to favour our system, shrank with sorrow and alarm, from what appeared to them so disastrous an experiment of Congregational principles”.⁸² The trouble came to a head when James Haldane rejected infant baptism and was baptised around March 1808.⁸³ His congregation was torn asunder and there were similar disruptions elsewhere. Many allied themselves to the Scotch Baptists. Robert shared his brother’s sentiments and forcefully advocated Baptist views, withdrawing his financial assistance to those who did not share his views. The fact that he held the purse strings of the SPGH, had built many of the church buildings, or given substantial loans, meant that his actions had tremendous implications.⁸⁴ The Congregational witness in Scotland changed dramatically and the SPGH was dissolved.

SPGH statistics

The SPGH report from May 1803 to January 1807 noted with satisfaction that almost every part of Scotland and a considerable part of the north of Ireland had “either permanently or occasionally enjoyed the preaching of the word” and the work in the Highlands particularly, both in the north and west, continued to be considerable, though they had never been able to meet the demand for preachers in the Highlands.⁸⁵ The Society had sent out a considerable number of agents over the years. Thirty-two were sent out between December 1797 and December 1801, fifty-three in March 1802 and twenty in July 1803, a total of one hundred and five. In October 1804, twenty-eight were sent out—eight to the Highlands, eleven to the Lowlands and nine to Ireland; on 31st December 1805,

80 G Ewing *Facts and Documents respecting the connections which have subsisted between Robert Haldane, Esq and Greville Ewing* (Glasgow 1809) 93.

81 W Orme *A Reply to the Remarks of Robert Haldane, Esq on the Appendix to Mr Greville Ewing’s Late Publication, entitled Facts and Documents, &c.* (Perth 1809) 3–6, cf Ewing *op cit* 95.

82 *Jubilee Memorial* 91.

83 G Yuille (Ed) *History of the Baptists in Scotland* (Glasgow 1926) 58. (W Orme) *The London Christian Instructor* (1819) 783.

84 *The London Christian Instructor* 784.

85 *Missionary Magazine* (1807) 70–71.

nineteen were sent out—three to the Highlands, twelve to the Lowlands and four to Ireland; in July 1806, thirty-three were sent out—five to the Highlands, twenty-one to the Lowlands and seven to Ireland after itinerating for some time in Scotland. Out of the one hundred and eighty-five sent forth, “182 had previously applied themselves to a course of instruction in various branches of knowledge, intended to improve their aptness to teach, and to increase their qualifications for preaching the gospel”.⁸⁶ The foregoing does not include those sent out by the SPGH after 1806; the sizes of the seventh, eighth and ninth classes in Haldane’s seminary are unknown but Robert Kinniburgh⁸⁷ states that the seminary sent out nearly three hundred preachers prior to its closure in December 1808.⁸⁸

The itinerating spirit lives on

The loss of the SPGH, along with the poverty of the churches, contributed to a considerable reduction in the amount of itinerancy undertaken but not its extinction. A number of Congregationalists, belonging to different churches, formed the Aberdeenshire Association for the spread of the Gospel in April 1808⁸⁹ and the January 1809 issue of the *Missionary Magazine* announced, “that it is in contemplation to furnish a few godly men ... with the means of acquiring such branches of knowledge, as may be thought useful in assisting them to preach the Gospel, and to itinerate in different parts of this country.”⁹⁰ The following April a number of ministers in the West, believing itinerancy to have been “criminally neglected” for some years, agreed to enable one or more of their number to itinerate during some part of the summer and autumn. Hugh Fraser,⁹¹ at that time visiting friends in Angus-shire, was requested to stay a fortnight or three weeks longer, for the purpose of itinerating in that quarter and two others were requested to itinerate together through the shires of Ayr and Galloway, for a month in May and June, while John Hercus,⁹² who intended to visit friends in Orkney, for two or three weeks at the beginning of July, was asked to prolong his stay for the purpose of itinerating. It was also noted that others belonging to various denominations had contributed for the support of a Gaelic preacher, Duncan Macnaughton, in an itinerancy of six months, from May onwards, chiefly in the islands of Skye and Lewis.⁹³ The following April, the

86 *ibid* 69

87 For Robert Kinniburgh (1780–1851) see McNaughton *op cit* 78.

88 *Jubilee Memorial* 70.

89 *Missionary Magazine* (1808) 211.

90 *ibid* (1809) 41.

91 For Hugh Fraser see McNaughton *op cit* 49.

92 For John Hercus (1782–1830) see *ibid* 64.

93 *Missionary Magazine* (1809) 202–203.

brethren in the West “agreed that two of the pastors whose places could be supplied, should itinerate, for some time during the ensuing summer, in Argyllshire, and another of their number in Ayrshire”. A few months later it was reported that Greville Ewing had preached at Stirling, Gargunnoch, Kippen and Ruskie, Callander and Thornhill, Doune and Blair Drummond Moss, Hill of Drip, Stirling, Alva, Alloa and Bannockburn, between 25th June and 4th July; while Ralph Wardlaw⁹⁴ had covered the same ground about a fortnight later. Two others also had itinerated in Ayrshire in July.⁹⁵ George Robertson⁹⁶ and Alexander McKay⁹⁷ had itinerated in Kintyre and Arran in June and McKay and Niel McGill⁹⁸ in Argyll thereafter.⁹⁹ Elsewhere, the Morayshire Association was formed in March, 1810.¹⁰⁰

Need for ministerial education

The missionary imperative was accompanied by an awareness of the need for the churches to facilitate ministerial education and an educated ministry. This led to the formation of the Glasgow Theological Academy in March 1811, with the appointment of Greville Ewing and Ralph Wardlaw as Tutors. However, with regard to connecting the new body with a scheme of itinerancy throughout the country, the brethren concluded, “that however desirable an extensive scheme of itinerancy might be, it was much better, in the meantime, to keep but one object in view ... and that no plan for itinerancy, therefore, should be at all connected with the proposed Institution, further than what was implied in the preaching of the more advanced students during the vacations, and of those who had finished their studies, from the time of their leaving the Academy till they should be settled in a fixed station”.¹⁰¹

Financial restraints

The poverty of ministers and churches impacted on itinerant labour. One country minister reported:

I send you a short statement of my income and expenses connected with my situation as a teacher, &c. My family consists of *five* persons. The number of my scholars, at an average, is forty, for whom I receive £28 per annum, supposing the school fees punctually paid, which is seldom the case in every instance. Deduct from this the sum of £9 for house and school rent, and the remaining £19 is all I

94 For Ralph Wardlaw (1779–1853) see McNaughton *op cit* 166.

95 *Missionary Magazine* (1810) 164 & 324.

96 For George Robertson (1778–1854) see McNaughton *op cit* 136.

97 For Alexander McKay (1780–1856) see *ibid* 92.

98 For Niel McGill see McNaughton *op cit* 90.

99 *Missionary Magazine* (1810) 362–364.

100 *ibid* (1811) 65–67. GACS Section 10 p21.

101 *Missionary Magazine* (1811) 190–194.

have to live on, save a few pounds I receive from our small church, and some necessary articles with which we are occasionally supplied. I make a monthly collection to defray the expenses of the Sabbath evening sermon, such as lights, &c. but this I cannot reckon much. My labours in the school occupy me usually six hours every day; my scholars are almost all beginners, which makes the teaching a heavy task. My time is not only thus taken up ... but I am often so wearied out by the time they are dismissed in the evening, that I am hardly able to study; and Saturday afternoon, which I take to myself, is ... no play time to me. Sabbath is to me a great day of anxiety and exertion, ... Besides the distance I have to travel from my own house, which takes up a considerable part of the day, I am employed speaking upwards of four hours every Lord's day ...¹⁰²

County associations sought to enable those who wished to itinerate to do so. The Perth and Dundee Association intimated in February 1812 that “If any of our Brethren wish to undertake an itinerating tour for three or four months during the ensuing summer” they would meet the expenses entailed. And elsewhere there were those who wished to itinerate, like the Gaelic preacher who had, “for these three summers past, visited some parts of Scotland, where nothing else is spoken ... and where the people are destitute of the means of religious instruction”, and in March sought support for the ensuing summer. There were also a few possessed of private means, like Wardlaw and Aikman, whom the August issue of the magazine notes had “just returned from an itinerancy of four weeks, in the south of Scotland”.¹⁰³ In addition, March 1813 saw the inauguration of yet another county body, the Association of the Congregational churches in the County of Stirling and vicinity.¹⁰⁴

The Congregational Union of Scotland

The Congregational Union, formed in November 1812, was an attempt on a national level to enhance the witness of the young churches. A church aid and home mission society, every pastor was regarded as an evangelist and every church a home-mission agency, and initially of the funds distributed a part was in most cases for “the immediate relief of the Pastor, and a part to assist him in itinerating”.¹⁰⁵ Indeed, for a period during his ministry one minister received £10 annually from the Union, but as it was thought that he “did not itinerate enough £5 of that was withheld”.¹⁰⁶ The Union sought to use its limited finances wisely and a few months after its inception was able to report “that material aid had already been afforded in several urgent cases, and several

102 *ibid* (1812) 217–220.

103 *Missionary Magazine* (1812) 74, 118, 318.

104 *ibid* (1813) 312–314.

105 *Annual Report of the Congregational Union of Scotland* (hereafter *Annual Report*) (Edinburgh 1813) 5, 18.

106 GACS Section 13 p22.

brethren, disposed to spend a part of the summer in itinerating, will now be enabled with comfort to engage in this important service".¹⁰⁷ Thereafter, Ewing noted that much good had been done, "by the occasional excursions of brethren ... but more benefit might be expected to result, from the kind of itinerancies encouraged by the Congregational Union. The effects of the former were transient, of the latter abiding".¹⁰⁸ The labours of some enabled to itinerate by the Union in 1814 were extensive and it was noted that "These itinerant excursions have been, almost without exception, in places where the gospel is little known. One of our brethren, after noticing a long tour on the borders of the Highlands, says, 'In the course of the season, I travelled ... about 600 miles, for the most part on foot'".¹⁰⁹ In the case of John Hercus, however, it is unclear whether he was in receipt of Union aid when he spent nearly three weeks in Orkney during the summer, preaching about thirty times in eleven parishes.¹¹⁰ Two years later, almost all the pastors of churches in receipt of aid had been enabled to labour more extensively and also at least ten of those, whose labour without Union aid would have been confined to one station, and to the first day of the week, as a result of the need to teach school, etc., had during the past year been wholly devoted to the ministry.¹¹¹

Edinburgh & Paisley Societies

The Edinburgh Itinerant Society came into being in 1816, composed of members of Edinburgh Congregational churches, determined to employ ministers, without regard to the denomination, to preach and to circulate suitable religious tracts in the Highlands, islands and other destitute parts of Scotland. During its first three years, upwards of sixteen ministers were employed in the summer months. They were all Congregationalists, however, "the Society not being able to find any others suitable for the work. In addition to the Northern and Western Islands visited by the Itinerants ... the southern parts of the country were frequently and extensively traversed". The Society spent upwards of £330 and continued its operations every summer until the Union was able to support more extended itinerancies than it could do initially.¹¹²

Concern for the plight of the Highlander also led to the formation of the Society in Paisley and its Vicinity, for Gaelic Missions to the Highlands and Islands of Scotland in 1817. The Gaelic preachers employed were all Congregational ministers, namely Alexander Mackay, Malcolm Maclaurin, James

107 *Missionary Magazine* (1813) 200.

108 *Annual Report* (1814) 20.

109 *ibid* (1815) 13.

110 *Christian Herald* (1814) 330-331.

111 *Annual Report* (1816) 10-12.

112 GACS Section 1 pp33-34.

Dewar,¹¹³ Alexander Dewar,¹¹⁴ John Campbell of Oban,¹¹⁵ Peter McLaren¹¹⁶ and James Kennedy,¹¹⁷ and for a number of seasons, these men generally spent five or six weeks in the summer as agents of the society.¹¹⁸ First to itinerate was McKay, who commenced itinerating in June and returned home in August 1817. Over nine weeks, he travelled about four hundred miles, from Kintyre to Fort William, and round by Sunart, Mull, Lismore, and other places. The fact that for several years he had been accustomed to itinerating part of the summer enabled him to cover so much ground in such a short time. Malcolm Maclaurin commenced itinerating for the society in January 1818; “His range was, north, to Fort William, east, to Tyndrum, south to Inveraray, and, west to Craignish, embracing the eastern shore of the Atlantic Ocean”. It was also noted that Maclaurin was to take as many of the Western Isles as he could during the summer and, as he had no pastoral charge, they were of the opinion that the Society ought to keep him active throughout the year. For their part, James Dewar of Nairn and Alexander Dewar of Avoch itinerated in their respective places during the winter of 1817 and in the spring extended their operations to the Counties of Inverness, Ross, and Sutherland.¹¹⁹

Something of the golden age of itinerating was returning and the Union’s 1818 Report recognised the Edinburgh and Paisley societies “as necessary and powerful” partners in the work, enabling more of their number to itinerate. It was also noted that during the year, “not fewer than *twenty-four* preachers have been enabled to extend their labours, by means of the Congregational Union ... and nearly the one-half of these may be almost considered as regular itinerants”.¹²⁰ The following year, John Hercus, who had received occasional assistance from the Edinburgh society, paid one of his frequent visits to Orkney “assisted by some friends in Glasgow”,¹²¹ while Robert Maclachlan¹²² and John Dunn¹²³ itinerated at the Society’s request in Galloway.¹²⁴ And by the time Neil McNeil¹²⁵ itinerated in Orkney in 1820 for the Edinburgh society, it had been employing George Robertson “for some time past” to preach in the “more

113 For James Dewar (1780–1843) see McNaughton *op cit* 35.

114 For Alexander Dewar (1785–1849) see *ibid*.

115 For John Campbell (c1780–1853) see *ibid* 23.

116 For Peter McLaren (1777–1849) see *ibid* 98.

117 For James Kennedy (1777–1863) see *ibid* 76.

118 GACS Section 1 p35.

119 *Christian Herald* (1818) 395–396.

120 *Annual Report* (1818) 17, 14.

121 *Christian Herald* (1819) 350.

122 For Robert Maclachlan (c1793–1866) see McNaughton *op cit* 97.

123 For John Dunn (d1820) see *ibid* 41.

124 GACS Section 16 pp2–3. *Christian Herald* (1819) 387–388, 429–430.

125 For Neil McNeil (1782–1855) see McNaughton *op cit* 101.

destitute” parts of the Isles.¹²⁶ For its part, the Congregational Union had “for a number of years past ... enabled no fewer than nine ministers of their connection to visit different parts of the Highlands regularly every summer”.

Home Missionary Society

It appeared in 1822 that the Congregational Union had assumed much of the character of a Home Missionary Society. “Not fewer than *thirty-five* pastors and preachers, ten of whom preach in the Gaelic language, have, during the past year, received considerable aid, in their important labours in the villages and glens around them, as well as in the more remote parts of Scotland—the Highlands, the Orkney and Shetland Isles—where very extensive itinerancies have been supported”.¹²⁷ Neil McKechnie¹²⁸ had devoted several weeks to the Gaelic population in Sutherland and the Dewar brothers, who had for several summers laboured in the Highlands for a short time on behalf of the Paisley Society, had indicated to the Union that they wished to itinerate longer provided their churches could be supplied. In urging the importance of their request, mention was made of the vast numbers who came to hear in many places and the desire of the people that they should stay longer. This proposal met with a sympathetic response; the committee being “Deeply convinced that itinerancies prolonged for some length of time in any one place, are much more likely to benefit the people than a passing sermon or two in many different places”.¹²⁹ Moving a resolution to encourage itinerant preaching, William McGavin¹³⁰ asserted:

It is a fine thing, Sir, to preach in a pulpit, with a velvet cushion, surrounded by hundreds of well dressed admiring hearers; but it is a very different thing to leave home, and all the comforts connected with home, and to go to remote glens and solitudes, without shelter from the storm and rain, and where scarcely the necessities of life are to be obtained, ... seeking out persons ... that we may impart to them that Gospel which brings salvation ... To the carnal mind this must appear a disagreeable and a degrading work—fit only for those of the ministry who have no hope of ever rising to greater things: and yet I have no hesitation in saying, that this is the more honourable work of the two. ... To go to the glens and the mountains—the high ways and hedges—to go to the lanes, and closes, and hovels of our city population—to instruct the ignorant, to restore the wandering, and to reclaim the vicious, is more honourable than to occupy the pulpit of the most splendid cathedral, and to preach to the greatest nobles of the land. This too is honourable work. It is a noble thing to preach the gospel in a cathedral; but I hold it more honourable to preach it in a hovel; because it

126 *Christian Herald* (1820) 351.

127 *ibid* (1822) 159–160, cp *Annual Report* (1822).

128 For Neil McKechnie (1791–1851) see McNaughton *op cit* 93.

129 *Annual Report* (1822) 15, 17–18.

130 For William McGavin (1773–1832) see McNaughton *op cit* 90.

indicates that humility, disinterestedness, and self-denial, which ought always to characterise the ministers of Christ.¹³¹

One itinerant asked a later meeting, “What would be thought of the spectacle of the son of 40 years of age, wheeling the aged and decrepid father on a barrow to the house of prayer, or of a parent carrying on his back his daughter, who through infirmity could not come within the sound of the gospel?” Such spectacles he had often seen “and they were more than sufficient to animate the coldest to exertion”.¹³² There was certainly such a lively desire to hear the gospel in the Highlands; the distance from which the people came, and the numbers that attended, notwithstanding the thinness of the population, were proof of this. However it was not only the willingness to hear the word that was encouraging but the response. It was noted that “In one island, where, but a few years ago, it would have been difficult to have found any possessed of the true knowledge of the gospel ... there is now a church, consisting of from 70 to 80 members”.¹³³ Nevertheless contemporary thought was that poverty in the Highlands was such “as entirely to exclude the hope of the gospel being supported among them ... but for the instrumentality of others”¹³⁴ and at this time every single church connected with the Union in Gaelic speaking areas received considerable aid from the Union, enabling their ministers to devote themselves entirely to the ministry and free to extend their labours. Some of these Gaelic ministers had been supported for several years in their more extensive summer itinerancies by the Paisley Society. But on top of this, some had received additional funding from the Union which enabled them to itinerate even during the winter and spring months.¹³⁵ Indeed, some of these preachers could almost be regarded as “general itinerants” rather than “resident pastors”. One Highland minister writing in March 1823 states “In going north at this time, it is my intention to itinerate for three weeks in different parts of the country. This is one of the best times of the year for preaching on week days in the Highlands of Perthshire. I laboured in January for three weeks in Breadalbane, and other places ... When I have accomplished my present intended preaching tour, it will, when added to ten weeks I have already been out at different times, make one fourth of the year, without including the many times I have preached on week days and Sabbath afternoons in this neighbourhood”.¹³⁶ Another minister, who preached in both English and Gaelic, whose church’s existence depended on Union aid, asserted he had not one

131 *Christian Herald* (1822) 167.

132 *ibid* (1827) 174.

133 *Annual Report* (1823) 15.

134 *ibid* 16.

135 *ibid* (1822) 12–13.

136 *ibid* (1823) 14.

wealthy person in his church and more than half of the members were very poor, but thanks to the Union he could report:

A great part of my time during the past year, was spent on missionary labours. ... The plan on which I ordinarily act is this: When not from home on long preaching excursions, I preach, in winter and spring, on weekdays, and in summer, on Sabbath evenings, in three parishes in this country, including six stations. At these places, from 50 to 150 attend ... Besides these services, I was last year fourteen weeks itinerating in other places, some of which lie in the remote parts of the Highlands. ... I was in summer sent out by the Paisley Society to labour for some weeks in Lochaber, Lernaith, Ardnamuchar, and some of the islands. I also itinerated for three weeks in the beginning of winter, in the western parts of the Highlands of Perthshire. Part of that time, Mr Kennedy of Aberfeldy accompanied me through Toss, Rannoch and Glenlyon.¹³⁷

More labourers required in the Highlands

Besides financial support, more labourers were required in the Highlands.¹³⁸ The Glasgow Theological Academy endorsed such sentiments and during 1821 good use had been made of its two Gaelic speaking students, with one in Islay and the other in Arran.¹³⁹ Students from the Highlands also agreed to preach in Gaelic to their fellow-countrymen residing in Glasgow, many of whom attended no place of worship. A school-room was rented and “the students were appointed to preach alternately every Sabbath evening”.¹⁴⁰ Here Edward Campbell¹⁴¹ commenced preaching to as many as the place would hold. Such was the success of this mission to Gaelic speakers that when student placements in various parts of the country were being arranged for the summer of 1823, it was decided that Campbell should remain in Glasgow, while another Gaelic speaker, Daniel McKeich,¹⁴² would itinerate on behalf of the Union.¹⁴³

Highlands and Islands a distinct and separate sphere of labour

Two additional agencies, the Fifeshire Home Missionary Association and the Angus, Mearns, and Perth Shires Itinerant Society, were founded in 1825¹⁴⁴ and around two years later, an ever increasing awareness of religious destitution in the Highlands caused the Congregational Union to adopt a resolution “making the

137 *ibid* (1824) 14–15.

138 *ibid* (1822) 13.

139 *Christian Herald* (1822) 67.

140 *Scottish Congregational Magazine* (1837) 290.

141 For Edward Campbell (1795–1836) see McNaughton *op cit* 22.

142 For Daniel McKeich (c1798–1836) see *ibid* 93.

143 Glasgow Theological Academy Minutes 1811–1842—2nd April 1823.

144 *Christian Herald* (1825) 397–401, (1826) 28.

preaching of the gospel in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland a distinct and separate part of their work” and to solicit contributions specifically for this work.¹⁴⁵ At this time the Union had fifteen ministers who preached in Gaelic, most of them stately and all occasionally: natives of the country, conversant with the habits of the people, and most of whom had for a number of years itinerated extensively. The Paisley and Edinburgh societies continued to be among those who granted aid to the preachers sent out by the Union.

Designation of the Highlands and Islands as a distinct and separate sphere of labour did not preclude itinerancy elsewhere and in 1829 it was reported with regard to more extended itinerancies in the Lowlands that, “Messrs Macneil, Munro¹⁴⁶, and Martin¹⁴⁷ ... had preached and circulated tracts in and around Portsoy, and throughout six extensive parishes on the banks of the Dee. Two other brethren itinerated around and northwards from Dunkeld, particularly in Strathmore ... Mr Massie¹⁴⁸ had itinerated extensively throughout the western parts of Fife, and the Fifeshire Association ... in the eastern districts of the county. Mr Dick had also laboured extensively in Roxburghshire and the South of Scotland¹⁴⁹

Sixteen Gaelic Preachers

In the Highlands and Islands in 1830, assistance was given by the Union to sixteen Gaelic preachers and five preachers who laboured in Orkney and Shetland; several were entirely supported and others, on average, received one half of their income from the institution. And of these individuals it was asserted:

They think nothing of preaching 7, 8, or 9 times, and travelling on foot, over the most rugged or swampy ground, 50 or 60 miles every week for months together. Nor are the people less willing to hear, than the preachers are to labour; indeed ... they cannot meet the earnest wishes of the multitudes. One of these preachers ... while on a long tour, was taken by his host for the night to a height, and pointing to part of four parishes within their view, “Now,” said he, urging a speedy repetition of the visit, “we have not had sermon within our reach since you were here last year, and we do not expect another till you return.” Some who were present, asked, if he could not preach in such a place; his reply was, that in consequence of other engagements, he could not, unless the people would come out early in the morning. This was at once agreed to; and several immediately set off through the night to give intimation of sermon. He went to the place appointed, and had, in a thinly people country, at four o’clock in the morning, a congregation of 500 or 600 most attentive hearers.¹⁵⁰

145 *ibid* (1827) 62.

146 For John Munro (c1774–1853) see McNaughton *op cit* 116.

147 For John Martin (1772–1834) see *ibid* 105.

148 For James William Massie (1798–1869) see *ibid* 106.

149 *Christian Herald* (1829) 182.

150 *ibid* (1831) 135–136, cp (1829) 182.

In expressing his concern for the Highlands, John Campbell¹⁵¹ stated “I have been often sorry to find that the Highlanders were, as to the means of salvation, almost the same as the Hottentots previous to societies in this country sending out preachers with the gospel”,¹⁵² and James Dewar informed the Annual Meeting in 1834:

If the people of Edinburgh had obstructions like Salisbury Crags and Arthur’s Seat, for twenty miles between them and the church, they would not go often to hear any gospel. There was a deplorable want of religion in the Highlands. ... The only thing they boasted of was their hospitality, and that they did not steal, but there was much barbarism among them notwithstanding the boast. He alluded to the burial of their dead. A large company assembled at a funeral; the corpse was carried to the place of interment, the bagpipes playing before them all the way, laid down on the grass, and an anker of whiskey set down beside it. They would not bury it till the whiskey was drunk, so that it was sometimes left uninterred all night. A person, he said, would reckon himself disgraced, if he had not a sufficient quantity of whiskey at a funeral. ... He said the whole of that district had now been explored by their itinerants; and a missionary from them would be received as a friend.¹⁵³

Finance

Though the need for itinerancy had not abated, it was noted four years later that there had been scarcely as much itinerancy as in former years.¹⁵⁴ Regarding finance, “£375 had been distributed amongst twenty of the poorer churches” in the Lowlands, and some of the pastors had also been aided in itinerancies; “but as the Highlands and Islands had been the scene of the most extensive operation of the Society, £528 had been devoted for the support of the gospel in these parts; and twenty-five brethren had been more or less engaged in preaching”.¹⁵⁵ Two years later the Union was still committing a considerable part of its income to the Highlands and Islands, as can be seen from the 1840 Report. Of £1504, £400 was allocated to twenty-five churches for general purposes and £1104 to missionary purposes in the Lowlands and Highlands: £195 to aid seven stations and support several preachers during the summer, £108 for various itinerancies fixed upon, £30 to the Aberdeen and Banff, and the Perth, Angus, and Mearns Shires’ Associations, and £100 to itinerancies in prospect in summer, while £601 was allocated to “the propagation of the Gospel in the Highlands and Islands by twenty Brethren, several of whom are entirely supported from the Funds” and £70 for “extra Itinerancies in the Highlands, according to the wishes of the Donors”. The report also alludes to a private donation of £100 to aid

151 For John Campbell (1766–1840) see McNaughton *op cit* 23.

152 *Christian Herald* (1833) 239.

153 *ibid* (1834) 180.

154 *Scottish Congregational Magazine* (1838) 288.

155 *ibid* 145.

itinerancies among the Gaelic population”; this enabled eleven itinerants to undertake “very extensive tours” during part of the summer, in addition to their subsidised labours.¹⁵⁶

A generation of itinerants passes away & the *Modus operandi* is questioned

Times were a-changing. The Perth, Angus, and Mearns shires Itinerant Society’s report of November 1839 declared that the condition of the counties visited by their agents was such as to merit six additional itinerants but the Union, “on account of urgent calls from other places, was not able to afford us even one”. Also, one of their agents, William Lindsay¹⁵⁷ had been completely laid aside from public usefulness by “*mental infirmity*” and his period of service seemed to be finished.¹⁵⁸ Lindsay, who died in January 1841, had served his charge from 1803 and is recorded as stating, “my attachments were formed; and nearly thirty years’ experience has not loosened them. ... Though not ashamed to preach any where, yet I did not consider my talent as fitting me for the polished manners of a city or large town; whereas I believed that my plain and homely manner was of advantage in the country: nor have I yet seen ... any place more suited to me than Letham. I had a populous country around where I had fields of labour among the adjacent mountains, which, from the circumstances both of food and accommodation, were almost inaccessible to those who had been delicately brought up”.¹⁵⁹

The absence of pastors from their charges while itinerating was also giving cause for concern around this time and it was suggested that the Union ought to reconsider the way in which it prosecuted its witness.

Most of our missionaries are pastors of churches, and many of them receive aid from the Union in both capacities. Their support requires the twofold grant; but the shape in which one part of it is given, sometimes subtracts a considerable portion of their time and labour from their churches, and their immediate localities ... justice to the churches requires that the mode of rendering assistance to them should not impose on their pastors any necessity to leave them to labour

¹⁵⁶ *Annual Report* (1840) 20–27, 44, cp *Scottish Congregational Magazine* (1841) 41–47. For Archibald Farquharson (1801–1878) see McNaughton *op cit* 44, Adam Gordon (d c1871) see *ibid* 55, John McLaren (1800–1889) see *ibid* 97, George Murray of Clachan (1775–1862) see *ibid* 117, Alexander & James Dewar, James Kennedy, Alexander McKay, Neil McKechnie, Malcolm Maclaurin, John Campbell of Oban.

Two years later, nearly fifty per cent of the Union’s funds was once again expended in aiding or wholly supporting about twenty brethren in the all-important work, see *Annual Report* (1842) 21.

¹⁵⁷ For William Lindsay (1761–1841) see McNaughton *op cit* 83.

¹⁵⁸ *Scottish Congregational Magazine* (1840) 95.

¹⁵⁹ *ibid* (1842) 397–398.

elsewhere. The self-supported churches are not subject to this drawback on their prosperity and progress ... Some of the pastors, if left at liberty, might continue to do as they do at present, and their churches might willingly acquiesce in the sacrifice. But still we ask if any necessity ought to be laid upon them? ... If the pastors must be supported under the character of missionaries, let their missionary district be very limited, and be that surrounding their homes, so as to bear directly on the increase of the church. ... If pastors must be sent abroad to distant places, let their lack of service at home be supplied ... and if no more distant labour were undertaken than can be efficiently compensated by a substitute at home, the greater part of the evil we deprecate would cease. ... But is it not practicable to find men who will devote themselves exclusively to missionary work and to support them? ... Let districts be chosen—*manageable* districts ... and men placed in them ... let this be done more systematically and zealously than heretofore ...¹⁶⁰

The difficulty in recruiting home missionaries lay in the comparatively low esteem in which the work was held, being considered subordinate to the pastoral ministry and a task almost any man could fulfil; “Nothing could be more honourable than the office of a Foreign Missionary, but few things are esteemed more lowly than the office of a Home missionary”. Published nine months later, *Missions in the Highlands and Islands* mirrored the above comments and noted:

The freshness of our first zeal has not been sustained, and the amount of our agency has for several years been stationary, and, according to present appearances, likely soon to diminish. Nearly one-half of the annual resources of the Congregational Union are expended upon this ... field of labour, and twenty agents are more or less constantly employed. The results have been, in many respects, cheering ... The amount of visible fruit, however, has not been so great as might be expected; nor does it appear in the *form* which is most likely to be conducive to permanent and increasing results. May not this, in some measure, be owing to the kind of exertion we put forth, as well as to its defective amount? ... Such ... are the views of many of those who walk hundreds, and some of them thousands of miles annually, in proclaiming the gospel through our remote glens and mountains. ... Let us have men devoted exclusively to itinerancy ... But the question arises, how shall we procure suitable men, seeing that the present labourers in the field are, for the most part, in the decline of life, and others are not coming forward to supply their places? We reply that, besides “a higher standard of maintenance”, we must resort to a modification of the plan originally adopted by the churches to secure qualified labourers. ... [The] present character of our Theological Academy ... is unsuitable for training up such men as would be willing to [serve] ... in the Highlands and Islands. Young men well-versed in their native languages and possessed of natural gifts that would fit them for eminent usefulness, are found but very imperfectly acquainted with the English language, and, from the limited educational advantages they have enjoyed, are unfit to enter with advantage upon the course of study pursued ... and besides ... [it] is of a higher cast than is essential in the field of labour they are to occupy. ... [We] are impressed with the necessity of having *another institution* ... in which,

¹⁶⁰ *ibid* (1841) 41–46.

during the period of two or more years, the elements of a thorough English education might be imparted, with systematic theology, mental philosophy, ecclesiastical history, and the rudiments of the Greek language. ... The services of a class of men would be made available, who, by the present plan, are either wholly excluded from the benefits of the Academy, or, enjoying these benefits, profit comparatively little by them.¹⁶¹

That few thought of devoting themselves to home missions longer than they could help it was a radically different outlook which probably arose out of a growing “*professionalism*” amongst the clergy in a denomination which over the years had become “*respectable*”. However, it would be wrong to assert that at any given time there were simply first and second generation Congregationalists holding specific sets of views. In addition, there was also the growing belief around 1840, that evangelism should be pursued through the new *protracted meeting* format rather than itinerancy. Over twenty ministers met in April 1842 to discuss this method of promoting revival, and as “much inconvenience had arisen from the injury done to the churches of some of the brethren who had been somewhat frequently away from home, a great deal of deliberation was had as to the best mode of obviating the evil, and at the same time spreading more widely the benefits of protracted meetings”.¹⁶²

Impact of the Free Church

For his part, William L. Alexander¹⁶³ looked forward to the birth of the Free Church:

I do not refer merely to the increased number of places of worship to be erected, or to the increased zeal which ministers will display in preaching in those churches, but ... that they are to take to itinerating throughout the country ... to preach the gospel in destitute parts of our land where it had not been preached for centuries ... But I must be allowed to make a little criticism on this [proposal] ... I take the liberty of reminding [them] ... that it will be very hard for them to find places in this country where the gospel has not been preached for ages. The Congregational Union has not ... left many such places. I am surrounded by brethren who have gone to the north, south, east, and west preaching the truths of the gospel—I am surrounded by men who are veterans ... men who have explored our remotest glens—who have visited our most distant hamlets—who have ascended our most rugged mountains ... men who have grown old in the work, and are yet as fond of the work as ever ... I like not such men to be overlooked, as if there had never been an itinerant upon the field ... I will back my good friends Mr. Kennedy of Inverness, Mr. Munro of Knockando, and Mr.

¹⁶¹ *ibid* 366–368. NB The “Highland College” at Sannox, Isle of Arran, trained young men, Congregational and Baptist, supported by private individuals, as Gaelic evangelists from around 1873 to 1879.

¹⁶² *ibid* (1842) 215–216.

¹⁶³ For William Lindsay Alexander (1808–1884) see McNaughton *op cit* 5.

McKenzie¹⁶⁴ of Bervie, for street-preaching, field-preaching, itinerant preaching, against ... rest of them, at any time.¹⁶⁵

A year later we find Alexander wishing the new Free Church “were not so free”!

I do not say that they have not a perfect right to go where they please to explain their principles ... I do not complain of their building places of worship next door ... to any of ours, though the consequence of that may be the withdrawing from our chapels of persons, who, though for a season with us, were never of us. ... All that I wish is, that their ministers in the country would act in the same way to our ministers ... [as they] have done to Dr. Wardlaw and myself, in Edinburgh and Glasgow. ... [Some] of my brethren in remote places have fared very differently at their hands. ... I do not like men going into the country, sharing the hospitality of our ministers, getting the use of their pulpits, and then standing in these very pulpits and telling the people of the great destitution of the true gospel in the place, and broadly proclaiming that the gospel had not been preached there before. ... In Edinburgh there is no hostility between the Free Church and us; why should it be otherwise in the provinces? But my chief reason for referring to this now, is to say that if ... any of our country brethren suffer, the call upon us is all the stronger to see that none fall for want of support ... when these men, though deserted by some who once worshipped with them, are standing by their principles, and, in spite of all difficulties, are still determined to stand.¹⁶⁶

There were around one hundred and ten churches, with many preaching stations, connected to the Union at this time.

The Grim Reaper continued to reap as things continued to drift

In the financial year ending in 1850, grants were made to twenty-three churches, and two brethren engaged in itinerant labours, in the Lowlands, and to sixteen churches and nine preaching stations in the Highlands and Islands. The churches in the Lowlands were granted £537 to assist in supporting themselves and £445 for itinerancies, the churches in the Highlands and Islands received £270 for the former purpose and £550 for the latter.¹⁶⁷ The following year it was noted that “Every year is removing some worn-out labourers to rest”¹⁶⁸ and the 1853 Report referred yet again to how the “thinness of the population and the poverty of the people render it difficult to provide the means of efficiently occupying the Highland field”. Emigration was taking its toll.¹⁶⁹

164 For James McKenzie (1776–1851) see *ibid* 94.

165 *Scottish Congregational Magazine* (1843) 233–234.

166 *ibid* (1844) 291.

167 *Annual Report* (1850) 33.

168 *ibid* (1851) 10.

169 *ibid* (1853) 16, 6.

The call for urban evangelisation

As a considerable proportion of the Union's funds continued to be expended on the Highlands and Islands, it was argued, "If the congregational churches of Scotland have aught peculiar in their mission ... *that* appears to us to be primarily to the masses congregated in the towns and cities of our native land. Concentration, not diffusion is our need; the latter with our limited forces is weakness, the former strength".¹⁷⁰ James Wilson¹⁷¹ had no difficulty in identifying with the above. Some years before, he had outlined the history of the Ragged Kirk movement in Aberdeen and "pressed the claims of the degraded classes in other large towns".¹⁷² Wilson believed the Union was passing into a new phase in its history: "At first they had to look to the country; now it was mainly to the towns. Let them by all means support the earnest men in the country, but unless they planted more Churches in large towns, Congregationalism would not do its duty to the great masses of people it was so well adapted to improve. He hoped the churches would be encouraged to use their efforts, and that they would be ready to devote a portion, at least, of their funds to the evangelization of the masses in large cities".¹⁷³

Have we a mission and are we discharging it?

Increasingly the question was asked "have we a mission, and are we discharging it?"¹⁷⁴ A vital principle of the early Independents at the outset was that no one should be admitted into a church who had not given evidence of being born again. They had acted on this principle and as a result, over the wide districts of the country where their fellowships came to be known, the influence which they exerted was very much greater than the fewness of their number. Now it appeared other denominations were as attentive to the principle of purity of communion as they once were, more sympathetic to the idea of observing the sacrament of the Lord's Supper with greater frequency and more awake to the importance of itinerancies in the more destitute districts.¹⁷⁵ The whole aspect of the mission field had changed; others preached the Gospel in all its integrity, simplicity and fullness.¹⁷⁶ Much of this had stemmed from Congregationalism's witness over the years. Indeed, the spiritual witness of Scottish Congregationalism cannot be separated from the Disruption of the Established Church. Prior to the Disruption, many who desired a more evangelical form of

170 *Scottish Congregational Magazine* (1855) 92; cp (1855) 41.

171 For James Wilson (1811–1897) see McNaughton *op cit* 172.

172 *Scottish Congregational Magazine* (1852) 161.

173 *ibid* (1857) 152.

174 *ibid* (1851) 192.

175 *Annual Report* (1848) 30.

176 *Scottish Congregational Magazine* (1851) 192.

preaching than that offered by the Establishment found it among the Congregationalists;¹⁷⁷ after 1843, this need could be met within a Presbyterian ethos in the Free Church or by the residuaries newborn zeal. They carried into these bodies the spirituality which had been cherished and cultivated in Congregationalism but Scottish Congregationalism's scope for evangelistic activity was reduced.

A new day had dawned

It was observed of those attending the Union's Annual Meeting in 1857 that, "Not one name appears belonging to the elder race of our ministers—not a solitary link to bind together the past with the present. ... Only four of the senior class of ministers yet survive ... and these are lingering on the extreme verge of life".¹⁷⁸ And at a conference held in 1860 to afford "an opportunity for free and frank discussion of matters affecting the progress of Congregationalism", the propriety of encouraging weak rural churches and of originating new causes in the larger towns was adverted to, and "It was found that of the churches which had become extinct within the last few years, several, especially from the Highland districts, had emigrated along with their pastors ... while others had declined through diminution of population, occasioned by emigration and other causes".¹⁷⁹ Also worthy of note is that some years before, in an article concerning weaker churches, the author drew an important distinction between those in receipt of aid with pastors and those without: "Respecting the *former* there can be not a moment's hesitation in affirming that the faith of the Churches is virtually pledged to their being maintained so long as the pastorate continues. Many of these pastors have assumed the position they occupy on this implied understanding ... Some of these Brethren have "old and greyheaded grown" in their spheres of labour, where to a generation that has departed they freely spent the vigour of their life's best days; and now upon the assistance the Union continues to afford they are almost or altogether dependent for the little they possess or enjoy of this world's good."¹⁸⁰

If itinerancy is not obsolete the need for it has diminished

The belief that a part of the Union's funds should spent on "movements designed to originate new churches in the larger towns"¹⁸¹ was encapsulated in the *Regulations of the Institution* in the late 1850s; added to the existing two

¹⁷⁷ *Reports from Commissioners: Religious Instruction (Scotland)* Parliamentary Papers (Edinburgh 1837–1839) Vol XXIII 1839 126.

¹⁷⁸ *Scottish Congregational Magazine* (1857) 190.

¹⁷⁹ *ibid* (1860) 146.

¹⁸⁰ *ibid* (1855) 90.

¹⁸¹ *Annual Report* (1860) 3, cp *ibid* (1861) 9.

objects, namely, the aiding of poor churches and the employment of itinerants. However, insufficient funds and the intention of the new provision being understood to be to *extend* the Union's operations, and not *merely change their sphere*, produced a reluctance to finance new initiatives at the expense of churches already receiving aid, or of itinerants employed by them, and led to delay in the implementation of any action in the spirit of the new provision.¹⁸² The issue of insufficient funds was not new. For example, between 1847 and 1867 the churches contributed £24,670 to Union funds, an average of £1,233 per annum; the income for the first year of the above period being £1,442 and that of the last £1,199. Bearing in mind the general rise in living standards over this period and increased membership in the city churches, David Arthur¹⁸³ wondered how to account for the "stationary or decreasing" measure of financial support and questioned whether the Union's three objects had ever been adequately promoted. He concluded that the Union to a large extent had fulfilled its role well as a church aid society. As to itinerancy, he had nothing to say, believing "If the practice is not obsolete the need for it at least is not urgent". On the other hand, lack of finance, Arthur asserted, had ensured that movements designed to form churches in the larger towns had never been prosecuted "to any considerable degree", though this object had always appeared to him of first importance. Arthur stated:

In Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dundee, and Aberdeen, not to mention many other considerable towns, we have a population of eight or nine hundred thousand, or nearly a third of the inhabitants of Scotland, and I am not aware that in these vast accumulations of human beings the Union sustains so much as one agent whose business is to evangelize in order to the origination of new churches. ... [In] Orkney and Shetland, containing a population of some sixty or seventy thousand inhabitants, you expended last year ... some four hundred and fifty pounds. ... I do not utter an opinion, far less pronounce an adverse judgment ... I only say if you do this, then that other, and in my estimate much more urgent work should not be left undone. ... I only put in a protest against the utter neglect of what we have declared to be one of our objects, viz., evangelistic effort in order to the "origination of new churches in our large towns."¹⁸⁴

For his part, David McLaren, the Union Treasurer asserted,

I am persuaded we must go deeper than we have been doing into first principles, if we would improve the state of matters which cause us regret. ... I remember well the meeting of this Union thirty years ago ... it was held in Dundee. ... There were several sermons preached in the open air that morning by ministers attending the meeting; that at the Cross, by the venerable Greville Ewing. I think I see the old blind man standing below the arches of the Town House. If I remember rightly I afterwards read that one soul at least was blessed

¹⁸² *ibid* 9.

¹⁸³ For David Arthur (1806–1890) see McNaughton *op cit* 9.

¹⁸⁴ *Scottish Congregational Magazine* (1867) 177–186.

by that sermon; and well do I recollect the happy expression of his countenance as he told ... that that morning he completed his three-score years and ten. Things are somewhat changed with us since then, whether for better or for worse I shall not inquire. Nor shall I say what we may have less of. We have more members, we have more wealth, we have more rank, we have more intellectual power in our pulpits, we have more of the aesthetic in our worship and in our buildings; and if these have been our ambition it has been attained. God grant that it may not be also true of us which is written, "*He gave them their desire, but he sent leanness into their souls.*"¹⁸⁵

The words, "Our fathers felt that *their* vocation was to *preach the gospel*. Our preachers were missionaries. Our churches were the mission churches. Our Union was a Missionary Union. The policy of our denomination was characteristically *aggressive*"¹⁸⁶ cannot be applied to Scottish Congregationalism as a whole from around 1840 onwards. By 1855 George Murray was the only Gaelic preacher in the field who did not have a pastoral charge. Five years later, he was still continuing his labours in Kintyre, at around 85 years of age. Having laboured in Kintyre for some fifty years, Murray died on 8th January, 1862.

W D McNaughton

185 *ibid* 190–191.

186 *ibid* (1855) 191.

Books for Congregationalists

Manual of Congregational Principles by RW Dale,

The Atonement by RW Dale,

Visible Saints: The Congregational Way 1640–1660 by Geoffrey F Nuttall

Studies in English Dissent by Geoffrey F Nuttall

Christian Fellowship or The Church Member's Guide by John Angell James

The Anxious Inquirer by John Angell James

Quinta Press, Meadow View, Weston Rhyn, Oswestry, Shropshire, SY10 7RN 01691 778659

E-mail info@quintapress.com; web-site: www.quintapress.com

Readers of this journal will be interested in some of the draft books being worked on. If you visit the web-site and click on the PDF Books link you will find draft versions of many books by important Congregationalists of the past, including John Cotton, Richard Mather, William Jay, John Angell James, RW Dale and PT Forsyth.

Also Edmund Calamy's 1702, 1713 and 1727 volumes of Richard Baxter's *Life and Times* detailing the ministers ejected in 1662 (these 3 volumes were the basis of AG Matthew *Calamy Revised*).

Click on the Whitefield link and there are further links to sermons of George Whitefield never yet reprinted and a new edition of his Journals that is more complete than that currently available.

There are many other titles too numerous to mention.

A POSTCARD FROM LIBERATED PARIS— SEPTEMBER 1944

My mother, Peggy, and her older sister, Mary, grew up in the Black Country and, with their family, they attended Park Congregational Church, Dudley. The two Wright girls, like many young, talented people from back street chapels, succeeded in gaining places at the local girls' grammar school, Dudley Girls' High School, where one of the subjects they studied was French. At a time when communication was so much slower than today and when France seemed much further away, they were encouraged to have French penfriends and, through the school, were put in contact with Monique and Claude le Moullac, two sisters who lived at 16 Impasse Ste Félicité in the 15th arrondissement in south west Paris.

Sadly my mother died in July 2010 and we had to clear her flat fairly quickly. She had several bibles which I took home, together with some other books. The first time I looked at one of her bibles properly, over a year later at a bible study, I discovered a small postcard in it. The card had been sent by Monique le Moullac and was dated 25th September, 1944. It was a little faded and the writing very small but, as I read it, I realised that this was the first news Peggy, then 21 years old, and Mary had had of their French friends since the occupation of Paris by the Germans in 1940. Monique and Claude were anxious to know whether their English correspondents were alive and well, especially as they had heard about the airborne attacks on Britain. The card suggests that the French girls, like many others, had been starved of accurate information about the progress of the war. Luckily the Le Moullac family had been kept safe and were reunited once their city was liberated in August 1944.

The card is small but Monique wanted to give as much information as she could—hence the small writing! She mentioned having completed the baccalauréat examination and said that she and her sister had completed a two year course at a commercial school. Despite the occupation, life had to go on and both were now working, her sister since March and Monique for the last 15 days. My mother left school at 16 and had spent the war working for Imperial Chemical Industries (ICI). The card finishes with an apology for Monique's bad English as she had had very little access to English books for the last four years. The family's feelings of anxiety and terror during the occupation were clearly stated and the restrictions they had had to live under are referred to.

Not long after receiving this card, Peggy and Mary were, in fact, able to visit the Le Moullac family in Paris and the correspondence turned out to be a life-long one. Mary and Claude both died before my mother, but she continued to

keep in touch with Monique up to her own death and the card obviously remained dear to her, as she had put it in the bible that was given to her by her friends at Park, Dudley, when she moved from the West Midlands to Chelmsford. The card almost moved me to tears the first time I read it and I am grateful to have been spared the fears experienced by these four young women.

Paris le 25 Septembre 1944

Dear Peggy and Mary.

At last, after these horrible days of anxiety and terror, we can take again contact with you, to send you and to ask you news—We spent these 4 years of German occupation, like everybody in France, with anguish and with the restrictions in all the domains, but we had the good luck to find us again after the liberation safe and sound, without any material loss and the whole family reunited. We thought always to you and yours and we were very anxious when we heard it said that there were shellings in your country. Do you live yet now in Dudley? Please write us quickly a little card to reassure us on your fate. We should be very happy, Claude and I, to know what you became since 39. I hope you and your family safe and sound. After the baccalaureate Examinations we have prepared during two years an Examination in a High Commercial School. Claude is working in a great Post-office in our quarter since the month March 44. I work since 15 days only, like a Secretary in a great Association. We are not yet married and you? We welcome your soldiers with a great and sincere enthusiasm. If you came in Paris, don't forget to visit your old french friends who send you and your family their kindest regards.

Monique and Claude Le Moullac

Claude is, since the last week, in the country, where she is spending some days of holidays with our father. Excuse my bad english, I have forgotten all the words and grammary because I have not often english books since 4 years. I must learn it again!

Lesley Dean

REVIEWS

***John Owen, Richard Baxter and the Formation of Nonconformity.* By Tim Cooper. Ashgate, Farnham, 2011. Pp 356. Hardback £70.00. ISBN 978-0-7546-6361-4.**

Cooper's important new book focuses on the relationship across the 1650s between two puritan giants, John Owen and Richard Baxter. He seeks to answer two specific questions: why Owen and Baxter disliked each other, and what the effect of their strained relationship was on the development of English nonconformity. Cooper suggests that, following their different experiences of the civil wars of the 1640s, Owen and Baxter pursued 'contrasting soteriological agendas', which combined with a 'clash of personality' to instigate a culture of blame between the two men, intensified by the failure of the Presbyterian and Congregational parties to reach agreement during the 1650s and the Restoration period. He sees his work as a development of Ann Hughes's account of the 'nuanced complexities' of puritan differences in the 1640s, as well as Mark Goldie's development of Patrick Collinson's model of 'horizontal' rather than vertical history, one that for Cooper emphasizes continuity, personal friendships, and animosities.

Cooper is particularly secure when providing contextual readings of individual texts by Baxter and Owen. In chapter one he compares Owen's early sermon to parliament, *A Vision of Free Mercy* (1646), with Baxter's posthumously-published memoirs, the *Reliquiae Baxterianae* (1696), in order to demonstrate that Owen observed the main military campaigns of the civil wars from a detached distance, whereas Baxter was an active participant. Cooper suggests that these differences in circumstance informed a difference in tone and substance between Owen's earnest clarion-call for the defeat of clerical Arminianism, and Baxter's dismay at the growth of antinomianism within the parliamentary army. In his second chapter, Cooper clarifies these theological differences. He contrasts Owen's *Display of Arminianism* (1643) with the work to which it responds, Samuel Hoard's *Gods Love to Mankind Manifested* (1633), and he explores Owen's *Death of Death in the Death of Christ* (1648), a response to Thomas Moore's *The Universality of God's Free-Grace* (1646), answered in turn by John Horn in *The Open Door* (1650). He then offers a detailed and persuasive reading of Baxter's response to Owen's *Death of Death* in his *Aphorismes of Justification*, informed by his previous book, *Fear and Polemic in Seventeenth-Century England* (Aldershot, 2001). In his third chapter Cooper supplements this reading with Owen's counteroffensive against Baxter in *The Death of Christ* (1650). Although his assertion of the proximity of both writers' beliefs may be overplayed, Cooper

concludes correctly that Owen and Baxter both believed in moral responsibility and God's sovereignty; however, Baxter drew attention to the believer's performance of the conditions of salvation through grace, whereas Owen strove to guard against locating the deciding factor of salvation in human free will.

Chapter 4 of Cooper's book, in which he seeks to delineate aspects of the personalities of Owen and Baxter, is less convincing. Cooper's welcome caveat that his sources are biased and one-sided jars with his sometimes uncritical reading of the accounts of Owen's acquaintances and early biographers. Greater attention to literary questions about the generic limitations of early modern life-writing was necessary here to avoid the biographical fallacy that personality traits can be identified through texts. Cooper's approach leads to some circularity when he speculates that his subjects' differing personalities (he may be confusing personality with reputation) affected the actions which earned them their personal reputation. These views on personality are mostly in abeyance in Cooper's important fifth chapter, which investigates Baxter's schemes for national church unity; here he uses a large quantity of manuscript correspondence to suggest, controversially but plausibly, that despite his persistence, Baxter was too junior a player for his schemes to be adopted without greater compromise than he was able to concede; meanwhile Owen, who was a major player, was moving in other directions, redefining schism as church division rather than church separation, and advocating a form of toleration predicated upon the agreement of doctrinal fundamentals.

Cooper suggests (chapter 6) that the personal and intellectual disagreements between Owen and Baxter came to a head in 1654, when Parliament sought advice from ministers to draw up an authorized list of the fundamentals of worship. This may be so, but Cooper's own reading of Baxter's account of the ministers' meeting in the *Reliquiae* indicates that it is a far from reliable source as to the actions or temperament of both men, and in parts of this chapter we come perilously close to the biographical fallacy once more. The best parts of the chapter, again, are those on doctrine; Cooper delineates clearly Baxter's problems with imposed doctrines of scripture sufficiency, and hints at Owen's firm belief in their value. As he concedes, there were 'genuine theological differences' as well as personal animosities between the two men. This is certainly true of the two works which Cooper discusses in the next chapter, Owen's *Death of Christ and of Justification* (1655) and Baxter's *Universal Redemption* (written c.1655-7, published 1694). Cooper's analysis of Baxter's Christology in this treatise is particularly incisive, although here and elsewhere one occasionally desires a more thorough investigation of the intellectual as well as personal reasons why both writers chose to misrepresent each other.

The most important thesis of Cooper's final two chapters is that 1659 rather than 1660 or 1662 is the crucial date for understanding the relationship between

Baxter and Owen. In his view, their divergent sentiments concerning the events of 1659 help to explain the persistence of the fissure between leading Presbyterians and Congregationalists during the Restoration period and beyond. Cooper demonstrates that Baxter blamed Owen for the demise of Richard Cromwell, in whom he had invested significant hopes, and that he believed Owen's connections with Fleetwood and the political Independents had helped to usher in the Restoration. Once again, Cooper's main sources are Baxter's letters, and he successfully builds upon William Lamont's thesis that Baxter's opinion of the Protectorate grew across the 1650s. Owen, by contrast, worried that the steam was running out of church reformation in the late 1650s, and Cooper suggests that the Savoy Declaration of Congregational beliefs (1658) can be viewed against that background. This reading, coupled with the evidence of Owen's gathered church in 1658–9, renders plausible Baxter's accusation that Owen helped to plot Richard Cromwell's downfall, although as Cooper concedes there is little positive evidence of his involvement. Rather, one is left agreeing with Cooper that the excesses of Baxter's manuscript narrative of the affair, edited out by Matthew Sylvester in his 1696 edition of Baxter's memoirs, were both undiplomatic and (in places) untrue.

Cooper's book is unquestionably the most important study of Owen to have appeared in print, and it adds very significantly to our understanding of Baxter. If it tells us somewhat less about their personal relationship, this is because the book has no central theory of how and why personality may be characterised through texts. Another minor irritation is the degree of reliance for wider historical and intellectual contexts on secondary sources, particularly in chapters 2 and 4. Nevertheless, Cooper has thrown the doors wide open for further research into both figures, and his second question, why the disagreement between Baxter and Owen mattered, will occupy historians, theologians, and literary scholars for many years to come. In part, it is a question concerning the development of their relationship in the 1660s and beyond; no doubt Cooper's current project as co-editor with Neil Keeble and John Coffey of the *Reliquiae Baxterianae* will enable some equally incisive, engaging and provocative studies of the latter careers of these two men in the future.

Mark Burden

***The SPCK Introduction to Karl Barth.* By D Densil Morgan.**

Pp 105. SPCK, 2010. Paperback £9.99. ISBN 978-0-281-06045-0.

Barth and I are not allies. In fact, a reviewer of my book, *Christ and the Other: In dialogue with Hick and Newbigin* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), rightly observed that Barthians will 'resist' my approach. I make this personal point in order to acknowledge a little of the position I could take with regards to an introduction to Barth. However, having shamefully not engaged with Barth as directly as I should have in the past, I freely admit that this introduction conveys the force of Barth's theology with clarity, integrity and quite some persuasiveness. As with my study of Lesslie Newbigin, in many ways a straightforwardly Barthian thinker and practitioner, whose theology I respect for its spirituality and coherence, there is also in Morgan's book a clear sense of the vitality and groundedness of Barth's theology. That is, even though he would personally write millions of words in a demanding way about the nature of God and Christian faith, his theology nevertheless remains concerned profoundly with everyday realities. Morgan captures this extremely well.

Barth and I disagree on some big questions, but now that Morgan has reacquainted me with much of the historical and theological context, I like to think that I too would have taken sides with the relatively powerless workers and not the overbearing industrialists in his early ministry, and that I would not have allowed my relative liberalism to be co-opted by the imperial theology of Germany in the years prior to the Great War. Barth's warning that human optimism about the inevitability of our progress is a necessary corrective to all our naivety and self-illusions, while Morgan also manages to articulate that this 'No!' is only part of Barth's message and that the more substantial part of his understanding of the Gospel is God's profound 'Yes!' to be *for* humankind *in Christ*. This is good news.

In essence, the book is a chronological introduction to Barth's thinking, showing how his early liberalism, defying his more traditional father, would evolve radically in light of his personal disillusionment with his liberal tutors who supported the Great War, and how his monumental *Church Dogmatics* would gradually emerge. It is the story of a pastor and theologian wrestling with what it means for God to speak into a world where human beings manipulate God's revelation to serve their own fleeting interests. This is not only a warning to liberals but to conservatives who, in their occasional piety, are no less guilty of assuming that God can be made to 'fit' within one's own interpretive framework. By contrast, particularly in the face of the prevailing tendency of the time towards 'natural theology', whereby humans presume to 'discern' God's being and wisdom in the natural course of events and experience, Barth insists on the priority of God's Word revealed in Christ, in scripture (which is nevertheless

entangled with human culture but the Spirit enables its witness to speak of God's radical otherness), and in our human proclamation (preaching). The Barmen Declaration (p.47), penned mostly by Barth, therefore implicitly denounces Nazism as a symptom of the natural theology which co-opts faith into human history, whereas the God who speaks and acts in Christ cannot be co-opted or subsumed, because it is the God of eternity.

It can sound strange to us, because of its suspicion even of 'experience' (p.57), but the point is that, for Barth, experience cannot be presumed to capture something of God; rather God takes the initiative: God elects to be for us, through his acts in Christ. This reappraisal of 'election', as Morgan shows, has radical implications, since Barth's insistence on the sovereignty of God's elective will makes it difficult for humans to presume to know who is 'out'; in fact, we ought really to think of it as an 'impossibility' (p.76) in the light of God's sovereign grace that any could be 'outside' at all.

Morgan offers only one criticism of Barth himself (p.82), clearly embracing overall the force of the Swiss theologian's incisive insight. As such, he conveys that it is both deeply contextual, as it responds to historical movements and issues, and fantastically systematic, with its nuanced yes-and-no carefulness. While articulating that some have questioned Barth's ethics—whether they are as developed as they might be—Morgan also emphasises, rightly, that despite all the care with his millions of words, Barth understands that mystery is at the heart of it all (p.88). In fact, this is why he does not rush to reduce ethics to a series of rules, but demonstrates how it involves faithful obedience to Christ—a question of revelation, grace and trust (p.90).

The commendations on the back cover are full of praise, and rightly so. They say it is 'readable, accessible,' 'vigorous, fast-paced,' and that it leads the reader through political upheavals, theological controversies and the 'deep impulses of Barth's life and thought' perceptively and generously. As Benjamin Myers notes, Morgan affirms the 'humanism' of Barth's theology, in the sense of his affirmation of God's 'yes' for humankind—and for that reason amongst others, I greatly value this introduction to one of the giants of Christian theology.

***Barth Reception in Britain.* D. Densil Morgan. Pp vii + 312. T&T Clark International, 2010. Paperback £29.99. ISBN 978-0-567-03186-0.**

Following Morgan's excellent introductory overview of Barth's theology, this more substantial book considers the reception of Barth's theology in Britain, essentially its reception during Barth's own lifetime rather than subsequent engagement with it. In that regard, it is a carefully traced history of the British receptivity and resistance to Barth's theology of crisis. It identifies in general how both Scotland and Wales were relatively fertile soil in which Barth's themes

could flourish, compared with the more pragmatic and theologically Europhobic England, with the exception that, as well as a few Anglican or Roman Catholic points of departure from the establishment norm, English nonconformity did in certain respects welcome and embrace this new orthodoxy from the continent.

I will not attempt to refer to all the periods and contexts illustrated so well by Morgan, but give here some of the earlier examples. As with Morgan's introductory book, I reiterate that I am not persuaded by Barthian theology, and yet find myself disappointed by the nature of some of the resistance to his approach described here: for it is undeniable, having spent this time with Barth's genius, that he lays down warnings which cannot easily be sidestepped and subtleties which confound critics on all sides. Principally, if his main concern is a liberal domestication of God, liberals must recognise their tendency to desire the human understanding of God to be as humanly recognisable as possible, since there is always a radical otherness which confounds our experience and understanding—but equally, conservatives must beware their tendency to delimit God according to selective criteria of their own.

Morgan begins, in the first chapter, with Adolf Keller, a Swiss contemporary of Barth, who played a significant role in introducing Barthian thinking to Britain, beginning with a journal article entitled 'The Theology of Crisis' in 1925. Morgan describes church decline in Weimar Germany—a helpful reminder that decline is not new!—and how Barth's thinking was helping to reverse that trend, before outlining how, in post-war Europe (the Great War), Christians sought to re-galvanise cross-border friendships and Barth's voice started to emerge. Interestingly (p.19) the first of these conferences demonstrated the tensions of the time, which also remain—between optimists who believed human beings can shape the kingdom of God, and those who believed it was only in God's hands, though of that second group, both the pietistic non-activists and the political pragmatists had the potential subsequently to allow Hitler's influence to grow. By contrast, Barth's position insisted the kingdom is God's doing but that we are called, in its light, to resist those, like Hitler, who exploit such tensions. Even so, as Keller's work indicated, there were misunderstandings about the ethical implications of Barth's theology, which recurred.

Chapter 2 concerns Scotland where Morgan identifies the ideal of a godly commonwealth, which was nevertheless socially conservative, racist (not least vis-à-vis Irish Catholics) and anti-labour (that is, serving middle-class interests). In this context, the liberal evangelicalism of Hugh Ross Mackintosh warmed to the Swiss group (including Barth, Brunner and Gogarten). He saw it as a challenge to the dominance of Ritschl's ethical, man-made, kingdom of God, which had influenced British nonconformity. John McConnachie, a parish minister, was arguing that Protestantism must return to the Word of God, and saw connections between P.T. Forsyth and Barth, to which Morgan returns, but was also

concerned (at first) about the place of ethics in Barth's thought. McConnachie could see, though, that this new movement attracted and repelled, but the more he engaged with it, and attended Barth's lectures in 1930 (p.36), he, like Mackintosh, appreciated that it was doing something vital. Interestingly, though, when McConnachie asked Barth to write a forward to one of his writings, as though to confirm his Barthian credentials, Barth declined, replying: 'This is my situation, not to produce a new form of security but to raise new questions and searchings which is so much needed in Germany today.'

Another Scot, Norman Porteous, who studied under Barth, grasped that, according to Barth's revitalisation of the Reformed tradition, the primary issue is not sin, it is grace and God's choosing to be gracious towards humankind, even as we misunderstand this (p.42). That is, unlike in Lutheranism which first preaches sin in order to follow with the good news of grace, Barth maintains that we cannot recognise sin without first appreciating the good news of God in Christ: once we understand we are under grace, we see the fullness of our sin which has been overcome. This, then, was counter-cultural, but deeply christocentric; so too McConnachie would denounce the 'anonymous powers such as capital, companies, big businesses [which] tyrannize [the churches]' (p.47), reflecting also Barth's counter-cultural concerns with the market, and speaking also to today's world. For where a creation is allowed to lord it over us, as though to replace the living Lord, dangerous social distortions follow.

Reception in Wales had arguably been less researched because much reflection was done in Welsh. Nevertheless, as Morgan describes it, a reverent biblical criticism and liberalized evangelicalism, since the 1880s, had evolved into a philosophical idealism and more blatant liberalism after the Great War, which would render Wales ripe for a new direction. Liberalism had particularly flourished in Congregationalism in Wales, namely under the influence of David Adams who applied Hegel's philosophy to the whole of Christian faith. In reaction, and with the force of Barth in their sails, J.E. Daniels (theologian) and J.D. Vernon Lewis (Congregational biblical scholar) responded, seeing commonalities between the Swiss and the Welsh, as marginalised communities of the pulpit (pp.56-8). Their challenge to liberalism was not obscurantist, divorced from scholarly modernism, but recovered God's otherness (God is not to be synthesized with any human philosophy but is the antithesis to, or the crisis for, all such human self-illusions) and they inspired a new generation of pastors and scholars.

In English nonconformity (the chapter for which begins with four brilliant pages outlining the key points and nuances of this collection of traditions), there was a space for a new theology, partly created by R.W. Dale's modified evangelicalism, Fairbairn's open liberalism and especially P.T. Forsyth whose spiritual crisis led him to emphasise the holiness of God's love, while maintaining his friendships with liberals (p.67). His students were ready for Barth, not least

Nathaniel Micklem who challenged the then citadel of liberal nonconformity, Mansfield College, as he pleaded for the revitalization of the place of dogma and the need for the atoning death to be preached (p.71), arguing that Congregationalists had never been free to believe whatever they liked. Bernard Lord Manning's 'Orthodox Dissent' concurred; that is, dissent had to recover its orthodox roots. The response of liberals like C.J. Cadoux was disappointing, asserting we are free to determine the value of biblical texts—not the most invigorating liberal defence! No wonder, then, with Micklem, Manning and J.S. Whale attacking such liberalism, Barthian themes would prevail. (Later on, Morgan rightly explores British nonconformity's support for the Confessing Church as well as British churches' collusion with the rise of Nazism.)

Within Baptist circles, the situation was less straightforward: even though R.B. Hoyle added a good book to the shelves, few engaged with it, because there was already an insularity which made Baptists of the time reluctant even to respond to a new orthodoxy. Methodism felt its impact a little, due to J.A. Chapman, but Presbyterianism remained unmoved (p.98). Meanwhile, a Quaker, Carl Heath, valued Barth's reaffirmation of the objectivity of God, while rejecting Barth's insistence on the discontinuities between God and all else.

Rather than explore the further examples, I simply say they include different instances of Anglican reception, some responses in the 1930s and as war approached, and during the war and beyond, till 1968 (with a Postlude taking us up to 1986). As John Webster, a leading Barth scholar, writes regarding this book, 'Morgan brings to his task a unique combination of wide knowledge of the theological life of the British churches in the twentieth century and sympathetic understanding of Barth's corpus. His account ... could hardly be bettered.' Or as Clifford B. Anderson notes: 'his treatment of Welsh-language scholarship on Barth is eye-opening. I commend Morgan's history to all students of Karl Barth on the theory that to make progress in the present one must come to terms with the past.' While I am no historian, and wonder whether we can ever 'come to terms with the past' as such (it will continue to surprise us!), I agree that this book is an excellent discussion of reception to Barth in Britain. Though it may be interesting to see how the story would be told differently by someone more critical of Barth, it is nevertheless a fascinating interaction between theology and history.

Graham Adams

***Saintly Enigma—a Biography of Pennar Davies.* By Ivor Thomas Rees. Y Lolfa, Talybont, Ceredigion 2011. Paperback £9.95. ISBN 978-1-84771-370-4.**

***Diary of a Soul.* By Pennar Davies translated by Herbert Hughes. Y Lolfa, Talybont, Ceredigion 2011. Paperback £9.95. ISBN 978-1-84771-376-6.**

2011 marked the centenary of a remarkable scholar, theologian, poet, novelist, and minister with the stature of one whose work stands comparison with any on the world-stage and yet who remains unknown outside Wales. Growing up in the 1920s in the abject poverty of an English-speaking Welsh mining family, Pennar Davies came late to the Christian faith and equally late to the Welsh language. With four years of study at the University College of South Wales in Cardiff, followed by study for higher degrees at Balliol College, Oxford and at Yale, culminating in a second period of study at Mansfield College, Oxford, Pennar Davies made the very deliberate decision to eschew international renown and minister, teach and publish in Wales and in Welsh.

With only thirteen publications in English, including a history of Mansfield College, a biography of John Penry, and an introduction to Welsh literature, arguably his most original work has not been available in English until now. Ivor Rees and Herbert Hughes, both former students of Pennar at the Memorial College, Coleg Coffa in Brecon, Swansea and finally Aberystwyth, have made good that omission with a lively and at times gripping biography and a moving classic of Christian spiritual writing that bears comparison with the greatest of Christian spiritual classics. As Rowan Williams says of *Diary of a Soul*, “We have an opportunity here to encounter one of the great Reformed Christian voices of our time: gentle, unsparing, delighting in the local and domestic, yet with a clear catholic vision. Above all, a man whose holiness is manifest in the love of God and neighbour and in unbroken longing for the full light of day, the Morning Star rising in our hearts for judgement and mercy.”

In telling the story of Pennar Davies, Ivor Rees brings alive the world of twentieth century Wales from the south Wales mining communities of the Depression to the campaigns that led to the establishment of the Welsh language as an officially recognised language of Wales, and of the Welsh Assembly as an instrument of Welsh government.

It was only due to the arrival of a ‘do-gooder’ in Mountain Ash who sought out the Congregational minister wanting to finance a youngster through college that he was able to take his studies beyond Cardiff to Oxford and Yale. That in itself is worthy of a novel! It is doubly moving to find that that subsidy and financial support ceased as abruptly as it began at the point at which Pennar’s awakening of faith in 1939 made him a pacifist. His involvement with the

Lutheran congregation at Mansfield College, and their contacts with Bonhoeffer, together with his marriage to a German, makes for a wonderful read.

As a brief church ministry leads into involvement in theological education of ministers for the Undeb, the Welsh Congregational Union, at its colleges in Brecon and Bangor the biography makes equally gripping reading. This is a self-sacrificial ministry in many ways, not least financially, as Pennar brings up his family on considerably less than a shoe string. There are fascinating glimpses of the tensions between the worthy college committees and their politicking that are disturbingly reminiscent of R.S.Thomas's contemporary indictment of the relationship between nonconformist ministers and their diaconate in his BBC Radio Verse Drama 'The Minister'.

There are equally fascinating insights into the theological differences between Pennar Davies and the more liberal Coleg Coffa in Brecon, Swansea and then Aberystwyth, and Tudur Jones and the more evangelical and Calvinist Coleg Bala-Bangor. There are troubling insights into what seemed to many at the time the perverse refusal to join with Baptists and Anglicans in Cardiff but to move from Brecon and be a stand-alone college in Swansea.

And yet even in telling this story something of the grace of both Pennar and Tudur emerges. It is that grace that comes to the fore in Herbert Hughes's translation of Pennar's own *Diary of a Soul* drawing heavily, as it does on the edition published with notes by Tudur Jones.

From January 1955 to February 1956 a weekly diary appeared in the weekly Welsh language paper, *Y Tyst* [The Witness]. Written anonymously under the pseudonym 'The Brother of Low Degree', it was the work of Pennar Davies. He had already written novels and poetry in Welsh and, in this personal confession, he writes in a grand style, baring his soul.

In it Pennar plumbs the depths of his pilgrimage of faith and shares the heights of inner devotion. Deeply conscious of his own inadequacies, he yet looks to the love of God in Jesus and finds hope. "I saw Jesus on the highway of history," he writes, "He raised his hand and invited me towards the horizon." There is an honesty in what he writes, not least in the insights he shares into the nature of prayer: "... I have had many blessings from thinking that it is by living that we pray. Living for God, living with God—that is prayer, and it is only that way that one can pray without ceasing. The prayerful life in its quintessence does not consist of devotional exercises at particular times and following more or less formal patterns, but living for God and living with God."

Pennar sees himself as a prophet and his message focused on the love of God in Christ. "I pray that the world will accept the message which was given me: truth, peace, responsible freedom and sacrificial brotherhood, and the Saving Righteousness of the Living God who has glorified our lives with his Presence

and Love and who calls on everyone to accept the ever-brilliant Privileges and the perfect Sonship in the Spirit.” A remarkable sentence. A remarkable faith.

That commitment to a life of self-sacrifice is then borne out in Pennar’s involvement in Welsh cultural and political life through the rise of Plaid Cymru in the 1960s, the rise of the Welsh language campaign in the 70s and 80s. Mrs Thatcher was proud to be the woman who was not for turning. Pennar was one of the few who helped her to reverse a policy decision. And he did it by going to gaol. That was what tipped the balance and forced Mrs Thatcher’s government to back-pedal and introduce S4C, the Welsh TV channel.

Both the biography and the spiritual classic make for powerful reading. But they raise some difficult and urgent questions. Ivor Rees is greatly indebted to a Welsh language biography of Pennar, written by Densil Morgan. In his Foreword, Densil poses two questions that trouble anyone with a love of Wales, a love of Welsh nonconformity and a passion for the church, its mission and its future. “With devolved Government a fact and the Welsh language afforded official status would Pennar and his contemporaries like Gwynfor Evans, J Gwyn Griffiths, R Tudur Jones and others, recognise the new Wales for which they strove and yearned? With Welsh nonconformity itself a thing of the past, as a significant social movement at least, and Welsh language culture hugely secularised, how, one wonders would they respond?”

I fear some of the clues, as to why those questions need asking, may well be hiding in these two eminently readable books.

Richard Cleaves

“Enclosed by Grace” Records of the Church Meeting at Port Vale Chapel, Hertford. Edited by Matthew J Hyde. Pp 616. The Huntingtonian Press, Southampton, 2011. Hardback £24.95. ISBN 978-1-901716-00-9.

This handsomely produced, substantial hardback is dedicated to the much missed former reviews editor of our magazine, Jonathan Morgan, who died in late October 2010. Jonathan was a loyal Gospel Standard Baptist and a professional archivist and he discovered the records of Port Vale Chapel among the papers of Bengeo parish, Hertford, and saw the need to preserve them for posterity. Matthew Hyde, who had Jonathan’s full co-operation and encouragement, during his lifetime, has completed this commission and seen this project through to published fulfilment. Indeed a second edition of this volume is due to appear soon.

Port Vale was an Independent Calvinistic chapel from the late 1830s to its closure in 1922 and its story is unique. It grew out of the secession in 1835 from the Church of England of a local clergyman, Bernard Gilpin (1803–71), with part of the parish congregation, over a matter of conscience relating to article 27 of the 39 articles. Sparked by the wording of the baptism and burial services, he was troubled that they referred to all people as being on the way to heaven. The records are fairly full during Gilpin’s time. Gilpin and his flock were particularly influenced by the writings of William Huntington (1745–1813), a charismatic and prophetic preacher, who admired Bunyan and Whitefield and founded several chapels. Huntington and his followers were not assiduous in keeping records and, in consequence, little is known directly of how their churches operated. Port Vale, Hertford, in some measure makes good that loss.

Gilpin and his successor as pastor, William Benson, his nephew, wrote several biographical studies of church members which, when united with the extant correspondence of ministers and visitors to Port Vale, and a memoir of Gilpin, offer a rare insight into the life of such a godly fellowship.

This volume offers an essay on the background to Port Vale Chapel by Henry Sant who points out that Gilpin’s congregation was not associated with any of the mainstream nonconformist denominations, although they did become associated with the Calvinistic Independents who were the successors of William Huntington. Sant also outlines Huntington’s significance and the extent of Gilpin’s ministry.

Mrs Pat Bradley, Gilpin’s biographer, makes clear that among his ancestors were a number of devout Christians. Readers of this magazine will not be surprised to discover that Gilpin found John Owen’s commentary on Psalm 130 helpful, as he struggled to grasp the difference between saving faith and self-deception.

Matthew Hyde has transcribed the church book of Port Vale Chapel, inside

which are a series of loose papers which give a sketchy record of the fellowship until about 1903. In the church book Gilpin noted a variety of concerns, such as those members who were admitted to communion on January 3rd, 1836, those who became church members (17 in all at the close of 1836 and 64 in 1868), donations for the building of the chapel, pastoral comments on individuals in the flock, the adoption of Joseph Hart's hymns for congregational use and other such matters, all of which give telling insights into the life of this church and the care which Gilpin exercised.

In addition, the register of baptisms and marriages conducted in the chapel is of interest. It throws light on the people who attended, as it includes their occupations which range from physician to solicitor, tailor to corn dealer, miller to carpenter. Here are blacksmith, white-smith (who dealt in cold metal for tin or pewter goods), postman, butcher, stationer, baker, draper, wheelwright, painter, labourer, school master and gardener. Most come from Hertford but Gilpin's grandson, a surgeon from Aldersgate St, London, also appears. This is a fascinating glimpse into 19th century church life.

Hyde contributes an account of Port Vale after Bernard Gilpin who settled the future of the chapel building on Edward Spence, a capable and trustworthy church member, who himself invited William Benson to become the pastor. Benson had suffered the amputation of his leg in 1841, without anaesthetics, and, although his life was despaired of, he had recovered. Hyde gives a revealing description of Benson's life, especially his spiritual development, showing that he was not an isolationist but contributed to local correspondence columns, and preached widely outside those churches immediately linked to Port Vale. However he concludes that by 1922 "the Lord's intended work" at the chapel had certainly been completed.

The book has no less than 7 appendices which together fill 219 pages. The first and biggest is Gilpin's hymn book which includes hymns by Cowper, Newton, Watts, Charles Wesley, Beddome, and William Williams among others. Appendix 2 offers sermons by Gilpin, William L Maydwell and Benson. Appendix 4 is the chapel's trust deed and appendix 5 comprises extracts from manuscript letters. The book also contains 32 illustrations/photographs, an annotated bibliography and an index. However the treasurer of the CHS would expect his church at Bedford, Bunyan Meeting, to be described accurately as a joint Baptist/Congregational cause and not merely Baptist (p 11). On p173 Begego has somehow appeared where it should read Benggeo. This is a useful publication from which concerned nonconformists and academics alike may take both pleasure and instruction. Jonathan Morgan, at times a hard taskmaster, would undoubtedly have approved of that.

***A History of Trinity Church, Sutton United Reformed and Methodist 1907–2007* by Colin Howard. Pp 136. 2009. Available from the church: www.trinitychurchsutton.org.uk/news.htm#HISTORY_BOOK
Paperback £10 + £1.50 p&p.**

This is a superior history of a local church, with colourful illustrations (37 in all), and lists of the ministers, Methodist, Congregational and United Reformed, and of the organists and choirmasters. Since 1973 this has been a shared URC/Methodist church, although the building began in 1907 as a Wesleyan foundation when Sutton was “an expanding commuter suburb”, as Martin Camroux, its present minister, put it.

Colin Howard informs his readers of his own upbringing in Sutton and of his early and close acquaintance with its Congregational church. He has benefited from the copious records which survive, especially for the Methodist element of this joint cause. He is aware of the frequent occurrence of ministers’ names in such histories and has tried to mention as many lay folk as possible, although “there are simply too many people to include and how does one favour some over others?”, he asks.

Among the ministers at Sutton was the poet and hymn-writer, Fred Pratt Green, who later described his time there 1964–9 as “the happiest pastorate of a long ministry”. Green composed some verses about his charge which included the challenging lines—

“They built a church not unworthy of Sutton;
But it could be as dead as spiritual mutton.”

Trinity, which has proved far from dead, thus far, acquired its name after the Methodist union of 1932 which brought together Wesleyans, United and Primitive Methodists. The building opened in 1907 and has a striking tower and crown spire and sits happily at the centre of what is now a bustling commercial and shopping area. Although this work marks the history of a successful union, it had been hoped that the Baptists and the Anglican parish church would join the group. That has not been possible.

Howard basically adheres to a chronological pattern, noting the national and international events, like the two world wars, the support of refugees (Jewish and non-Aryan Christian), questions of social and economic justice and other such issues, that naturally impact on a concerned church’s life. On my visit to this church, I found a vibrant, welcoming flock. An index would have greatly increased the book’s usefulness to some readers. Yet Colin Howard is to be thanked for his efforts in recording the story of a community of Christians who have made a lively contribution to this area and beyond.

James Crosfield

***Spires and Meeting Houses: a history of the growth and development of Congregationalism in and around Oxford.* By Michael Hopkins. John Owen Press, Farnham, 2011. Pp [vi] + 227. Paperback £10 + £2.60 p&p (UK). Available from www.johnowenpress.co.uk or 23 Hilary Road, Farnham, Surrey GU9 8QX. ISBN 978-0-9568312-0-0.**

Michael Hopkins, a member of this society, has based his book on his MPhil thesis. He makes the point that Oxford's situation is unusual due to its status as a university city, a county town and having industry in the form of Morris Motors and its successors. He argues that these factors make the city's Congregationalism unique. An introductory chapter links the strands, filling gaps which are outside the scope of the study and acknowledges how anomalous Sunday worship at Mansfield College chapel was—a Congregational chapel without members. As the history of Mansfield has already been written it is summarised here, as are the origins of St Columba's Presbyterian Church. With the coming of the United Reformed Church (URC) the "Mansfield Sunday morning service" moved to St Columba's.

Starting from the roots of dissent in the 1640s and 50s, he describes its early days in Oxford. The meeting house riots in 1715 having destroyed both denominations' buildings, the Baptists united with the Presbyterians at New Road Chapel in 1721 with a trust deed that would include all dissenters except Quakers. A covenant of 1780 continued this comprehension with provision for both infant and adult baptism. In the light of this co-operation between Baptists and paedobaptists, perhaps one might take issue with his statement later in the book that Presbyterians are the nearest ecclesiastical neighbours to Congregationalists.

In 1832 George Street comes into being as a Congregational breakaway from New Road, the latter eventually becoming entirely Baptist. The pastorates at George Street are mostly short, often only of 3 or 4 years. There is an embarrassing three years from 1880 when the church tries to call several "big name" ministers and is turned down by all. The biggest calamity for George Street, however, comes with the city council's compulsorily purchasing all the church premises. Somehow, despite a membership of 143 the church was unable to agree on relocation and disbanded in 1933. Fortunately the money raised from the sale was placed in a local trust and the George Street trustees were able to use the funds to assist chapel extension in the area. How different might the story have been had the money been channelled into a central, national, pot?

He continues by examining in turn the various causes, some of which still survive as URCs. These include Cumnor which, having never had deacons as a Congregational church, took thirty years as a URC before electing elders.

Resistance was expressed in church meeting to creating a “different class” of church member.

He concludes with a comparison with other cities which had Congregational colleges, focusing especially on Cambridge. He notes that there, in contrast to Oxford, Emmanuel Congregational Church moved into a city centre location, following the opening of the university to dissenters, and also that Cheshunt College did not have a chapel until the 1920s. Also Emmanuel did not devote itself to founding churches locally while George Street made considerable efforts to do so. Useful appendices give New Road’s 1780 covenant, the founding covenant of George Street, the 1899 rules for George Street’s relations with the village chapels, and a description of the English Congregational Chapel Building society.

There are one or two factual anomalies. Constance Coltman (néé Todd) is described as the “first woman Christian minister”. He should say in England—the Americans were earlier in this. His description also excludes the first Unitarian woman minister, ordained a few years earlier than Coltman. Wheatley is given as starting as a Baptist cause which later became Congregational. Yet dates given for the involvement of New Road’s minister are during the period when neither New Road nor its minister were exclusively Baptist. He refers to the repeal of “the University Test Acts” and later simply Test Acts. The later reference particularly could be confused with the repeal of the Test Acts in 1828. The Universities Tests Act 1871 repealed the provisions of the Act of Uniformity 1662 and later acts which prevented nonconformists from being either students or staff of the universities of Oxford and Cambridge.

A map of the area and a family tree of the various churches would have been helpful. Surprisingly, in his otherwise detailed footnotes, he has not given any references at all for any church meeting or deacons meeting etc, yet he relies greatly on information gathered from church meeting minutes, although the locations of all the church archives are referenced in the bibliography.

He has thoroughly researched the original records, where available, of the churches covered in this easily read book. I should recommend it to anyone wanting to know more about Oxford’s Congregationalism.

Peter Young

Hymnody: A Sung Theology that Changed the World: The Congregational Lecture 2011. By Janet Wootton. Pp 24. The Congregational Memorial Hall Trust (1978) Ltd. £3.00. ISSN 0963-181X.

Janet Wootton defines a hymn as “words with music, generally in stanzas”. For this lecture she concentrates on the words and the theology embedded in them. She mentions the “emotional power” of hymns but does not explore how music heightens their emotional content. She does, however, acknowledge that music and its rhythm aid in memorising the words.

Hymn singing as we know it begins with the Reformation, and particularly the hymns of Luther, who saw theological proclamation as their purpose. By contrast Calvin saw a much more restricted purpose similar to the congregation at prayer and his influence slowed the development of hymn singing in England. Isaac Watts, of course, is influential in moving English speakers away from this limited view.

Hymns had a major use in the mission field and, using the very large hymn collection in the Congregational Library, Wootton refers us to the numerous hymn sheets used for outreach and Sunday school meetings at home. She notes that overseas missionaries translated these same hymns into native languages and they are still regularly encountered in this form today.

She observes that Christianity was hugely influential in British mainstream politics and culture up to the beginning of the twentieth century and that hymn quotations have persisted in popular culture into the later years of that century. Maybe the decline in the centrality of Christianity in Britain is the reason she only quotes the words from one modern “worship song”. Or could it be that so many modern songs of this style do not have much theology in them? Beyond noting a preference for “I” rather than “we”, she does not give any comment on this genre.

She has used the Congregational Library’s resources to good effect to back up her already wide knowledge in this field. Within the constraints of the lecture format this is a useful survey of a relatively modern Christian phenomenon.

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