



*George Whitefield (1714–1770)*

‘Among the names of the Fathers and Founders of the London Missionary Society there does not appear the name of George Whitefield. Yet no one familiar with the period of English history at which the London Missionary Society had its rise would fail to acknowledge the influence of Whitefield in inspiring more than one religious movement.’

SILVESTER HORNE (London Missionary Society historian)

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# John Love in London

## – Part 4 –

# The Origins of the London Missionary Society<sup>1</sup>

ROY MIDDLETON

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## **1. Influences that led to the formation of the LMS**

The London Missionary Society (LMS),<sup>2</sup> which was formed in 1795, along with the Religious Tract Society, established in 1799, and British and Foreign Bible Society, which commenced five years later in 1804, were the three great inter-denominational societies that resulted from the revival of religion in the eighteenth century.<sup>3</sup> The formation of the LMS hailed a new era in the history of Christian missions. It was a society comprised of Christians of various denominations working together to undertake missionary work on a larger scale than could be undertaken by a single denomination. The founders of the LMS exhibited a zeal for missions and a concern for the heathen who had never heard of the Saviour that kindled a flame which quickly spread through the whole country, to continental Europe, and to the shores of America. Alexander Hastie Millar,<sup>4</sup> the author of the article on John Love in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, rather overstates Love's involvement in the formation of the LMS when he asserts: 'he became the virtual founder of the London Missionary Society in 1795, having written the first small letter which called together a few ministers to consult respecting the formation of the society.'<sup>5</sup>

The strands of influence that led to the formation of the LMS have been described as 'tangled and diffuse';<sup>6</sup> Independents, Calvinistic Methodists, evangelical Anglicans, and Scottish Presbyterians, along with several

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<sup>2</sup> Throughout this article the Society is referred to as the London Missionary Society or the LMS. However, until 14th May 1818 it was called just 'The Missionary Society'. The Society changed its name on 14th May 1818 to the London Missionary Society. In 1966 the Society revised its constitution and became the Congregational Council for World Mission (CCWM), of which the members were the seven Congregational Unions of the British Isles and Commonwealth countries. Then in 1977 it merged with the Commonwealth (Colonial) Missionary Society (founded in 1836) and the English Presbyterian Board of Missions (founded in 1847) to become the Council for World Mission (CWM).

<sup>3</sup> Ernest A. Payne lists twenty-six religious and philanthropic societies formed between 1792, when the Particular Baptist Society for the Propagation of the Gospel amongst the Heathen was formed (later called the Baptist Missionary Society), and 1824 when the Church of Scotland set up its own foreign missionary committee. See Ernest A. Payne, *The Church Awakes* (London, 1942), pp. 33-34.

<sup>4</sup> Alexander Hastie Millar (1847-1927) was the city librarian of Dundee. He was on the staff of the *Dictionary* and contributed over a hundred articles. See *The Times*, 1st March, 1927; Issue 44518; p. 9.

<sup>5</sup> Leslie Stephen and Sidney Lee (eds.), *Dictionary of National Biography (DNB)*, Vol. 12, pp. 158-159.

<sup>6</sup> David Boorman, 'The Origins and Early Years of the London Missionary Society – 1', *Banner of Truth Magazine*, Issue 351 (December 1992), p. 13.

ministerial associations from different parts of England, were all involved in the events that led up to its formation. James Bennett in his biography of David Bogue makes the following observation: ‘To discover who was the father of this Missionary Society may be as difficult as to ascertain the source of the Nile.’<sup>7</sup>

**(a) George Whitefield and Calvinistic catholicity**

The evangelical revival of the eighteenth century was, in the words of ecclesiastical historian, John Walsh, ‘an international and pan-Protestant phenomenon.’<sup>8</sup> In discussing this pan-Protestant movement David Ceri Jones has pointed out: ‘This is not to say that the evangelical revival was a single homogeneous movement. It could encompass Christians of many different persuasions, from Lutheran Pietists in Saxony, Presbyterians in Scotland, Anglicans and Dissenters, Calvinists and Arminians in England and Wales, and Puritan Congregationalists in New England, who each jealously guarded their distinctive identity. What the revivalists did was transcend these differences by emphasizing a set of core beliefs and elevating revivals of religion to central importance in an attempt to revitalize the flagging fortunes of the Protestant cause throughout much of western Europe and the American colonies.’<sup>9</sup> All felt a common affinity with each other because of a shared experience of the new birth and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Amongst the Calvinistic wing of the eighteenth-century revival, flowing from the example of George Whitefield, there developed a catholicity of spirit that led to the formation of these interdenominational societies.<sup>10</sup> In Whitefield’s recommendatory preface to *The Works of John Bunyan* he asserted his particular endearment to Mr Bunyan because ‘he was of a catholic spirit, the want of water adult baptism with this man of God, was no bar to outward Christian communion. And I am persuaded that if, like him, we were more deeply and experimentally baptized into the benign and gracious influences of the blessed Spirit, we should be less baptized into the waters of strife, about circumstantial and non-essentials. For being thereby rooted and grounded in the love of God, we should necessarily be constrained to think, and let think, bear with and forbear one another in love, and without saying “I am of Paul, Apollos, or Cephas”, have but one grand laudable, disinterested strife, namely, who should live, preach and exalt the ever-loving, altogether lovely Jesus most.’<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> James Bennett, *Memoirs of the Life of David Bogue* (London, 1827), p. 193.

<sup>8</sup> John Walsh, ‘Methodism and the origins of English-speaking evangelicalism’, in Mark A. Noll, David W. Bebbington, and George A. Rawlyk (eds.), *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular Protestantism in North America, the British Isles and Beyond, 1700-1990* (New York, 1994), p. 20.

<sup>9</sup> David Ceri Jones, *‘A Glorious Work in the World’: Welsh Methodism and the International Evangelical Revival, 1735-1750* (University of Wales Press, 2004), p. 2.

<sup>10</sup> For an accurate and sympathetic description of Whitefield’s catholicity, see Iain H. Murray, ‘George Whitefield and Church Unity’, in *Heroes* (Banner of Truth Trust, 2009), pp. 47-83.

<sup>11</sup> George Whitefield, ‘Recommendatory Preface’, *The Works of John Bunyan* (London, 1767), Vol. 1, p. iv. The Recommendatory Preface was reprinted in *The Works of George Whitefield* (London, 1771), Vol. 4, pp. 305-308 and most recently in the *Banner of Truth*

William Seward, a close friend of George Whitefield, echoed his views when he wrote in his report regarding a revival in Wales: 'I told them I did not want them to leave their Church but to attend it closely, and that I only wanted to bring them to Jesus Christ and then if they were fully persuaded in their own mind let each remain in the communion in which he was called. If he was a Churchman let him remain; if a Quaker, a Baptist, or Presbyterian let him remain so.'<sup>12</sup> It is to George Whitefield more than anyone else that we must look for the wellsprings of the late eighteenth-century pan-evangelical impulse that led to the formation of the benevolent societies; he was the founder of undenominationalism.<sup>13</sup> Roger Martin has written: 'It was indeed by the ministry of Whitefield that many first-generation evangelical churchmen and Dissenters were awakened and by them the Whitefieldite heritage was transmitted to Calvinists of the second and third generations, those who produced the great united societies of the 1790s.'<sup>14</sup>

Silvester Horne, one of the historians of the LMS, begins his narrative as follows: 'Among the names of the Fathers and Founders of the London Missionary Society there does not appear the name of George Whitefield. Yet no one familiar with the period of English history at which the London Missionary Society had its rise would fail to acknowledge the influence of Whitefield in inspiring more than one religious movement...The passionate evangelistic spirit of Whitefield communicated itself to very many of those churches which were debtors to his spiritual power and religious teaching. A conscience was created among various Christian communities which were specially brought under the influence of Whitefield and his associates, as to the necessity of seeking to save those who were lost in sin and misery at home. This spirit of evangelism produced, as the inevitable fruit, a sense of the larger responsibilities of the Christian Church.' He goes on to note that some had the motto 'England for Christ' but with a growing few they had a new and inspiring motto which was 'The World for Christ.'<sup>15</sup> The evangelical revival in which the ministry of Whitefield was to play such a major part was the mainspring of interdenominational co-operation which led to the modern missionary movement.<sup>16</sup>

The interdenominational co-operation among Evangelicals which found its fruition in the 1790s owed a great deal to several previous attempts at united effort. The first of these was the Prayer call of 1744 which had a significant influence on the foreign missionary movement half a century later. A group of Scottish ministers led by the John M'Laurin of Glasgow met together for a 'Concert' of prayer and intercession. The 1740s prayer call was not confined to Britain; Jonathan Edwards' correspondence with M'Laurin led

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*Magazine*, Issue 338 (November 1991), pp. 14-16 (the November 1991 issue was incorrectly numbered 339; it should have been 338).

<sup>12</sup> MS Bangor 32, *Journal of an Early Methodist*, 24th August 1740, cited in Roger H. Martin, *Evangelicals United* (Scarecrow Press, Metuchen, 1983), p. 3.

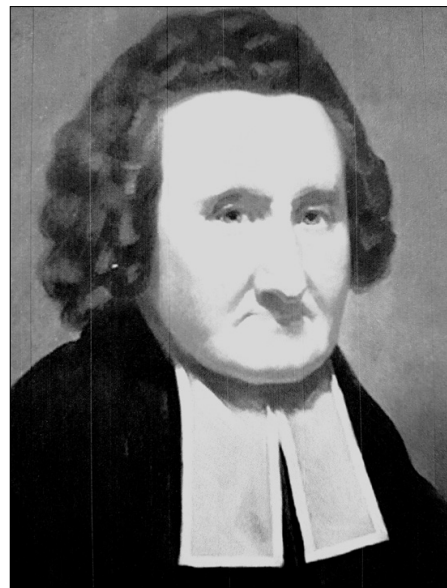
<sup>13</sup> Martin, *Evangelicals United*, p. 4, note 5.

<sup>14</sup> Martin, *Evangelicals United*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>15</sup> C. Silvester Horne, *The Story of the L.M.S., 1795-1895* (London, 1894), pp. 1-2.

<sup>16</sup> See Ernest A. Payne, 'The Evangelical Revival and the beginnings of the Modern Missionary Movement', *The Congregational Quarterly*, Vol. 21 (1943), pp. 223-236.

to his writing the tract *An Humble Attempt to produce Explicit Agreement and Visible Union of God's People in Extraordinary Prayer, for the Revival of Religion and the Advancement of Christ's Kingdom on Earth, pursuant to Scripture – Promises and Prophecies concerning the Last Time*.<sup>17</sup> John Erskine (1721-1803) whilst a very young minister in Kirkintilloch was part of the 1740s Concert for Prayer. He eventually became the leader of the Evangelicals in the Church of Scotland and began in 1747 a lifelong correspondence with Edwards which continued with Edwards' sons and then his grandson. As Iain Murray observes, 'Erskine was also to become the first editor of Edwards' books in Britain and certainly the most dedicated overseas promoter of his writings. It was through Erskine's influence that William Carey carried an Edwards volume with him to India in 1792. Erskine was to be a key link between Edwards and the missionary movement which commenced in Britain before the end of the eighteenth century.'<sup>18</sup>



*John Erskine, leader of the Evangelical party in the Church of Scotland.*

In April 1784, when Erskine was the minister of Greyfriars in Edinburgh, he sent copies of Edwards' *Humble Attempt* to the Baptist Association in Northamptonshire which resulted in the further Prayer Call of 1784.<sup>19</sup> This prayer call of the Baptists was a major contributory factor leading to the formation in 1792 of the Particular Baptist Society for the Propagation of

<sup>17</sup> For the background to the Scottish 'Concert for Prayer' and Edwards' Scottish correspondence that led to his writing the *Humble Attempt*, see Nicholas T. Batzig, 'Edwards, McLaurin, and the Transatlantic Concert', in Kenneth P. Minkema, Adriaan C. Neele, and Kelly Van Andel (eds.), *Jonathan Edwards and Scotland* (Edinburgh, 2011), pp. 77-87; George Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (Yale University Press, 2003), pp. 334-339; Iain H. Murray, *Jonathan Edwards: A New Biography* (Banner of Truth Trust, 1984), pp. 291-310. For a discussion of the earlier 'Praying Societies' in Scotland, see Arthur Fawcett, *The Cambuslang Revival* (Banner of Truth Trust, 1971), pp. 57-74.

<sup>18</sup> Murray, *Jonathan Edwards*, pp. 291-292. Though Erskine became Edwards' main correspondent in Scotland, Roger Martin is not correct when he links Erskine's correspondence with Edwards as the origin of the *Humble Attempt* (*Evangelicals United*, p. 23). Edwards' Scottish correspondent at the time of the 1740s Concert of Prayer was not Erskine but John M'Laurin. For a recent account of Erskine's life and theology, see Jonathan Yeager, *Enlightened Evangelicalism: The Life and Thought of John Erskine* (Oxford University Press, 2011). Erskine was a prolific distributor of good books. For an insight into this part of his ministry, see Jonathan Yeager, 'A Microcosm of the Community of Saints: John Erskine's relationship with the English Particular Baptists, John Collett Ryland and his son John Ryland, Jr', in Anthony R. Cross, Peter J. Morden, and Ian M. Randall, *Pathways and Patterns in History: Essays on Baptists, Evangelicals, and the Modern World in Honour of David Bebbington* (Spurgeon's College and the Baptist Historical Society, 2015), pp. 231-254.

<sup>19</sup> For the history behind the Prayer Call of 1784, see Ernest A. Payne, *The Prayer Call of 1784* (Baptist Laymen's Missionary Movement, London, 1941), pp. 4-5; Michael A. G. Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul: John Sutcliffe of Olney, his friends and his times* (Darlington, 1994), pp. 153-171.

the Gospel amongst the Heathen (later the Baptist Missionary Society) and, subsequently, to William Carey going to India. The Baptist prayer call was taken up by George Burder and the Warwickshire Independent Association which helped to prepare them for their part in the formation of the LMS as an interdenominational institution that would unite Evangelicals in the task of foreign missions. Linked to Edwards' *Humble Attempt* was what Iain Murray has called the 'Puritan Hope'; that is, the worldwide expansion of the gospel and the victories of the Cross that would usher in a period of unparalleled blessing prior to the return of Christ. Murray has observed, 'It would astonish the modern reader to observe just how prominent the driving power of this "hope" was in all the missionary activities which followed 1792.'<sup>20</sup>

### (b) Early Scottish missionary activity

John Love was born in Paisley and was closely associated with the evangelical witness in his home town. The minister in the Abbey Church until five years before he was born was Robert Millar who had published a two-volume work in 1723 entitled the *History of the Propagation of Christianity and the Overthrow of Paganism*.<sup>21</sup> Missionary interest was stirred by this work and as John Roxborough has noted, 'It may be no accident that Paisley continued to be a centre of mission interest.'<sup>22</sup> As a Paisley minister, Millar's important contribution to the history of missions would have been known to John Love. Two of Millar's successors in Paisley, John Witherspoon and John Snodgrass were strong supporters of the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge (SSPCK). Amongst the Society's aims was a commitment to evangelize 'Popish and Infidel parts of the world.' Through commissioners in Boston and New York, the SSPCK supported several missionaries to the North American Indians including the celebrated David Brainerd.<sup>23</sup> Snodgrass would eventually become involved with others in setting up a local missionary society that was an auxiliary of the LMS.<sup>24</sup> During his ministry in London,

<sup>20</sup> Iain Murray, *The Puritan Hope* (Banner of Truth), 1971, p. 153. See also James A. De Jong, *As the Waters cover the Sea: Millennial Expectations in the Rise of Anglo-American Missions, 1640-1810* (Kampen, 1970).

<sup>21</sup> On Millar, see Ronald E. Davies, 'Robert Millar – an Eighteenth-Century Scottish Latourette', *Evangelical Quarterly*, Vol. 62:2 (1990), pp. 143-156. Davies points out that John Gillies in his *Historical Collections relating to Remarkable periods of Success of the Gospel* (Edinburgh, 1754) makes considerable use of Millar's *History*, at times abstracting complete sections of Millar's narrative (p. 145). See also Hew Scott (ed.), *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae* (8 vols., 2nd edition, Edinburgh, 1915-50), Vol. 3, p. 166 (cited afterwards as Hew Scott, *Fasti*).

<sup>22</sup> John Roxborough, *Scotland and the Missionary Movement*, at roxborough.com/REFORMED/TCCHAP09.pdf (accessed 13th June 2016). This article is a slight enlargement of a short section of his thesis: William John Roxborough, 'Thomas Chalmers and the Mission of the Church with special reference to the Rise of the Missionary Movement in Scotland' (PhD thesis, University of Aberdeen, 1978), pp. 278-279.

<sup>23</sup> David E. Meek, article on the 'Scottish SPCK' in Nigel M. de S. Cameron, *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (DSCHT) (Edinburgh, 1993), p. 762. See also Henry Hunter, *A Brief History of the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge in the Highlands and Islands and the Corresponding Board in London* (London, 1795). Hunter was the Clerk of the London Scots Presbytery and a close friend of John Love.

<sup>24</sup> Gavin White, "'Highly Preposterous": Origins of Scottish Missions', *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, Vol. 19:2 (1978), p. 115.

John Love, along with his ministerial colleagues in the Scots Presbytery, was actively involved in the Corresponding Board in London for the SSPCK. As a consequence of his involvement with this organisation, Love had a distinct link to early Scottish missionary activity.

**(c) Upsurge in missionary activity in the context of French Revolution**

The closing decades of the eighteenth century and the early years of the nineteenth century witnessed what has been called the ‘great breakthrough of the missionary idea.’ Brian Stanley has observed: ‘Between the early 1780s and the second decade of the nineteenth century the obligation to bring the Christian gospel to the “heathen” world seized the conscience and imagination of evangelicals in all parts of the church.’<sup>25</sup> There were many factors for this surge in missionary interest, the major one was the evangelical revival; a further factor was the portentous political events on the continent of Europe following the French Revolution which ushered in a period of far reaching upheaval in France that lasted for a decade from 1789. The monarchy was overthrown; a republic was established amidst scenes of anarchy and crime that spread panic through the surrounding nations. As the political ambitions of the revolutionaries expanded, France declared war on several European countries and determined their occupation. In 1795, the year the LMS was formed, the Netherlands was occupied. It seemed likely that the course of the Revolution in France would result in the overthrow of the Roman Catholic Church, which most Protestants identified with Antichrist. Indeed, by 1798 the French army had set up a republic in Rome itself and forced Pope Pius VI into exile. As Brian Stanley has noted, ‘The Europe that gave birth to the missionary movement was neither self-confident nor generally expansionist; rather it was a continent in the throes of political upheaval and anguish.’<sup>26</sup> The countries of Europe were involved in wars on which the hopes and liberties of the civilized world seemed to depend. These were years of tremendous social upheaval and resulting from this shaking of the nations a multitude of eschatological ideas begun to abound.<sup>27</sup> Roger Martin, commenting on this, has written: ‘Millennial expectation was still in the ascendant, soon to be given new impetus by the spectacular descent of the French armies into Rome, the citadel of anti-Christ.’<sup>28</sup>

William Ellis in his *History of the London Missionary Society* has pointed out that although ‘there was nothing in the political state of the continent or of England favourable to any great exertions for the conversion of the heathen,

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<sup>25</sup> Brian Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag* (Apollos, Inter-Varsity Press, 1990), p. 57.

<sup>26</sup> Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag*, p. 61.

<sup>27</sup> For a helpful discussion of the effect of the French Revolution, see Ian J. Shaw, *Churches, Revolutions and Empires* (Christian Focus Publications, Fearn, 2012), Chapter 2, ‘The French Revolution and its Legacy’, pp. 35-62. That some in England were fearing a French invasion is clear from an article in the April 1794 issue of the London *Evangelical Magazine* entitled ‘Against unbelieving fears’, which begins with these words, ‘At the present time, when many entertain serious apprehension of a *foreign invasion*, and timorous people are very ready to paint to their imaginations all its attendant calamities in the darkest colours, it is not to be wondered at, if the enemy of souls should suggest to the minds of weak believers the most distressing ideas on this occasion.’ *Evangelical Magazine*, Vol. 2 (1794), p. 154.

<sup>28</sup> Martin, *Evangelicals United*, p. 40.



the very darkness and tribulation that everywhere prevailed drew the attention of a number of devoted ministers of Christ to those parts of the sacred writings which predict the ultimate diffusion of Christianity throughout the earth. "The revival of religion at home, and the universal spread of the Gospel, were regarded by many as events which might be expected to flow from existing calamities." To the Christians of that day "the prospects of the future triumphs of the church spread a mildness over existing gloom, and cheered them amidst the miseries and wickedness which distressed the nations and distracted the world." They remembered that "amidst the desolating strife of mortals God had often appeared in his glory" and "the recent shaking of the nations led not a few to anticipate those glorious days when the knowledge of the Lord should cover the whole earth."<sup>29</sup>

#### (d) Captain James Cook's *Voyages*

During the 1780s interest in the conversion of the heathen had been widely aroused by the publication of Captain James Cook's *Voyages*. The accounts of his three voyages were read extensively and captured the public imagination.



Captain James Cook.

Many Evangelicals were fascinated by the accounts and quickly realised the significance of his discoveries with regard to the extension of the gospel in foreign and exotic lands. Brian Stanley has written: 'The published accounts of Captain James Cook's three voyages to the South Seas between 1768 and 1780 created intense public interest in the "primitive" peoples of the area.'<sup>30</sup> William Carey later acknowledged that 'reading Cook's voyages was the first thing that engaged my mind to think of missions.'<sup>31</sup> In a similar vein William Ellis writes, 'Among the circumstances which contributed more or less directly to the formation of the Missionary Society, the

effect of Captain Cook's *Voyages* to the South Sea Islands on the mind of the late Rev. Dr. Haweis, rector of Aldwinckle, in Northamptonshire, and chaplain to the Countess of Huntingdon, is one of the earliest of which any record has been found.'<sup>32</sup> Thomas Haweis<sup>33</sup> in a sermon preached at the inaugural

<sup>29</sup> William Ellis, *The History of the London Missionary Society* (London, 1844), Vol. 1, pp. 3-4. The first two quotations that Ellis gives are from a sermon by John Barrett of Kidderminster preached before the Worcestershire Association at Stourbridge in March 1794 and the last two are from a letter dated 7th January 1795 written by John Love on behalf of the organising committee seeking to set up a Missionary Society to ministers throughout the country.

<sup>30</sup> Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag*, p. 58.

<sup>31</sup> Eustace Carey, *Memoir of William Carey, D.D.* (London, 1836), p. 18.

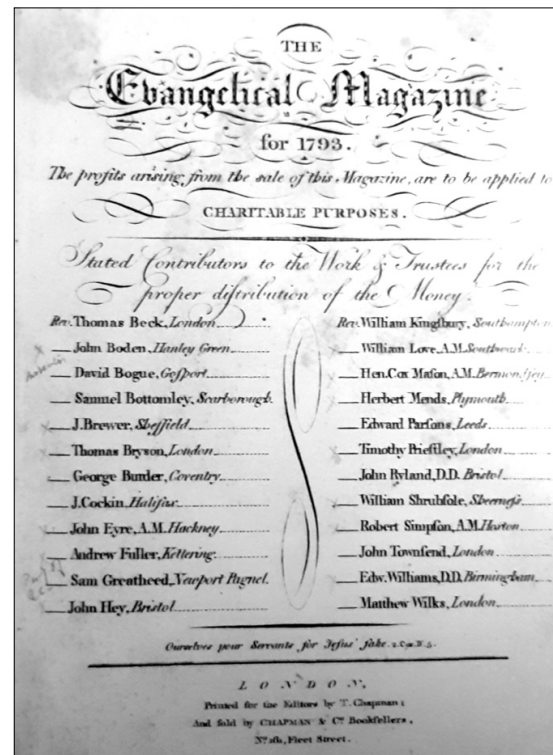
<sup>32</sup> Ellis, *The History of the London Missionary Society*, Vol. 1, p. 6. Cook had given vivid descriptions of Tahiti and the South Sea Islands. See *The Voyages of Captain James Cook* (2 vols., London, 1842), Vol. 2.

<sup>33</sup> Thomas Haweis (1734-1820) became one of the founding fathers of the London Missionary Society. He was the son of a Redruth solicitor and was converted under the

meetings of the LMS in September 1795 referred to ‘the new world recently uncovered in the South Pacific and his persuasion of the missionary prospects of the South Seas was decisive in determining the destination of the first missionary party sent out by the LMS in 1796.’<sup>34</sup>

### (e) *The Evangelical Magazine*

The immediate factors that led to John Love taking a leading part in the missionary surge were literary. The first was the commencement in July 1793 of a monthly periodical, the *Evangelical Magazine*. It was the burgeoning evangelical unity movement that led to the commencement of this journal. When the LMS was formed several years later, the *Evangelical Magazine* became virtually the Society’s organ of communication. Early in 1793, a meeting of twenty-four ministers, from several denominations, met at the Three Crowns Coffee House in London and resolved to establish a magazine, the major purpose of which would be ‘to arouse the Christian public from its prevailing torpor, and excite to a more close and serious consideration of their obligations to use every means of advancing the Redeemer’s Kingdom.’<sup>35</sup> The principal editor was John Eyre (1754-1803), an Episcopal clergyman at Homerton. Eyre along with Matthew Wilks (1746-1829) of Whitefield’s Tabernacle and a few other friends were the main originators of the project.<sup>36</sup> Eyre and Wilks had both been trained at the Countess of Huntingdon’s College at Trevecca.<sup>37</sup> Eyre was a Cornishman born in Bodmin. He was educated at Bodmin Grammar School and was then apprenticed to a



Title-page of volume 1 of the *Evangelical Magazine*.

ministry of Samuel Walker of Truro. At Oxford he started a second Holy Club among the undergraduates. After assisting Martin Madan, the chaplain to the Lock Hospital in London, he was offered the living at All Saints, Aldwinckle, Northamptonshire, which he held until his death. His church quickly became a centre of evangelical influence. In 1774 he was appointed a chaplain to Lady Huntingdon and following her death he was named as the trustee-executor of her estate. For biographical details of Haweis, see Arthur Skevington Wood, *Thomas Haweis, 1734-1820* (London, 1957); John Morison, *Fathers and Founders of the London Missionary Society* (2nd one-volume edn., London, undated), pp. 323-345.

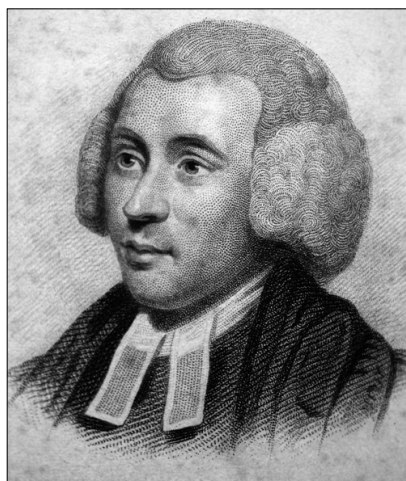
<sup>34</sup> Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag*, p. 58.

<sup>35</sup> Horne, *The Story of the LMS*, p. 4.

<sup>36</sup> All the men who were involved in starting the *Evangelical Magazine*, with the exception of several Baptists, were among the founders of the LMS. The Baptists had their own missionary society.

<sup>37</sup> There are several spellings of this location – Trevecka and Trefeca – I have followed the anglicized one used by Geoffrey F. Nuttall.

clothier in Tavistock. Whilst there, at the age of fifteen, he was converted under the ministry of Andrew Kinsman, a Calvinistic Methodist Minister. After his conversion his father disowned him. Lady Huntingdon sent him to her college at Trevecca after which he preached for a time in her Connexion before matriculating at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, and then receiving ordination in the Established Church in 1779.<sup>38</sup> Wilks was born in Gibraltar. On moving to England, he became an apprentice in Birmingham and was converted at West



John Eyre.



Matthew Wilks.

Bromwich in 1771 on hearing the preaching of the evangelical Anglican minister William Piercy, who the following year was appointed by Lady Huntingdon as one of her chaplains. With the help of Piercy, he went to the Countess's college at Trevecca. One of the managers of Whitefield's two London Chapels, having heard him preach, asked him to supply the pulpit. After itinerating under the Countess's instructions, he settled in London and remained for the rest of his life at the Moorfields Tabernacle and the Tottenham Road Chapel. Along with Eyre, Wilks played a prominent part in the formation of the LMS.<sup>39</sup>

The editors, in introducing the first issue of the *Evangelical Magazine* to the public, state that the men behind the publication 'are composed of Churchmen and Dissenters of different denominations, uniting their efforts in one common cause, who will endeavour to diffuse liberal sentiments, wheresoever the providence of God may direct this little confluence of doctrine and catholicism to wind its peaceful course.'<sup>40</sup> John Townsend (1757-1826), the founder of the London Asylum for the deaf and dumb and minister of the Independent Church in Bermondsey, was present at the meeting at which it was decided to establish the journal, and was an early contributor to its pages. Townsend's *Memoir* informs us of the charitable purpose that was an additional factor in the decision to commence the publication. The profits from the *Magazine* were to be 'distributed among the widows of

<sup>38</sup> For further details on Eyre, see Morison, *Fathers and Founders of the LMS*, pp. 9-46; *DNB*, Vol. 6, pp. 964-965; and Donald M. Lewis, *The Blackwell Dictionary of Evangelical Biography, 1730-1860* (2 vols., Oxford, 1995), Vol. 1, p. 373.

<sup>39</sup> For further biographical details on Wilks, see Morison, *Fathers and Founders of the LMS*, pp. 444-461 and *Blackwell Dictionary of Evangelical Biography, 1730-1860*, Vol. 2, p. 1193.

<sup>40</sup> *Evangelical Magazine*, Vol. 1 (1793), preface, p. 8.

deceased ministers’, and for other charitable purposes. Townsend’s *Memoir* was published in 1828, and by that date his biographer states that £16,000 had been distributed in this way.<sup>41</sup>

The influence of the *Evangelical Magazine* extended far beyond London. William Findlater in his biography of his father, Robert Findlater Sr., a merchant at Drummond in Ross-shire, writes of how his father’s interest in missions began:

About the year 1796, the great cause of missions to heathen lands excited a strong interest in Ross-shire, as well as other places throughout the kingdom – especially in those parishes where the ministers felt interested and made collections for the purpose. Two or three sermons preached by Mr. Calder, Urquhart,<sup>42</sup> on the words, ‘Thy kingdom come’, previous to his making a collection in aid of the funds of the Missionary Society and a perusal of a few numbers of the *Evangelical Magazine*, were the means of kindling in his mind that holy glow of zeal for the cause which continued increasing to the day of his death. He immediately ordered the work from its commencement in 1794, where the rise, progress, and operations of the London Missionary Society were recorded monthly. By his recommendation and influence several copies were circulated among Christian friends throughout the country, and the lively interest he took in the prosperity of the Society is forcibly and pathetically expressed by himself several years previous to his death in his testamentary instructions to his children.<sup>43</sup>

#### (f) William Carey and Melville Horne

The other literary works that had an influence on John Love’s involvement with the LMS were two books on the importance of missions. The first was William Carey’s missionary manifesto, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to use Means for the Conversion of the Heathen*.<sup>44</sup> This volume led to the formation of the Particular Baptist Society for the Propagation of the Gospel amongst the Heathen. It was both Carey’s view, and of the Baptists generally, that due to the divided state of Christendom it was more likely for good to be done by each denomination engaging separately in mission work. It was a second volume, however, that was to have a decisive effect on John Love. This book argued for missions being undertaken as a united co-operative effort involving all evangelicals. The book was entitled *Letters on Missions: Addressed to the Protestant Ministers of the British Churches*. It was

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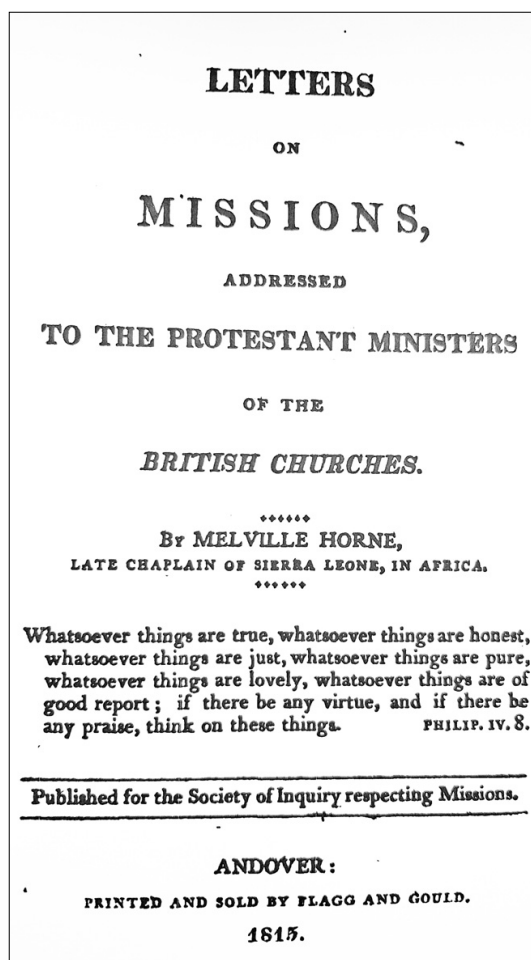
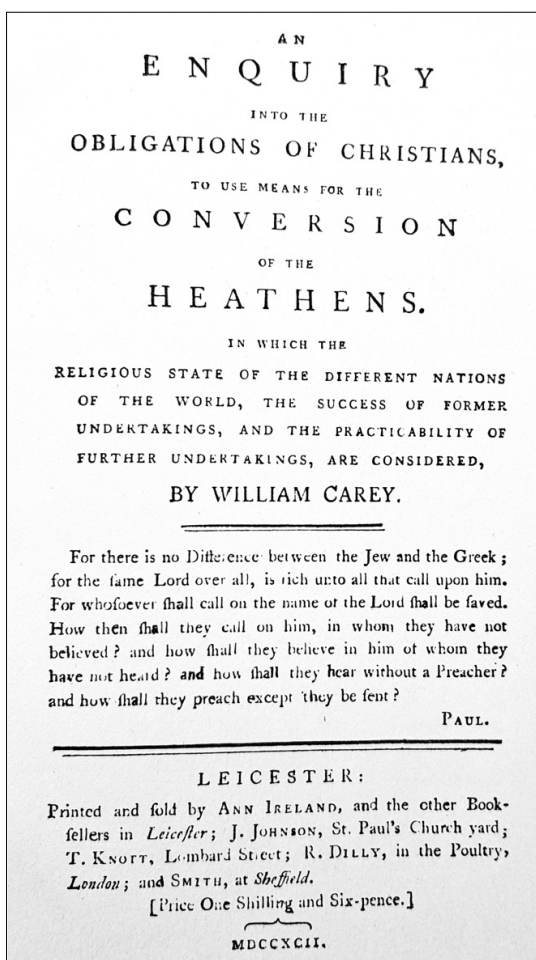
<sup>41</sup> *Memoir of John Townsend* (London, 1828), p. 54. Townsend’s father, Benjamin Townsend, was a pewterer in Whitechapel and a Calvinistic Methodist who was disinherited for his attachment to George Whitefield. See the article on John Townsend in *DNB*, Vol. 19, p. 1033. Townsend was also one of the founding fathers of the LMS. See Morison, *Fathers and Founders of the LMS*, pp. 406-426.

<sup>42</sup> This is a reference to Charles Calder (1748-1812) who preceded John Macdonald (the Apostle of the North) as the minister of Urquhart. His father was James Calder (1712-1775) the Church of Scotland minister of Croy whose diary was reprinted in the *Banner of Truth Magazine*, Issues 130-131 (July-August 1974).

<sup>43</sup> William Findlater, *Memoir of the Rev. Robert Findlater together with a Narrative of the Revival of Religion during his ministry at Lochtayside, Perthshire in 1816-1819 to which are prefixed Memoirs of his parents* (Glasgow, 1840), p. 41. As noted above the *Evangelical Magazine* commenced in July 1793, not 1794.

<sup>44</sup> A facsimile edition of this historic book was published by Carey Kingsgate Press, London in 1961 with an informative introduction by Ernest A. Payne.

written by Melville Horne and published in 1794.<sup>45</sup> Ernest Payne speaks of Carey's *Enquiry* and Horne's *Letters on Missions* as 'Two historic missionary



*Two historic missionary pamphlets.*

pamphlets...of considerable importance for the beginnings of the modern missionary movement and the founding of the great societies.<sup>46</sup>

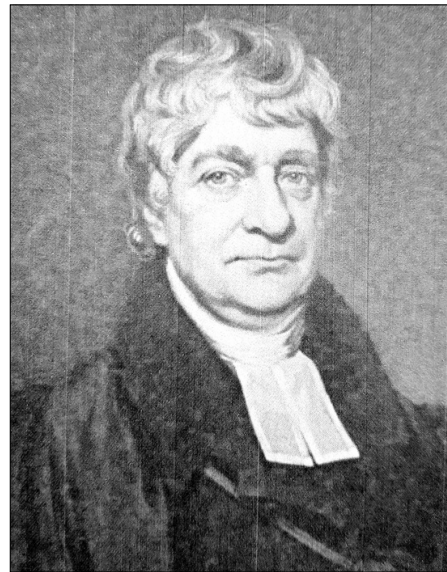
Melville Horne (1761-1841)<sup>47</sup> was the son of an Antiguan barrister and planter who after his conversion became a Wesleyan itinerant preacher. In 1786, he was ordained as curate in the parish of Madeley where John Fletcher had been the vicar until his death the previous year. In the 1780s Methodism was still embraced within the Church of England, and in 1787 John Wesley appointed Horne as the superintendent of the new Wolverhampton Methodist circuit, a position he held until Wesley's death in 1791. Horne then became

<sup>45</sup> Melville Horne, *Letters on Missions: Addressed to the Protestant Ministers of the British Churches* (London, 1794). Citations in this paper are taken from the edition published in Andover, Mass., in 1815.

<sup>46</sup> Payne, *The Church Awakes*, p. 65.

<sup>47</sup> For biographical details of Horne, see Suzanne Schwarz, 'An evangelical clergyman and missionary advocate: the career of the Reverend Melvill Horne, Minister of Christ Church, Macclesfield', *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, Vol. 153 (2004), pp. 1-31; *Blackwell Dictionary of Evangelical Biography, 1730-1860*, Vol. 1, pp. 572-573; C. Hole, *The Early History of the Church Missionary Society* (London, 1896), p. 632.

a chaplain in the Clapham Sect-sponsored Sierra Leone Company formed in 1792.<sup>48</sup> The company was set up in order to found a British colony in Africa to enable the re-settlement of black American ex-slaves and the ‘Black-poor’ of London. It was a scheme for Africa’s spiritual and commercial regeneration. As early as 1789, William Wilberforce had advocated legitimate commerce as the best way to cut off the slave-trade at its source within Africa. Commerce and Christianity was an anti-slavery ideology. In the late eighteenth century, the abolition and missionary movements were closely linked. The Sierra Leone Company was the first such enterprise formed for the abolition of the slave trade, the civilization of Africa, and the introduction of the gospel. Melville Horne went out as a Company chaplain with the firm intention of fulfilling a missionary role. Unable to stand the climate, he returned to England after little more than a year. However, in his short stay in the colony Horne had observed the beneficial effects of missionary co-operation. It was doubtless this experience in Sierra Leone that played an important part in his decision to write his famous *Letters on Missions* published in 1794, fourteen months after his return to England. The catholicity of the letters can be seen from how the first letter begins:



*Melville Horne, the author  
of Letters on Missions.*

From the pulpit, and from the press, we frequently hear loud calls on Christians to respect the interests of their several churches. One while, we, of the Establishment, turn the attention of our brethren to the alarming progress of dissenters, and exhort each other to a skilful opposition against sectaries. Another while, dissenters rouse the languid zeal of their people, descanting on the excellence of their own modes of faith and worship, and indulging vehement invective against the avarice, the sloth, and the lordliness of Episcopalians. We talk of the Interests of the Establishment, the Dissenting Cause, the Baptist and Independent Interest, the Methodist Cause, and the like, until we lose sight of the Christian Cause, the common interest of mankind, and the diligent, peaceable service of our Master. Thus, do we forsake the sublime of religion, sink into the meanness of partisans and inspire our flocks with a fierce, sectarian zeal. We first baptize our secular interests and evil tempers into the name of the disinterested and lowly Jesus; and then contend for them, with as much warmth and

<sup>48</sup> For a history of the Sierra Leone Company and colony, see Andrew F. Walls, ‘A Christian Experiment: the Sierra Leone colony’, in G. J. Cuming (ed.), *The Mission of the Church and the Propagation of the Faith* (Studies in Church History, Vol. 6, Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 107-129, reprinted in A.F. Walls, *Crossing Cultural Frontiers: Studies in the History of World Christianity* (New York, 2017), pp. 91-109; Stephen Tomkins, *The Clapham Sect: How Wilberforce’s circle transformed Britain* (Oxford, 2010), chapters 10, 11, 13, and 17; Ernest M. Howse, *Saints in Politics: the Clapham Sect and the growth of freedom* (London, 1953), pp. 46-50.

pertinacity, as though they involved our salvation. Is not this to fight for Barabbas, and to crucify Jesus?<sup>49</sup>

Horne's advice with respect to the type of men that would be most suitable to engage in missionary activity was in these terms:

He must be an extempore preacher, and possess a facility of conveying to the mind his ideas clear and strong, independent of those modes of speech, which originate in the laws and manners of Europe. He must be far removed from narrow bigotry, and possess a spirit truly catholic. It is not Calvinism; it is not Arminianism, but Christianity, that he is to teach. It is not the hierarchy of the Church of England; it is not the principles of protestant dissenters that he has in view to propagate. His object is to serve the church universal. It is not the latitudinarianism of principles, but largeness of affection, which I recommend to the Missionary. I would not have him indifferent to his own peculiarities, whether they respect the doctrines he receives as truth, or the points of ecclesiastical polity he considers most friendly to religion; but I would have him thoroughly sensible, that the success of his ministry rests not on the points of separation, but on those wherein all godly men are united. He should know to what place in the grand scale of truth he is to refer each article of his creed; and be infinitely more concerned to make men Christians than to make them Church of England men, Dissenters, or Methodists. Would to God this were more attended to among us! and then, instead of observing with jealousy the prosperity of any other denomination of Christians, and considering it as an obstruction to the success of our own party, we shall rejoice in hearing that Christ is preached, and souls are saved.<sup>50</sup>

Horne's book had a very considerable effect, not only in stimulating missionary zeal, but also in emphasising the need for evangelical adherents of different denominations to combine in this great enterprise. The stress of Horne's book was that differences of ecclesiastical policy, and also to some extent even of doctrine, need not hinder aggressive missionary activity. The Anglican minister, Thomas Haweis of Aldwinckle in Northamptonshire, had come to a similar conclusion; whether this was a result of reading Horne, or his own opinion, we do not know. In a letter written in 1794 he observes, 'My former experience had convinced me that only by a general union of all denominations could a broad basis be laid for a mission.'<sup>51</sup>

### **(g) Warwickshire Congregational Association**

In June 1784, the Northampton Baptist Association, that linked some twenty Baptist churches stretching from Hertfordshire to Lincolnshire, met in Nottingham. At that meeting John Sutcliff of Olney moved that the ministers present should hold regular prayer meetings, on the first Monday of every month, for the revival and spread of the Christian faith. Andrew Fuller of Kettering, who had preached to the gathering, printed his sermon, adding some notes, to encourage and assist prayer for the revival and the extension of real religion. Sutcliff had urged that the 'whole interest of the Redeemer be affectionately remembered, and the spread of the gospel to the most distant

<sup>49</sup> Horne, *Letters on Missions*, pp. 17-18.

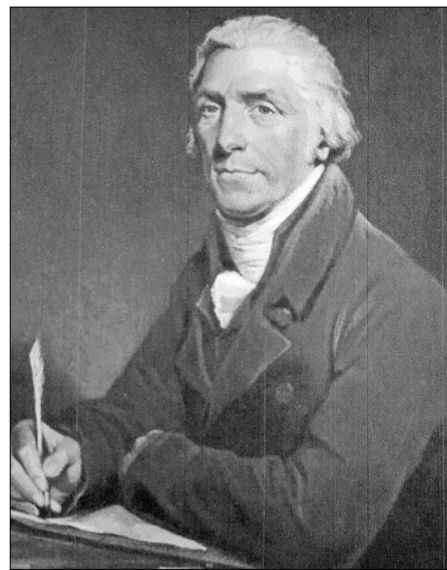
<sup>50</sup> Horne, *Letters on Missions*, pp. 92-93.

<sup>51</sup> Manuscript letter of Thomas Haweis cited in Ellis, *History of the LMS*, Vol. 1, p. 15.

parts of the habitable globe be the object of your most fervent requests'. These calls to prayer were quickly taken up in other counties.<sup>52</sup> Alan Argent has detailed how the Prayer Call of the Northampton Baptists spread to the Warwickshire Independents:

In 1786 the Warwickshire association of Baptist ministers recommended that prayer meetings should be held on the first Monday of the month and from these Baptist churches the movement spread to nearby fellowships of Independents. In June 1786 the association of Baptists meeting at Northampton noted with pleasure that 'several churches not in the association, and some of other denominations' had joined in prayer meetings on the first Monday in every month. By then some Independents in Leicestershire were meeting regularly for such prayers. The BMS, founded in October 1792, emerged from the spread of these Monday evening prayer meetings. Significantly, among those churches giving early support to the BMS were several in Warwickshire and the Midlands where the prayer call had been heard.<sup>53</sup>

The Warwickshire Independents, who adopted the plan of monthly Monday evening prayer meetings, were themselves led to consider the spread of the gospel, and this proved to be another vital influence in the formation of the LMS. Two men were to play a leading role in the Warwickshire Association of Ministers; they were George Burder and James Moody. Burder (1752-1832) was also heavily involved in the formation of the LMS. He was born in London. His mother had been converted under the preaching of George Whitefield. A work of grace in his own soul seems to have come through hearing both Whitefield and William Romaine after which, with the encouragement of John Fletcher of Madeley, he began to preach. In 1778 he became the pastor of an Independent Chapel in Lancaster. In November 1783 he moved to Coventry to become the minister of West Orchard Street Chapel where he was instrumental in 1793 in founding the Warwickshire Association of Ministers for the spread of the gospel at home and abroad. In 1803 he became the minister of Fetter Lane Chapel in London.<sup>54</sup>



George Burder, one of the founders of the LMS.

<sup>52</sup> Payne, *The Prayer Call of 1784*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>53</sup> Alan Argent, 'The Founding of the London Missionary Society and the West Midlands', in Alan P. F. Sell (ed.), *Protestant Nonconformists and the West Midlands of England* (Keele University Press, 1996), p. 16.

<sup>54</sup> The year that Burder moved to London he became the secretary of the LMS, a post he held until 1827. He was also the editor of the *Evangelical Magazine* from 1803 to 1826 along with being a founder of the Religious Tract Society. Burder was one of the most influential ministers of his day and was the author of the highly popular eight-volume *Village Sermons*. For biographical details, see Henry Foster Burder, *Memoir of the Rev. George Burder* (London, 1833); Morison, *Fathers and Founders of the LMS*, pp. 268-292; *Blackwell Dictionary of Evangelical Biography, 1730-1860*, Vol. 1, pp. 168-169; *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (ODNB).



James Moody (1756-1806) came from a godly Scottish background. His grandparents had moved to London where he was born in 1756. As a young man he became addicted to worldly pursuits. On one occasion, a pious servant, when brushing his clothes before he went out to the playhouse, said to him, 'Master James, this will never do. You must be otherwise employed.' Desiring his conversion, the worthy man put into his hands Alleine's *Alarm to the Unconverted*. This was clearly the first step in a great change. The first sermon he heard with profit was at the Countess of Huntingdon's Chapel at Spa Fields. Before the building was acquired by the Countess it was a place of drinking and amusement which Moody had formerly frequented when it was 'a temple of vanity and dissipation'. After training at the English Evangelical Academy (a predecessor to Hoxton Academy – it was called English because no Latin was taught or required) he was ordained to a small Independent congregation, Cow Lane Chapel in Warwick, in 1781 where he remained until his death twenty-five years later at the early age of fifty.<sup>55</sup> Under his highly appreciated ministry the congregation grew from around 50 to almost 600. George Burder, then in London, preached a funeral sermon in Moody's church several weeks after his death which was afterwards printed.<sup>56</sup>

Both Burder and Moody had close connections with the Baptists. Burder and Carey were well known to each other and Moody was a friend of John Ryland (1753-1825), the Baptist scholar who along with Carey was one of the founders of the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS). Ryland was the minister of College Lane Chapel, Northampton until 1793 when he moved to Broadmead Chapel in Bristol. He had close family ties with Warwick and was also well acquainted with Burder. Within a few months of the founding of the BMS, Burder was involved in the formation of the Warwickshire Association of ministers for the spread of the gospel at home and abroad.

On 27th June 1793 (the same month in which Carey and his companion, John Thomas, sailed for India) a meeting was held in James Moody's house at Warwick where the question under discussion was, 'What is the duty of Christians with regard to the spread of the Gospel?' The ministers present resolved to promote the knowledge of the gospel both at home and abroad and passed a series of resolutions:

1. It appears to us, that it is the duty of all Christians to employ every means in their power, to spread the knowledge of the Gospel, both at home and abroad.
2. As ministers of Christ, solemnly engaged by our office to exert ourselves for the glory of God, and the spiritual good of men, we unite in a determination to promote this great design in our respective connexions.
3. That we will immediately recommend to our friends the formation of a fund for the above purpose, and report progress at the next meeting.

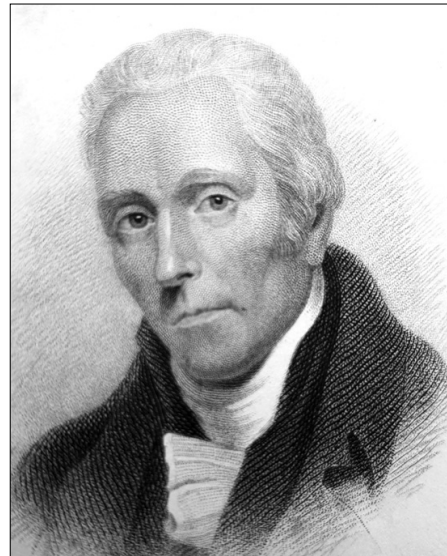
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<sup>55</sup> For further biographical details, see *Evangelical Magazine*, Vol. 15 (1807), pp. 193-200; J. Sibree and M. Caston, *Independency in Warwickshire* (Coventry, 1855), pp. 134-141.

<sup>56</sup> George Burder, *The Christian's Review of Life and Prospect of Futurity* (London, 1807).

4. That the first Monday of every month, at seven o'clock in the evening be a season fixed on for united prayer to God for the success of every attempt, by all denominations of Christians, for the spread of the Gospel.
5. That the Secretary write to Dr Williams, of Birmingham, to prepare by the next meeting a circular letter, on the subject of spreading the Gospel by the next meeting.<sup>57</sup>

Though absent from the meeting, Edward Williams (1750-1813), the minister of Carrs Lane meeting house in Birmingham was asked to write the circular letter. This reveals both the high reputation that Williams had among his fellow ministers along with his known sympathy for the missionary cause. He was born at Glan Clwyd, Denbighshire, educated at St Asaph grammar school and then at Caerwys grammar school, for a year. He was intended for the Anglican ministry but came under the influence of the local Methodists and joined the Independent church at Denbigh, where he began to preach, and in 1771 entered the dissenting academy at Abergavenny. He was ordained minister on 27th March 1776 at the Independent church at Ross-on-Wye and a year later he was settled as the minister at Oswestry where at the request of the evangelist Jonathan Scott he began educating students for the ministry on Lady Glenorchy's foundation. In 1792 Williams was called to the Carrs Lane Independent Church in Birmingham, where he remained for three years.<sup>58</sup>



*Edward Williams, then the minister of Carrs Lane Congregational church in Birmingham.*

The meeting at James Moody's house appears to have been the first business-like approach towards the founding of an ordered missionary society among the Independents. These Warwickshire ministers were not looking to London for leadership but acted on their own convictions of immediate duty and achieved considerable success both in their own and other counties in undertaking the preparatory work necessary to forming a missionary society.

<sup>57</sup> H. F. Burder, *Memoir of the Rev. George Burder*, pp. 131-132; Evan Davies (ed.), *The Works of the Rev. Edward Williams, D.D.* (4 vols., London, 1862), Vol. 4, pp. 411-412.

<sup>58</sup> After Williams left Carrs Lane, he took up his final charge as minister of Masbrough Independent Church near Rotherham in Yorkshire, where again he kept a school and worked as principal of the Yorkshire Independent academy. Having been awarded the degree of DD by Edinburgh University in 1792, he helped to found and edit the *Evangelical Magazine* in 1793. His most significant publications were *An Essay on the Equity of Divine Government and the Sovereignty of Divine Grace* (1809) and *Antipaedobaptism Examined* (1789) which brought him into conflict with the Baptist Abraham Booth. Williams' theological position on the atonement was Amyraldian. For biographical details, see W.T. Owen, *Edward Williams D.D., 1750-1813: His Life, Thought and Influence* (Cardiff, 1963); *Blackwell Dictionary of Evangelical Biography, 1730-1860*, Vol. 2, pp. 1194-1195; ODNB; Arthur H. Driver, *Carrs Lane, 1748-1948* (Birmingham, 1948), pp. 31-36; Morison, *Fathers and Founders of the LMS*, pp. 427-443.

Their circular letter became a powerful tool in the development of the opinion that the time was ripe for missionary action. Following the Baptist pattern, they too set aside the first Monday in each month for prayer. Their desire for the success of all attempts to spread the gospel reveals no narrow approach. Before the ministers left James Moody's house, a collection was taken that amounted to five guineas.

At their next meeting at Nuneaton, held on 6th August 1793, the circular letter prepared at the request of the Association by Williams, with the addition of a postscript, was ordered to be printed and sent not only to the churches of the county, but to others in different parts of Britain.<sup>59</sup> The account of Williams' life in the *Fathers and Founders of the London Missionary Society* states that the objects proposed by his letter were 'the revival of religion in the churches – the introduction of gospel truths in the places where most wanted at home; and the communication of them to nations abroad, by the support of missionaries in foreign lands.'<sup>60</sup> The postscript contained these challenging words:

Has not the poor heathen world waited long enough? If not, how many centuries longer must the ignorant and uncivilized wait? Were one man of God truly qualified for the work, sent from each county in the kingdom, what great things might we not expect? Or even were some of the larger and more opulent counties to do this, while the smaller ones joined together to send one between two or three? The Lord pardon our too long continued indifference towards an object of such magnitude and moment...The nature of their office requires that ministers should embrace every opportunity to promote the growth of the gospel tree, that it may not only take deep root, but also extend its branches, that its fragrance and fruit may be communicated to all the world...It deserves the closest enquiry, whether the want of a powerful and lively acquaintance in our own souls with Jesus Christ and the benefits of his gospel, be not at the bottom of all indifference about the salvation of others? and whether those blessed characters, in former and latter ages, who were so greatly honoured in propagating truth in their several situations, differed from us in anything so much as in the strong conviction and awakening apprehension they had of spiritual and eternal things?<sup>61</sup>

The Association was in fact a Home and Foreign Missionary Society, and the co-operation of ministers in other parts of the country was sought chiefly in aid of the foreign objects; hence, in the postscript they observe: 'We now conclude our solicitations for your fraternal agreement with us, by calling your attention to one particular more, which we think by no means the least important, viz., the sending of missionaries to the heathen.'

Samuel Pearce,<sup>62</sup> the Baptist minister of the Cannon Street church, in Birmingham, and a zealous supported of the BMS from its beginning, had

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<sup>59</sup> The letter and postscript are printed in *The Works of the Rev. Edward Williams*, Vol. 4, pp. 411-430. Though the postscript added to the letter is printed in Williams' *Works*, Alan Argent thinks that it may have been written by George Burder. See Argent, 'The Founding of the London Missionary Society and the West Midlands', p. 19.

<sup>60</sup> Morison, *Fathers and Founders of the LMS*, p. 439.

<sup>61</sup> *The Works of the Rev. Edward Williams*, Vol. 4, pp. 427, 428, 430.

<sup>62</sup> Samuel Pearce (1766–1799) was born at Plymouth. He studied at the Baptist College, Bristol (1786–9), and in 1790 became minister of Cannon Street Baptist Church, Birmingham.

several strong friendships with the Independent ministers in the Midlands. In May 1794 Pearce reported to Carey in India that ‘our Mission Society has been the means of provoking other Christians to love and good works.’ He went on to tell Carey that the Independents of Warwickshire had formed an association for the propagation of the gospel at home and if possible, among the heathen and that he had preached for them two weeks earlier from Galatians 5: 13, ‘By love serve one another.’<sup>63</sup> Pearce hoped it might be a means of ‘uniting us more firmly in the common cause.’ Accordingly, he was delighted to report that an Association of Ministers in Worcestershire had been formed in December 1793, with seven churches served by five Independent and two Baptist ministers. In 1796, a year after the formation of the LMS, Pearce told Carey that the LMS publicly recognized ‘that our zeal kindled theirs’, and that they had stated, ‘we lighted our torch at yours; and that it was God who first touched your heart with fire from his holy altar.’<sup>64</sup>

## 2. The events leading up to the society’s formation

### (a) Beginnings in the Dissenters’ Library

John Eyre, the editor of the *Evangelical Magazine*, was also deeply affected by Horne’s *Letters* and on a visit to the Dissenters Library on Red Street in May 1794 he met three Scottish London ministers and started discussing with them the contents of Horne’s book. The Scottish ministers were Alexander Waugh, the minister of Burgher Secession congregation at Wells Street, and two members of the London Scots Presbytery; James Steven, the minister of the Crown Court congregation, and John Love. The Dissenters’ Library was established by the will of Dr Daniel Williams (1643-1716), a leading nonconformist minister in London. He left instructions for his trustees to house his library and to make it available to nonconformist ministers in the capital. In addition to his own extensive library, Williams had purchased in 1699 the library of his old friend William Bates.<sup>65</sup> John Love had become aware of the Dissenters’ Library in

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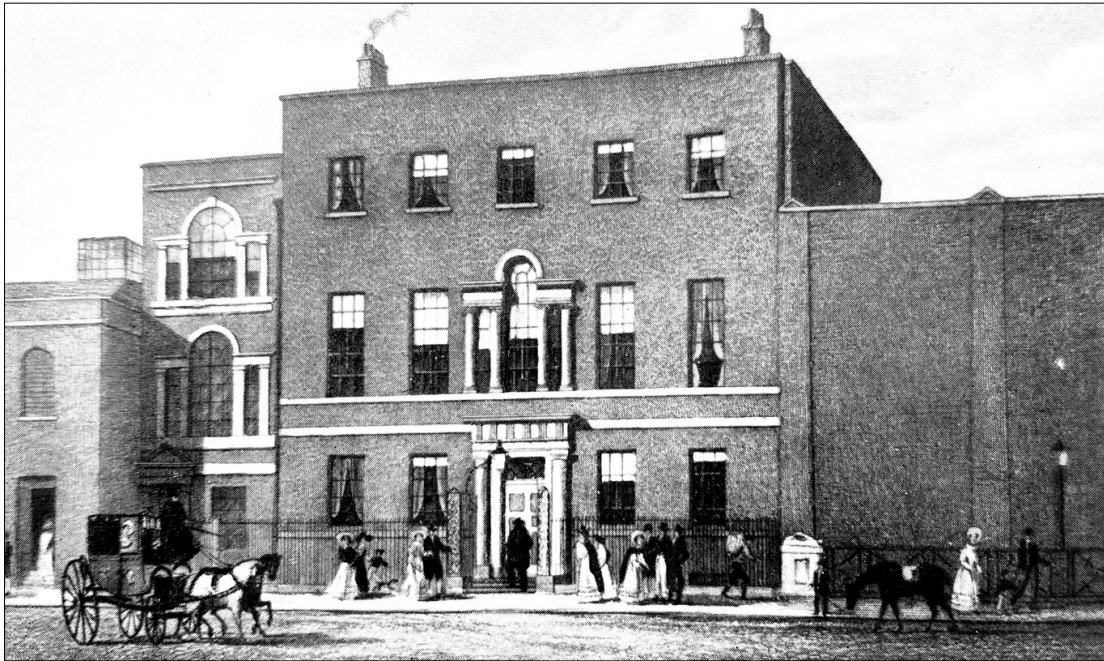
There he laboured successfully until his death. Pearce was one of the founder members of the Baptist Missionary Society, which he passionately supported throughout his short life, assisting the Society in various ways. He was disappointed to be turned down for missionary service, having studied Bengali for that purpose. He wrote several hymns which were included in nonconformist hymnals. He was known for his careful walk with God and was often compared with David Brainerd. Pearce showed great interest in the founding of the LMS, and attended its first general meeting. For biographical information, see Andrew Fuller, *Memoirs of the late Rev. Samuel Pearce* (Clipstone, 1800); *Blackwell Dictionary of Evangelical Biography*, Vol. 2, pp. 863-864; ODNB.

<sup>63</sup> *Missionary correspondence: containing extracts of letters from Samuel Pearce and John Thomas* (London, 1814), p. 3 (letter dated 26th May 1794 from Kettering).

<sup>64</sup> *Missionary correspondence*, pp. 51-52 (letter dated 6th January 1796 from Birmingham).

<sup>65</sup> The Dissenters’ Library was first housed in Red Street, Cripplegate in 1729. It remained there until 1865 when, after moving to two temporary locations, it was finally housed in its present location at Gordon Square in London. The library’s extensive collection was further enhanced in 1977 when the library of New College, London, which housed thousands of very valuable books from the Dissenting Academies, was transferred to the Dr Williams Library. See Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *New College London and its Library – Two Lectures* (Dr Williams Trust, London, 1977). For a history of this important library, see *A short Account of the Charity & Library established under the will of the late Rev. Daniel Williams, D.D.* (London, 1917); Stephen Kay Jones, *Dr Williams and His Library – The inaugural lecture*

1789 after he had been in London for less than two years. In a letter written to his parents dated 4th February 1789 he writes, 'I have been much confirmed of late, and led into a new field of improvement by falling in, very providentially, with a large and excellent library, just in the neighbourhood of my house, wherein I find particularly many of the writings of those who lived in the first



*The first location of Dr Williams Library on Red Street, London.*

ages of Christianity. Hereby I have opportunity to imbibe more of that divine purity, wisdom and simplicity of soul, which showed their genuineness in those seasons of dreadful persecution. I find easy access, in a very retired situation, to ransack here all the treasures of divine grace and human learning.'<sup>66</sup> Irene Fletcher, an archivist and librarian of the LMS, writes regarding this discussion of Horne's views in the Dissenters' Library, 'The men got excited over this challenging book with its scathing attack on the indifference of all branches of the Church to the needs of the heathen.'<sup>67</sup>

Scottish ministers were to play major roles in the formation of the LMS.<sup>68</sup> This was especially so with respect to the ministers that Eyre met in the Dissenters' Library. Alexander Waugh (1754-1827) studied under John Brown of Haddington and was licensed at Duns by the Edinburgh Presbytery of the Burgher Secession Church on 28th June 1779. He supplied briefly the Burgher Secession Wells Street

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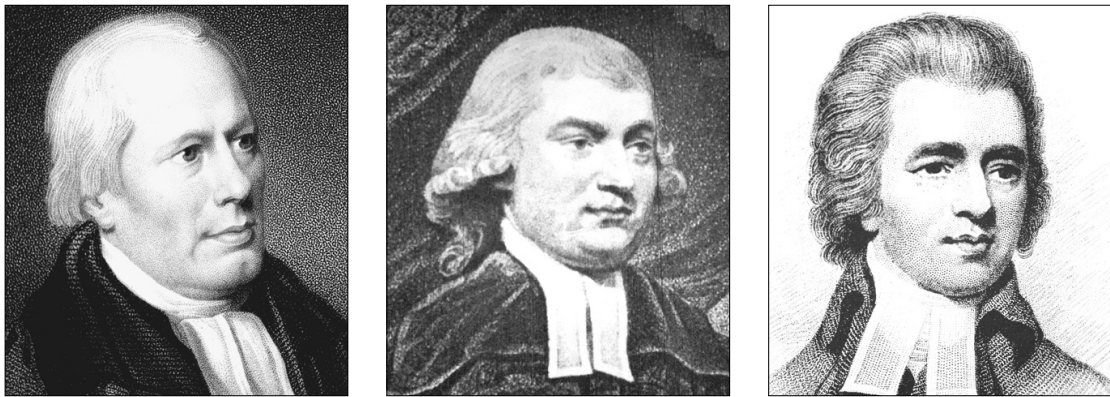
*of the Friends of the Dr Williams Library in 1947* (Cambridge, 1948); John Creasey, *Dr. Williams Library: The last fifty years* (Friends of Dr Williams Library, lecture for 1999); Alan Argent, *Dr. Williams's Library, 1729-1793: 'A Good Library, under the direction of the Dissenters'* (Friends of Dr Williams Library, lecture for 2017). Argent is currently working on a history of the Dr Williams Trust and Library, 1716-2016.

<sup>66</sup> *Letters of the late John Love, Minister of Anderston, Glasgow* (Glasgow, 1838), p. 87.

<sup>67</sup> Irene Fletcher, 'The Fundamental Principle of the London Missionary Society – Part 3', *Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society*, Vol. 19:5 (September 1963), p. 225.

<sup>68</sup> See James M. Calder, *Scotland's March Past: The Share of the Scottish Churches in the London Missionary Society* (London, 1945).

congregation in London that was vacant following the death of Archibald Hall in 1778. On returning to Scotland he was called by the small congregation of Newtown, Roxburghshire and was ordained there on 30th August 1780. Within a short time, he received two calls by the London Wells Street congregation. He accepted their entreaties and became the minister of Wells Street in 1782 where he remained for the next forty-five years until his death in 1827. Waugh's London ministry was characterised by his readiness to work with clergymen of other denominations including the national establishment, to which he was a friend. Nowhere was his non-denominational approach more evident than in his wholehearted support for the LMS. This would become his most cherished cause and one with which he was involved from its inception. Waugh supported a host of other religious and philanthropic bodies, including the British and Foreign Bible Society and the Scottish SPCK. He is buried in Bunhill Fields.<sup>69</sup>



(left to right) Alexander Waugh, James Steven, John Love – The three Scottish ministers that John Eyre met in the Dissenters' Library.

The other Scottish minister at the Dissenters' Library in May 1794, besides John Love, was James Steven (1761-1824). After studying at Glasgow University, he was licensed by the Presbytery of Paisley on 28th June 1786, called to the London Crown Court congregation of the Church of Scotland in June 1787, and ordained there five months later on 1st November 1787. John Love had been ordained to the Crispin Street congregation little over two months earlier on 22nd August 1787. Both of them would become founders of the LMS. Steven was later translated to Kilwinning in March 1803.<sup>70</sup>

After Eyre left his meeting with the Scottish ministers in the Dissenters' Library, he called on Matthew Wilks and repeated to him his conversation

<sup>69</sup> For biographical details of Waugh, see James Hay and Henry Belfrage, *A Memoir of the Reverend Alexander Waugh* (London, 1830); *Evangelical Magazine and Missionary Chronicle*, new series, Vol. 6 (1828) pp. 27-28, 45-53; Morison, *Fathers and Founders of the LMS*, pp. 218-253; *Blackwell Dictionary of Evangelical Biography, 1730-1860*, Vol. 2, p. 1163; ODNB; Dudley Reeves, 'Alexander Waugh in London', *Banner of Truth Magazine*, Issue 115 (April 1973), pp. 1-5. For a recent discussion of Waugh's theology in relation to the *Marrow of Modern Divinity* and the Atonement Controversy in the Secession Church in the 1840s, see William Van Doodewaard, *The Marrow Controversy and the Seceder Tradition: Atonement, Saving Faith, and the Gospel Offer in Scotland, 1718-1799* (Reformation Heritage Books, Grand Rapids, 2011), pp. 240-246.

<sup>70</sup> For biographical details of Steven, see Morison, *Fathers and Founders of the LMS*, pp. 472-477; Hew Scott, *Fasti*, Vol. 3, p. 118; Vol. 7, p. 468.

with the Scottish brethren. The result of these deliberations was that a small number of men started meeting fortnightly during the summer of 1794 for prayer, reading of the Scripture, and conference on the subject of missions. Whilst the meetings began somewhat informally, they took on a more formal structure as the numbers attending grew. Among those who became involved was Thomas Haweis of All Saints Aldwinckle. At this very early stage, David Bogue, the prominent Independent minister of Gosport, was not involved in the discussions. Though Bogue, as we shall see, was to have a major part to play in the LMS, at this stage it was Horne's vision of a mission embodying Evangelicals of all denominations that was at the centre of the discussions, not an important article that Bogue was to write later in the year.<sup>71</sup>

The fortnightly meetings during the summer of 1794, which were attended by John Love, were held at the Castle and Falcon on Aldersgate Street. As William Ellis observes, 'The Castle and Falcon was probably selected for this purpose, in consequence of its being kept at that time by Mr. Dupont who, with his family, were religious persons, and regular attendants at the Tabernacle or Spa Fields Chapel.'<sup>72</sup> Matthew Wilks, in a letter to a correspondent, details a resolution that the ministers made after several of these fortnightly meetings. He writes: 'we resolved to give publicity, and to write to certain leading men in the country, some at our meeting objected to Mr. Bogue as an high and overbearing man, but that was over-ruled, and he was addressed.'<sup>73</sup> Eyre, still impressed with Horne's call for inter-denominational missions, asked his fellow Anglican evangelical, Thomas Haweis, to review the book for the *Evangelical Magazine*. Haweis explained the request in these terms, 'I was then going to Brighton for the summer, he begged me to take with me Melville Horne's treatise on Missions to review for them. This kindled afresh the missionary flame in my heart.'<sup>74</sup> The review appeared in the November 1794 issue.<sup>75</sup>

### (b) David Bogue of Gosport and missionary zeal

David Bogue (1750-1825)<sup>76</sup> was born in Coldingham, Berwickshire; he studied at the University of Edinburgh for the ministry of the Church of Scotland

<sup>71</sup> This point is emphasised for the reason detailed by Roger Martin, that many historians incorrectly believe that David Bogue founded the LMS on his own initiative. See Martin, *Evangelicals United*, p. 42.

<sup>72</sup> Ellis, *History of the LMS*, Vol. 1, p. 17 footnote. Ellis adds, 'There is reason to believe that the house had long before this period been resorted to by ministers and religious persons visiting London, as mention is made of Dr Doddridge and other ministers remaining there when in town.' Spa Fields Chapel was a congregation of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion from the late 1770s. It was adjacent to her London home. See Edwin Welch, *Spiritual Pilgrim: A Reassessment of the Life of the Countess of Huntingdon* (Cardiff University Press, 1995), p. 284, n. 44.

<sup>73</sup> LMS – Raffles Collection, Fathers and Founders Autographs – Wilks to Bennett, 22nd August 1827, cited in Fletcher, 'The Fundamental Principle of the LMS – Part 3', p. 225.

<sup>74</sup> From a letter written by Thomas Haweis, the original of which is in the Mitchell Library, Sydney, NSW – Maggs Catalogue 616 (1935) – cited in Fletcher, 'The Fundamental Principle of the LMS – Part 3', p. 226.

<sup>75</sup> *Evangelical Magazine*, Vol. 2 (1794), pp. 476-478.

<sup>76</sup> For biographical information on Bogue, see Bennett, *Memoirs of the Life of David Bogue*; ODNB; Morison, *Fathers and Founders of the LMS*, pp. 156-217; *Blackwell Dictionary of*

and was regularly licensed as a preacher of the gospel. It was expected that he would be presented to the living of Coldingham provided his father made a request to the patron on his behalf. As his father was a determined opponent of patronage, he refused to do this. Accordingly, he told his son, 'I have given you the best education and you must now make your way in the world. I would advise you to go to London, and I will provide you with the means.'<sup>77</sup> In 1771 he became a teacher, first in an academy at Edmonton in Hampstead, London and then at a boarding school in Chelsea run by William Smith, the Church of Scotland minister at Camberwell, whom he also assisted in his ministerial work. After six years as a teacher and assistant to Smith, he was ordained in 1777 as the minister of the Independent Church in Gosport. Reflecting the inter-denominational spirit of the Scots Presbytery in London, Henry Hunter, the clerk of the Presbytery and the minister of the London Wall congregation of the Church of Scotland both offered the ordination prayer and gave the charge when Bogue was ordained to the Congregational church in Gosport.<sup>78</sup>

From his settlement at Gosport, David Bogue, following Smith's example, began to educate students in his home. Twelve years later his teaching took on a more formal character when he received funding from George Welch, a wealthy London banker and an evangelical Independent, who was concerned at the growth of Unitarianism and wanted to increase the number of evangelical preachers.<sup>79</sup> Welch offered to support the Gosport Academy if Bogue would agree to gearing his curriculum towards preparing men for the conservative, itinerant ministry. The pair reached an agreement whereby Bogue developed a three-year programme and recruited three new ministerial students per year, and Welch paid him £10 per annum per student and an additional £25 for each student's room, board, and incidental expenses. Besides his labours as minister and tutor, Bogue along with his biographer, James Bennett, produced an important multi-volume history on nonconformity.<sup>80</sup>

In early August 1794, Bogue took the opportunity of freedom from teaching in the Gosport Academy, provided by the summer vacation, to go on a preaching tour. He, along with James Steven, from the Crown Court

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*Evangelical Biography, 1730-1860*, Vol. 1, p. 115; Hew Scott, *Fasti*, Vol. 7, pp. 494-495; C. Terpstra, 'David Bogue DD, 1750-1825: pioneer and missionary educator' (PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1959); R. Middleton, 'John Love in London, Part III: Ministry at Crispin Street and Artillery Street, Spitalfields', *Scottish Reformation Society Historical Journal*, Vol. 9 (2019), pp. 69-70, n. 26.

<sup>77</sup> Bennett, *Memoirs of David Bogue*, p. 18.

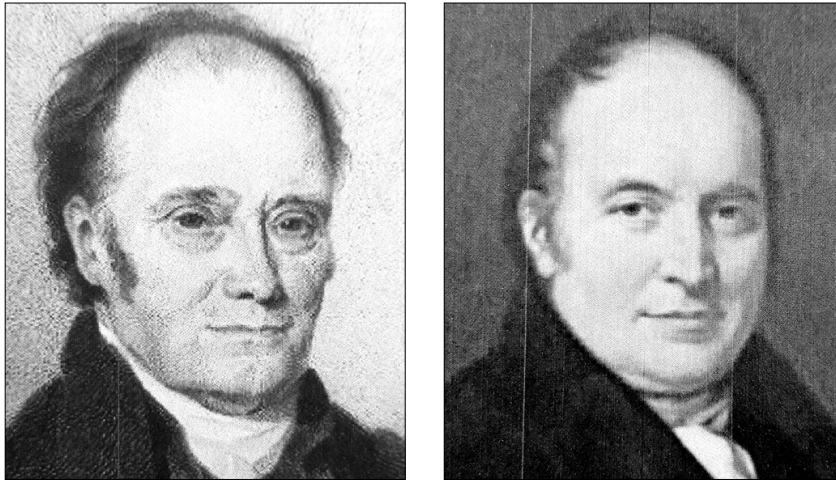
<sup>78</sup> Bennett, *Memoirs of David Bogue*, p. 88.

<sup>79</sup> For the contribution of George Welch to the Gosport Academy, see Noel Gibbard, 'David Bogue and the Gosport Academy', *Foundations*, No. 20 (Spring 1988), pp. 36-40; Christopher A. Daily, Gosport Academy (1777-1826) in *Dissenting Academies Online: Database and Encyclopedia*, Dr Williams Centre for Dissenting Studies – accessed 19th February 2019.

<sup>80</sup> David Bogue and James Bennett, *A History of Dissenters, 1689-1808* (4 vols., London, 1808-1812). For a recent analysis of these volumes and the purpose of the authors in their historical context, see Robert Striven, 'Dissent and Religious Liberty in David Bogue and James Bennett's *History of Dissenters*', in Andrew Atherstone and David Ceri Jones (eds.), *Making Evangelical History: Faith, Scholarship and the Evangelical Past* (London, 2019), pp. 63-80.



Church of Scotland congregation in London, went to Bristol for the purpose of preaching special sermons at Whitefield's Bristol Tabernacle. While they were there John Ryland (Jr.),<sup>81</sup> the minister of the Broadmead Baptist Church, received the first letter from William Carey after he and his colleague, the medical doctor John Thomas, had arrived in India as missionaries supported



*John Rylands (Jr.), President of the Bristol Baptist Academy (left) and Henry Overton Wills (right), Manager of Whitefield's Bristol Tabernacle*

by the Particular Baptist Society for the Propagation of the Gospel amongst the Heathen. Ryland was delighted with the content of the letter and invited Henry Overton Wills,<sup>82</sup> the manager of Whitefield's Bristol Tabernacle, and other friends to come to the Baptist Academy, of which he was the president, to share his joy by hearing Carey's letter read detailing the first account of their missionary work in India.<sup>83</sup> Wills readily agreed to go and asked Ryland if he could bring Bogue and Steven along with him. After hearing Carey's account, Bogue is said to have remarked, 'Why can't we have a missionary society too?'<sup>84</sup> On leaving Ryland at the Baptist Academy, Bogue, Steven, Wills, and

<sup>81</sup> John Ryland (Jr.) (1753-1825) was the son of John Collett Ryland (1723-1792) who was reported to have told William Carey, 'Young man, sit down, sit down. You're an enthusiast. When God pleases to convert the heathen, He'll do it without consulting you or me. Besides, there must first be another pentecostal gift of tongues.' S. Pearce Carey, *William Carey* (London, 1923), p. 50. (The accuracy of this was queried by his son). The younger Ryland was one of a group of ministers in the Northamptonshire Association who, through their study of the Bible and the writings of Jonathan Edwards, were beginning to cast off a High-Calvinist theology. Ryland was closely associated with Andrew Fuller in the formation of the Particular Baptist Missionary Society. He assisted his father in Northampton from 1771 to 1786 when he succeeded him. In 1793 he moved to Bristol, combining the Broadmead pastorate with the presidency of the Bristol Baptist Academy. For biographical details, see *Blackwell Dictionary of Evangelical Biography, 1730-1860*, Vol. 2, pp. 965-966; ODNB; Grant Gordon, 'The Call of John Ryland Jr to Bristol', *Baptist Quarterly*, Vol. 34:5 (January 1992), pp. 214-227.

<sup>82</sup> H. O. Wills was a British tobacco importer and the founder of the company that became known as W. D. & H. O. Wills. The company was one of the organisations that eventually merged to form the Imperial Tobacco Company.

<sup>83</sup> Ellis, *History of the LMS*, Vol. 1, p. 16; Richard Lovett, *History of the London Missionary Society* (2 vols., London 1899), Vol. 1, p. 5.

<sup>84</sup> Fletcher, 'The Fundamental Principle of the LMS - Part 3', p. 225.

John Hey<sup>85</sup> minister of the Independent church at Castle Green, Bristol, held a meeting in the parlour of Whitefield's Bristol tabernacle for prayer and consultation on the best way that they could arouse the public mind to the grievously neglected duty of attempting to send the gospel to the heathen.<sup>86</sup>

An immediate and direct result of this meeting at Bristol, and hearing Carey's letter read, was the preparation by David Bogue of a paper that was published in the *Evangelical Magazine* for September 1794 with the title, 'To Evangelical Dissenters who practice infant baptism'. This article has been described as 'one of the first and most important steps in the great and providential work of originating the London Missionary Society.'<sup>87</sup> This is how Bogue begins his address to Christian brethren dated 26th August 1794:

God has favoured us with the knowledge of the way of salvation through a crucified Redeemer. Our obligations to Him on this account are inexpressible; and, I trust, we are often prompted from the fulness of our hearts to ask, *What shall we render unto the Lord for all His benefits?* If in many things we are anxious to make a suitable return, there is one thing with respect to which, if weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, we shall be found wanting.

He then went on to point out what others were doing:

The labours of the Church of Rome have been far more abundant than those of all other sects whatever. Oh, that they had but conveyed Christianity pure to the blinded Pagans! The Church of England has a society of considerable standing, for the propagation of the Gospel. The Kirk of Scotland supports a similar institution. The Moravian Brethren have, if we consider their numbers and their substance, excelled in this respect the whole Christian world. Of late the Methodists have exerted themselves with a most commendable zeal. An association is just formed by the Baptists for this benevolent purpose; and their first missionaries have already entered on the work. We alone are idle. There is not a body of Christians in the country, except ourselves, but have put their hand to the plough. We alone (and it must be spoken to our shame) have not sent messengers to the Heathen to proclaim the riches of redeeming love. It is surely full time that we had begun. We are able. Our number is great. The wealth of many thousands of individuals is considerable. I am confident that very many among us are willing, nay desirous, to see such a work set on foot, and will contribute liberally of their substance for its support. Nothing is wanting but for some persons to stand forward, and to begin.

Bogue then laid out his plan:

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<sup>85</sup> John Hey (1734-1815) was a student at the Countess of Huntingdon's college at Trevecca. As a student he had preached in the Countess's Chapel at Birdport Street in Worcester. The chapel had been opened in 1773 by Walter Shirley and Matthew Wilks. After three short pastorates Hey became the minister of the Independent church at Castle Street in Bristol in 1789. He emigrated to America in 1806 to become the pastor of an Independent church on South Fourth Street, Philadelphia. For details, see *A Biographical Dictionary of Living Authors of Great Britain and Ireland* (London, 1816), p. 155; William Urwick, *Nonconformity in Worcester* (London and Worcester, 1897), p. 157; Geoffrey F. Nuttall, 'The Students of Trevecca College, 1768-1791', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, Session 1967, Part II (1968), p. 273.

<sup>86</sup> Lovett, *History of the LMS*, Vol. 1, p. 5. See also p. 408 for a letter from Wills' grandson to Lovett giving details of the meeting.

<sup>87</sup> Boorman, 'The Origins and Early Years of the London Missionary Society – 1', p. 15.

We have the greatest encouragement, Brethren, to engage in this work of love. The sacred Scripture is full of promises, that the knowledge of Christ shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the channel of the sea; and every promise is a call and a motive to enter on the service without delay. It is the cause of God, and will prevail. Should we even fail in the attempt, we shall not lose our labour; for though the heathen should not be gathered by our means, ‘yet we shall be glorious in the eyes of our God.’ But we have no reason to expect such an issue. For all who are engaged have met with such success, as to animate others to unite their vigorous endeavours. In no one place have pious and persevering missionaries laboured in vain. Some perhaps may ask, what can we do? We are willing to assist; but how can our assistance avail? Need I say, Brethren, that our duty is to use the means of divine appointment? In every age of the Church, the propagation of the Gospel has been by the preaching of the ministers of Jesus Christ. By the same method are we to propagate the Gospel now. It is highly probable that some zealous men would present themselves, who are well qualified to go immediately on a mission among the heathen. But in general, they will require some previous instruction; and therefore, it will be necessary to found a Seminary for training up persons for the work. An able and eminently pious minister in a central situation must be sought for to superintend it. And as the education of a missionary must be in many respects widely different from that of those who preach in Christian countries, it may be expected that every man of talents will unite his endeavours to render the plan of instruction as well adapted to answer the end in view, and in every respect as complete as possible. For the support of the seminary, and of the missionaries, funds must be provided.<sup>88</sup>

The importance of Bogue’s appeal is that it was the first publication that stood in immediate connection with the eventual formation of the LMS. It fell upon a soil that had been prepared for its reception from several sources, a major one being the establishment of the journal in which the address was published – the *Evangelical Magazine*.<sup>89</sup> Bogue was calling, as the title of his article suggested, for a paedobaptist and nonconformist society to match the Baptist effort; he was not at this stage calling for a pan-evangelical effort as envisaged by Melville Horne.

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<sup>88</sup> The above citations are excerpted from the *Evangelical Magazine*, Vol. 2 (1794), pp. 378-380. Bogue’s article is reprinted in full in *Sermons preached in London at the formation on the Missionary Society, September 22, 23, 24, 1795 to which are added Memorials* (London, 1795), pp. iii-vi, and in Lovett, *History of the LMS*, Vol. 1, pp. 6-10.

<sup>89</sup> A group of men, then associated with the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Glasgow, who were subsequently disciplined for supporting the Glasgow Missionary Society have detailed how the *Evangelical Magazine* and particularly David Bogue’s letter stimulated their interest in missionary endeavour. They write: ‘The greater part of our number had been regular readers, and were ardent admirers of the *Evangelical Magazine*: it is a fact generally known, that the present missionary societies, are, under providence, in a great measure indebted for their existence to a letter which appeared in that pious work. The avidity with which we had been accustomed to peruse its contents, prevented such a luminous idea from escaping our observation. Our attention having been thus engaged, it was afterwards gradually and progressively fixed, by the accumulated mass of information, relating to this object, which from time to time was laid before the public, through the channel of this truly interesting and respectable publication.’ *An Adherence to the Missionary Society of Glasgow Defended, at the expense of being cut off from the Reformed Presbytery* (Glasgow, 1798), p. 47.

Just two months after Bogue's article was published, the review of Horne's book by Thomas Haweis, the Anglican clergyman and chaplain to the Countess of Huntingdon, appeared in the November 1794 issue of the *Evangelical Magazine*. Haweis warmly supported Horne's contention that differences in church polity or the points of dispute between Calvinists and Arminians need not prevent combined activity on the part of Christians in the cause of missions, and pleaded for the formation of a missionary society on such a basis. He called upon the 'really faithful and zealous' to 'look out for men who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, and begin with one corps of missionaries to the heathen in the South Seas...Could such a society be formed upon Mr. Horne's large scale, below which little or no good can be expected, we have the pleasure to inform the public that one gentleman has pledged himself for £100, and that we have £500 more engaged from another respectable minister (this was Haweis himself), for the equipment of the first six persons who shall be willing to devote themselves, and be approved by such society for a mission to the South Sea Islands.'<sup>90</sup> Horne's book was clearly exerting a considerable influence on the thinking of these ministers, not only in stimulating them to missionary zeal, but also in convincing them that Evangelicals in the different home churches ought to combine in this great enterprise and lay aside differences of ecclesiastical polity, and also to some extent even of doctrine, in order to establish a pan-evangelical missionary society.

We can readily understand how some historians view the prayer meeting that followed Bogue's meeting with John Ryland to hear William Carey's first letter home being read as being 'the cradle of the Missionary Society.'<sup>91</sup> It was this prayer meeting that then led to Bogue's address in the September 1794 issue of the *Evangelical Magazine*. However, Roger Martin is surely correct when he writes: 'It is true, of course, that David Bogue had called for a rather denominational response to the challenge of the Baptist Missionary Society in his September 1794 *Evangelical Magazine* article. But Bogue was neither present at the earliest of the London Missionary Society's founding meetings in the spring of 1794, nor was his article the inspirational force that some historians have made it out to be. Indeed, the original founding fathers, several months before Bogue had joined their ranks, had been inspired by Melville Horne's *Letters on Missions* which they had discussed together at these early meetings. As we have seen, Horne, unlike Bogue, called for a missionary response that would include Arminians as well as Calvinists, Churchmen as well as Dissenters, and, by implication, Baptists as well as paedobaptists. It was Horne's pamphlet and not Bogue's article, it must again be stressed, that was read first by the founding fathers, and it was Horne's vision of a mission embodying all denominations and theological persuasions, not Bogue's call for a mission sponsored solely by paedobaptists and Dissenters, that was the stimulus in leading these men to found the London Missionary Society in 1795.'<sup>92</sup>

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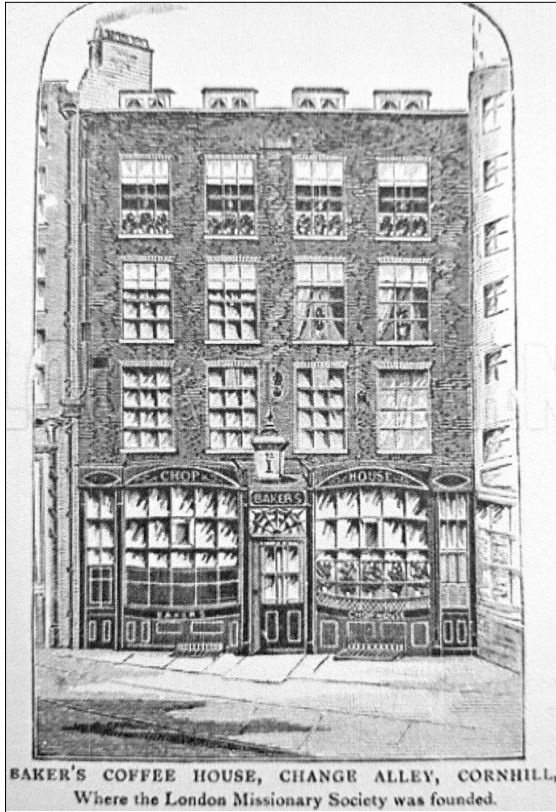
<sup>90</sup> *Evangelical Magazine*, Vol. 2 (1794), p. 478. See also Arthur Skevington Wood, *Thomas Haweis*, pp. 191-193.

<sup>91</sup> Lovett, *History of the LMS*, Vol. 1, p. 5.

<sup>92</sup> Martin, *Evangelicals United*, p. 46.

### (c) Baker's Coffee House meetings

According to John Townsend, the minister of the Independent church in Bermondsey, 'the Dissenting ministers in London and its vicinity were at this period in the habit of meeting at Baker's Coffee House, in Change Alley, Cornhill for an hour or two every



*Baker's Coffee House where the first meeting was held that led to the formation of the LMS.*

Tuesday afternoon, for general conversation on any public question when as many as twenty were frequently present, and sometimes a much larger number.<sup>93</sup> A communication was drawn up by John Eyre, George Burder, and John Love and sent to a number of ministers in the London area to meet at Baker's Coffee House on Tuesday 4th November 1794. This gathering, at which eight ministers were present, was the first concerted meeting that would eventually lead to the formation ten months later of the LMS.<sup>94</sup> David Bogue was in London on business and went to the usual gathering of London ministers at the Coffee House. Those present in addition to Bogue were John Eyre, John Love, James Steven, Matthew Wilks, John Townsend, Joseph Brooksbank,<sup>95</sup> and John Reynolds.<sup>96</sup>

The earliest account of the formation of the LMS describes the gathering in these terms: 'It was a small, but glowing and harmonious, circle of ministers of various connexions and denominations. From that time there appeared a

<sup>93</sup> Ellis, *History of the LMS*, Vol. 1, p. 17 footnote\* which cites a manuscript by Townsend. Richard Lovett describes the regular meetings as being 'for chat and the interchange of news'; Lovett, *History of the LMS*, Vol. 1, p. 13.

<sup>94</sup> Fletcher, 'The Fundamental Principle of the LMS - Part 3', p. 222. John Morison asserts that it was John Eyre and Matthew Wilks who called the Coffee House meeting. Morison, *Fathers and Founders of the LMS*, p. 450.

<sup>95</sup> Joseph Brooksbank (1762-1825) was the pastor for forty years of the Independent church meeting at Haberdashers' Hall; there is a brief account of his life in Morison, *Fathers and Founders of the LMS*, pp. 495-499. There is a lengthy account of the Haberdashers' Hall Independent congregation in Walter Wilson, *The History and Antiquities of the Dissenting Churches and Meeting Houses in London, Westminster and Southwark* (4 vols., London, 1808-1810), Vol. 3, pp. 148-184. The puritan Theophilus Gale was one of his predecessors in the pastorate.

<sup>96</sup> John Reynolds (1739-1803), who kept a diary account of the meeting at Baker's Coffee House, was the minister of Camomile Street Independent church. Though he was involved in the early meetings that led to the formation of the LMS and was a signatory of several key documents, there is no account of his life in Morison's *Fathers and Founders of the LMS*. There is, however, a sketch in Wilson, *The History and Antiquities of the Dissenting Churches*, Vol. 1, pp. 390-392. Reynolds was buried in Bunhill Fields.

gradual increase of cordial friends to the perishing heathen, though many respectable characters, whose early patronage of this cause was desired, yielded to cautious hesitation and some were perhaps disposed to attach presumption to the undertaking.<sup>97</sup>

The following afternoon, Wednesday 5th November 1794, Matthew Wilks called on John Reynolds to ask him to meet some ministers again at Baker's Coffee House. This he did, noting their names in his diary as being all those who were at the previous day's meeting except Joseph Brooksbank and John Townsend, but with the addition of three others: George Jerment of Bow Lane, Cheapside,<sup>98</sup> Herbert Mends of Plymouth,<sup>99</sup> and a stranger from Scotland. Reynolds wrote in his diary:

The object of the meeting was to form a society for the preaching of the Gospel among the heathen nations. To qualify and appoint missionaries for that important end etc. Agreed nem con.<sup>100</sup>

Those present at the 4th November 1794 Baker's Coffee House meeting decided to invite other ministers to their gatherings and, as there would be need for a larger room, they agreed to meet at the Castle and Falcon, in Aldersgate Street. That inn was chosen most probably not only due to its central location but, as we have noted, because it was kept at that time by a man who attended both Matthew Wilks' church and the chapel of the Countess of Huntingdon at Spa Fields.

#### **(d) John Love's letter to ministers in London**

The first meeting of which any record is extant took place on 8th January 1795. Eight ministers were present, including John Eyre, who was in the chair, Matthew Wilks, James Steven, and John Love. The first hour was spent in prayer and in the reading of those parts of Scripture which bear directly upon the conversion of the heathen, and then a conference was held bearing especially upon missionary affairs. At this meeting early in 1795, John Love was appointed to write a circular letter to ministers in the London area and to enclose with it an address which was printed in the *Evangelical Magazine* for January 1795. Love's letter read as follows:

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<sup>97</sup> *Sermons preached in London at the formation on the Missionary Society, September 1795 to which are added Memorials*, pp. vi-vii.

<sup>98</sup> George Jerment (1759-1819) was the minister of the Antiburgher Secession congregation meeting at Great St Thomas Apostle's, Bow Lane, Cheapside, which had been built originally for Richard Baxter in 1676. He ministered to the congregation for thirty-seven years. In 1808 the congregation moved to a chapel on Oxendon Street. The year after Jerment's death the congregation became part of the United Secession Church with the merger of the main branches of the Burgher and Antiburgher Secession Churches in 1820. For biographical details, see Morison, *Fathers and Founders of the LMS*, pp. 506-512; William Mackelvie, *Annals and Statistics of the United Presbyterian Church* (Edinburgh, 1873), pp. 494-495.

<sup>99</sup> Herbert Mends (1755-1819) was the pastor of the Independent church at Batter Street, Plymouth. He was the co-pastor of the congregation with his father Christopher Mends from 1782-1799 and then the sole pastor until his death twenty years later. Morison describes him as a 'truly amiable and devoted man of God'. He was one of the first directors of the LMS and 'evinced a lively attachment to its catholic principles to the hour of his death.' For biographical details, see Morison, *Fathers and Founders of the LMS*, pp. 499-506.

<sup>100</sup> John Reynolds' Diary, typescript extracts covering founding of LMS, cited in Fletcher, 'The Fundamental Principle of the LMS – Part 3', p. 226.

Rev. Sir

By appointment of several ministers who have repeatedly met together, with a serious design of forwarding the great object which the prefixed Address recommends, I take the liberty to acquaint you, that another meeting for the same purpose is proposed to be held on Thursday 15th inst. at 11 o'clock precisely. The place of meeting is the Castle and Falcon Inn, Aldersgate Street. It is also intended that the hour immediately before, viz. from 10 to 11, shall be employed in prayer at the same place.

We realise the cry of misery and destruction in destroying lands where millions are perishing in the blood, gall and wormwood, of a Christ-less state, and are hastening to eternity in guilt, pollution and darkness. We listen, with solemn regard, to the voice of Infinite Grace, which promises and commands, the publication of the everlasting Gospel, to every creature under heaven, and we earnestly desire to use some strong exertions, that if it pleases our God, we may be, in some degree, instrumental to fulfil his merciful purposes respecting heathen countries.

Trusting that your sentiments of zeal and compassion are congenial with ours, we solicit, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, your kind co-operation by your counsel, influence and prayers, and request, that you will favour us with your presence at the time of prayer and consultation above mentioned.

I am, Rev. Sir, with great respect, your most humble Servant, in Gospel bonds  
John Love<sup>101</sup>

The Address that accompanied Love's letter was signed by nine ministers including Eyre, Wilks, Waugh, Steven, Brooksbank, Reynolds, and John Love.<sup>102</sup> Whilst it is possible that the address was a joint production, it seems most probable that it was written entirely by Love and approved by the other signatories. Roger Martin, in identifying the author as John Love, writes, 'Possibly as a corrective to David Bogue's call for a paedobaptist and nonconformist missionary society, Love echoed Melville Horne in 1795 when he hoped "that not only Evangelical *Dissenters* and *Methodists* will be found generally disposed to unite in instituting a Society...but that many *Members of the Established Church*, of evangelical sentiments, and of lively zeal for the cause of Christ, will also favour us with their kind co-operation".'<sup>103</sup> In order to give an impression of John Love's zeal and the force of his writing we cite a number of paragraphs from this address:

The address which appeared in the *Evangelical Magazine* of last September,<sup>104</sup> on the subject of sending missionaries to preach the Gospel among Pagan nations, seems to have awakened considerable attention. Many acknowledge the desirableness of the object; some lament, with tears, its having been so long neglected, and numbers only wait with anxiety for an opportunity of exerting themselves in so glorious a cause.

<sup>101</sup> *Sermons preached in London at the formation on the Missionary Society, September 1795 to which are added Memorials*, p. x.

<sup>102</sup> The printed versions of the address do not indicate the names of the nine signatories. These are detailed in Lovett, *History of the LMS*, Vol. 1, p. 17.

<sup>103</sup> Martin, *Evangelicals United*, p. 47.

<sup>104</sup> This is a reference to David Bogue's article, 'To Evangelical Dissenters who practice infant baptism'.

That something may be done with *effect*, it is hoped that not only Evangelical *Dissenters* and *Methodists* will be found generally disposed to unite in instituting a Society for this express purpose, but that many *Members of the Established Church*, of evangelical sentiments, and of lively zeal for the cause of Christ, will also favour us with their kind co-operation. Indeed, the increase of union and friendly intercourse among Christians of different denominations at home is one of the happy effects which will immediately flow from an institution of this nature.

In order to the organization of such a society, it has been proposed that a General Meeting of Ministers should be held in London early in the ensuing summer. In the meanwhile, that such a meeting may be brought forward with advantage, it is earnestly desired that ministers and others, who favour the design, would immediately begin to exert themselves in their particular spheres.

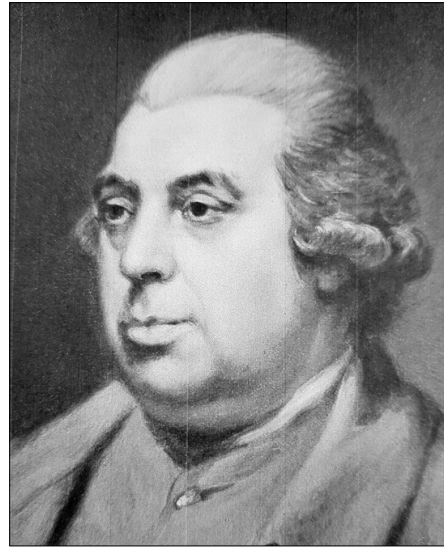
It may be asked, What can be done? In answer to this proper inquiry, the following *hints* are humbly suggested: Let each individual, who is affectionately zealous in the cause, take every proper opportunity by conversation and by letter, to endeavour to communicate the same sacred fire to others. Let him try to impress his friends, not only with the general importance of this business, but with the idea of its being practicable and expedient, in concurrence with others, to do something in it *now*. And where the force of argument seems to take effect, let him farther endeavour to persuade his friends to come forward with pecuniary support. By all the methods which a prudent and spirited zeal can suggest, let him make up as large a list, as possible, of respectable names and subscriptions. Proceeding in this manner, it is impossible to say what extensive success may soon follow the exertions even of a few individuals. To such as shall subscribe, it may not be amiss to hint the impropriety of diminishing their former liberality to other religious institutions, in order to extend it to this new undertaking. The Lord does not approve of ‘Robbery for burnt offering.’ What is given, should either be saved from some article of unnecessary expenditure, or taken from what would otherwise be laid up in store.

By such efforts as these, a Christian may engage the support of his friends in behalf of this important enterprise; but let it never be forgotten, that it belongeth to ‘Him who hath the key of David, who openeth and no man shutteth to open a great and effectual door’ for the propagation of his Gospel. To Him, therefore, let every eye be directed. The great mean of obtaining his blessing on our benevolent exertions, is *prayer*. Perhaps God’s putting it in our hearts to engage in this excellent design, is an answer to the prayers of many of his people, for a series of ages. Let us then take encouragement to stir up ourselves, and others in our several connexions, to extraordinary prayer, for the pouring out of the Spirit from on high, to direct and prosper this great undertaking! For this purpose, the laudable example of our brethren in Warwickshire is worthy of general notice; who have set apart the first Monday of every month, at seven o’clock in the evening, as a season of *united prayer*, for the success of such attempts to spread the Gospel through the world. ‘Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence; give him no rest till he establish and make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.’

Already has Divine Providence begun to smile on this infant design. In the *Evangelical Magazine* for November, one gentleman promises £100 to the



Society as soon as it is established; and £500 more are promised by another gentleman for the equipment of the first six missionaries to the South Sea islands. The warmest gratitude is due to these two generous friends of the Christian interest in heathen lands, and their animating example is worthy of being held up to general imitation. Though a Thornton<sup>105</sup> is gone, we rejoice to think, that the lively efficient zeal of that great Christian philanthropist is not extinct, but warms the breasts of others, and prompts them to the same noble and strenuous exertions...What remains then, but that, laying aside all excuses we put our hand to the work with vigour and speed. Perhaps, some wish to wait till they see their seniors go before them; but this is a false modesty. Procrastination argues a torpid indifference. To be '*forward* to every good work' ranks high both as a ministerial and Christian virtue. A few successive moments will terminate our present life; and with it, all opportunities of 'serving the will of God in our generation,' or 'seeking the profit of many, that they may be saved.' Every argument that recommends the object at all tends also to stimulate to instant exertion. The glory of God, the constraining influence of redeeming love – the deplorable condition of countless millions, who never heard of the great salvation, and 'are ready to perish for lack of knowledge' – our awful responsibility for the use we make of the privileges and talents entrusted to us – and finally, the exalted honour and felicity awaiting those who 'shall have turned many to righteousness' – are considerations which should surely prove powerful incentives to speed and diligence in this noble design...Yet a little while, and the latter-day glory shall dawn and shine forth with a reviving splendour, when, according to the predictions of the infallible



*John Thornton, merchant  
and philanthropist.*

<sup>105</sup> This is a reference to John Thornton (1720-1790) who was said to be the richest business man in England. He inherited a fortune of £100,000 (£17.5 million in 2019 terms) from his father, who was a director of the Bank of England. Thornton invested the money in trade and was frugal in his personal expenditure which enabled him to give away between £2,000 and £3,000 a year (between £350,000 and £525,000 in 2019 terms). He became known as a munificent supporter of the first generation of Evangelicals. He circulated immense quantities of Bibles and religious books in all parts of the world, and printed many at his own expense. He bought the right of patronage on several livings in the Church of England in order to appoint deserving clergymen. When John Newton (1725–1807) settled at Olney, Thornton allowed him £200 (£35,000 in 2019 terms) a year to be spent in hospitality, and promised as much more as might be needed. When Cowper took refuge with Newton during his mental illness in 1773–4, Thornton doubled this annuity. Thornton in 1779 presented Newton to the rectory of St Mary Woolnoth, in London. He was a constant friend to Cowper, who describes him in the poem on 'Charity,' and wrote some lines upon his death. His contribution to the advancement of early evangelical patronage and benevolence was unsurpassed and paved the way for the accomplishments of William Wilberforce and Charles Simeon. For biographical details, see M. Seeley, *The Later Evangelical Fathers* (London, 1879), pp. 20-38; Stephen Tomkins, *The Clapham Sect* (Oxford, 2010), pp. 16-27; *Blackwell Dictionary of Evangelical Biography, 1730-1860*, Vol. 2, pp. 1103-1104; and ODNB.

word, ‘The knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea; His name shall endure for ever: His name shall be continued as long as the sun: Men shall be blessed in him; and all nations shall call him blessed.’ Amen!<sup>106</sup>

### (e) John Love appointed secretary of the Organising Committee

The next meeting of ministers was a week later, on 15th January 1795 at the Castle and Falcon on Aldersgate Street; fifteen were present and Alexander Waugh in the chair. After the Baker’s Coffee House meetings, this was the next major gathering that would lead to the formation of the LMS. At this meeting John Love was appointed the secretary of a provisional organising committee. It is an indication of the standing that he had amongst his both his brethren and the leaders of evangelicalism in London that of the very many eminent ministers and lay-men in the capital John Love was chosen for this crucial role. We quote the minute in full:

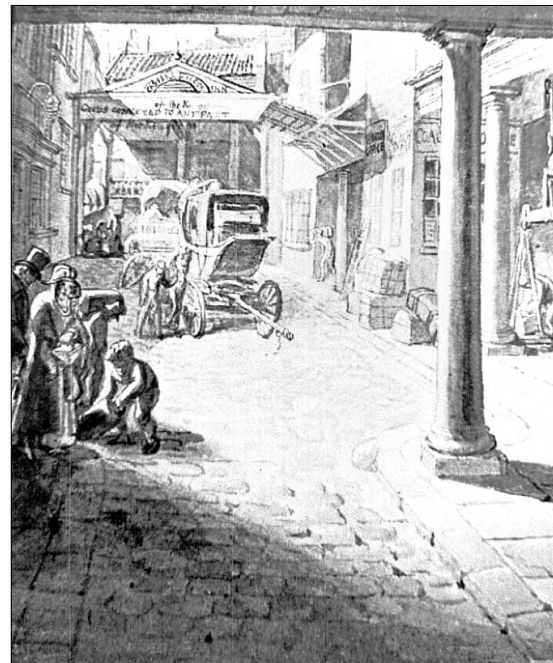
Some time was employed in prayer, in which Messrs. Waugh, Knight, Wilks, Rooker, Cockin, and Eyre engaged. The minutes of last meeting were read and confirmed. A short account was given to the Ministers present for the first time of the progress of this design of sending missionaries to the heathen.

It was moved, seconded, and unanimously resolved, that Ministers who favour this design, and desire to exert themselves in promoting it by bringing forward a general meeting of Ministers and others for the purpose of organizing a Society to act efficiently in the affair, do signify the same by putting down their names in a book to be provided for the purpose.

It was resolved that the Rev. Mr. Eyre be appointed Treasurer, and the Rev. Mr. Love Secretary of this meeting. It was resolved that a Committee be appointed for the purpose of corresponding with Ministers in the country: and that the following gentlemen be of that Committee, viz. Messrs. Waugh, Wilks, Eyre, Smith, Steven, Brooksbank, Platt, Love.

It was resolved that next meeting of this Society be on the first Tuesday of February, at half-past ten, and thence forward once a fortnight.<sup>107</sup>

On 27th January 1795 the Committee of Correspondence issued the first circular letter sent out in connection with the Society to ‘pious clergyman



*The Castle and Falcon, the hotel where many of the early LMS meetings were held.*

<sup>106</sup> The complete address is printed in the *Evangelical Magazine*, Vol. 3 (1795), pp. 11-15. It is also reprinted in *Sermons preached in London at the formation on the Missionary Society, September 1795 to which are added Memorials*, pp. vii-x.

<sup>107</sup> Cited in Lovett, *History of the LMS*, Vol. 1, pp. 14-15.

and ministers throughout the empire.’ Though signed by nine of the committee of whom John Love was one, it again seems most probable that he was the main author. The letter, which was widely disseminated, recounted what had been already done and outlined the organising committee’s plans. The opening paragraph referred to the ‘recent shaking of the nations.’ This was a reference to the French Revolution and the wars that were in progress on the European continent. James Calder has described the social and political situation in the period in which the LMS was formed, ‘The threat of invasion, social turmoil, financial panic, bad harvests, rising prices, domestic dangers, foreign wars, crippling poverty, none of these formidable obstacles prevented the start and continuance of the Society’s work. The social chaos of the early years was appalling. Scotland shared in it. In Edinburgh, one in eight of the people had no resource but to live on charity. Britain stood alone against a victorious France. The Army and Navy seethed with discontent. The year 1797 was Britain’s darkest hour until 1940.’<sup>108</sup>

The substance of this first circular letter was as follows:

Reverend and Dear Sir

Amidst the desolating strife of mortals, God has often ‘appeared in his glory’ to extend the kingdom of his dear Son. This remark in the present era is suited to afford peculiar consolation; and the recent ‘shaking of the nations’ has led not a few pious minds to anticipate those glorious days, when ‘the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the whole earth’.

Many Christians, both clergy and laity, have long pitied the deplorable blindness of heathen countries, and have wished to do more than commiserate the unnumbered millions of their fellow men, who are ‘perishing for lack of knowledge’. Some have written with considerable energy, on the nature and expediency of missions to those remote inhabitants of the earth, and our Baptist brethren have sent two persons to the East Indies, where they meet with flattering encouragement.

Several meetings have lately been held in London, by evangelical ministers of various denominations, who cordially unite in this interesting subject. On Thursday, the 15th of this month, a respectable body of ministers met at the Castle and Falcon Inn, Aldersgate-street, and appointed a committee of correspondence, for the purpose of collecting the sentiments of their reverend brethren in the country relative to this affair.

We, the undersigned, being chosen to act as the said committee, are induced to make this application to you, by the sentiments we entertain of your piety, zeal, prudence, and compassion for perishing souls. We hope that your personal experience of the bitterness of a sinful state, and of the love, power, and riches of Jesus the Redeemer, and your official employments in labouring to save immortal souls, will open your heart to the enlarged concern for millions ready to perish in ‘the dark places of the earth’ and prepare you to echo to the sounding of the bowels of Christian compassion towards them from this favoured, though unworthy, country...The object before us is of such magnitude as to require the combined wisdom and exertions of many gospel ministers and societies.

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<sup>108</sup> Calder, *Scotland’s March Past: The Share of the Scottish Churches in the London Missionary Society*, p. 5.

It is therefore in contemplation to bring forward, early in the ensuing summer, a general meeting of ministers and lay-brethren, delegated from all parts of the country at London, or some other central situation. Their business, when convened, will be to plan and organize a society for carrying these great designs into immediate effect...We request your immediate answer, intimating your consent to engage in this service, together with your opinion what is likely to be effected in your neighbourhood, and will be ready on our part, to forward to you every information, and to answer any questions you or your brethren may propose. The Warwickshire association have unanimously resolved to concur in the design, and have suggested the expediency of a short, spirited address, to be sent to ministers to be distributed gratis among their friends.

Hoping that the Lord will incline and direct you to do his will in this business, and wishing that his truth and work may prosper in your part of the country, and particularly under your ministerial labours.

P.S. Your answer may be addressed to the Rev. John Love, Queen's Row, Hoxton. We wish to unite with approved evangelical ministers, respectable in their moral conduct, and with all sects of every denomination.<sup>109</sup>

The circular letter resulted in an outburst of feeling that showed how rapidly the cause of missions was gaining ground in public estimation. John Love received the most gratifying testimonials to the interest that the circular had excited on behalf of the great plan of evangelisation that the committee of correspondence were nurturing to maturity, and John Morison records a number of these testimonies sent in to John Love. One of them read: 'Immediately on hearing the good news, I called the members of our little church together, to pray for a blessing on it. All rejoiced in the prospect of seeing many come from the east and west, and north and south, to sit down in the kingdom of their common Father; and all signified their readiness to put their mite into your treasury. If it be but little, I am sure you will have their hearts, and, I hope God's blessing with it.'<sup>110</sup>

The first mention of the Missionary Society in John Love's printed letters is dated 10th February 1795, and though the recipient's name has been removed, it was most probable sent to David Bogue,<sup>111</sup> a friend of John

<sup>109</sup> The letter is printed in full in Morison, *Fathers and Founders of the LMS*, pp. xvi-xvii.

<sup>110</sup> Morison, *Fathers and Founders of the LMS*, p. xviii. There were communications of support encouraging the brethren in their noble exertions from David Bogue; George Burder; Thomas Haweis; Herbert Mends of Plymouth; Philip Oliver of Chester; Samuel Greathead of Newport Pagnell; Thomas Grove of Walsall; Samuel Lavington of Bideford; James Boden of Hanley; and Edward Parsons of Leeds. Several of these men would become Fathers and Founders of the LMS. In addition, there were responses from ministerial associations assuring the committee of their support: George Lambert of Hull; Richard Alliot of Nottingham, on behalf of the associated churches of Nottingham and Derby; James Small of Axminster, on behalf of the Western Association; along with the associations of Kent, Worcestershire, Northamptonshire; and the Synod of the Burgher Seceders. See Ellis, *History of the LMS*, Vol. 1, p. 19 footnote\*.

<sup>111</sup> Several statements in the letter indicate David Bogue as the recipient. It was written to a person zealous for missions and one familiar both with the London Scots Presbytery and Love's troubles in his congregation – his 'martyrdom of more than seven years'. In the second paragraph Love states that whilst, as secretary of the organising committee, information regarding the proposed meeting in London has been widely circulated, he adds, 'We have left H—, and the adjacent parts of other counties, as your diocese of inquiry

Love from his attendance at the London Presbytery. Bogue was a zealous supporter of missions and had not been present at the London meetings on January 8th and 15th.

London, February 10th, 1795.

Rev, and dear Sir, I sit down to write you chiefly on the business of attempting to send the gospel to the heathen, a business which I can hardly think of without a degree of humiliation and shame; for, though it is by no means new to my thoughts, which have long been accustomed through grace to travel at large through the dark and remote places of the earth with some affectionate breathing towards the mighty God of salvation in their behalf, yet, when I come near to the subject, I cannot help being struck with a sense of my vast distance from the exalted strength of zeal, faith, courage, and compassion, required in those who would, in the remotest manner, put their hands to so sublime a work.

A considerable body of ministers are now brought into the train of meeting once a fortnight for prayer and consultation, and discover a spirit of harmony and serious zeal which you would be pleased to witness. A committee, likewise, has been appointed, and has written to about fifty ministers in all parts of the country; from several of whom very auspicious answers have been received, though the greater part have not yet replied to our letters. Here the affair seems to be brought to a trial; for further progress must greatly depend on the willingness and zeal which breathe over the country, and on the information and opinion transmitted by corresponding brethren. We have left H—, and the adjacent parts of other counties, as your diocese of inquiry and particular exertion.

But I return to the general view of this affair. And, though it may seem querulous and somewhat gloomy, yet I wish I could complain to some purpose of the awful withdrawing of that majestic energy of the gospel at home, which would give life and impulse to the attempt of darting beams of saving light into the darkest habitations throughout this evil world. As to the fact, that the genuine and glorious power which belongs to Divine ordinances is, to an alarming degree, withdrawn, I cannot entertain the smallest doubt. How then shall we think of sending to the utmost parts of the earth a gospel which has lost its power at home? How shall we attack the fortress of hell in unknown regions, when we find them impenetrable to our efforts in the midst of all the advantages which such a country as this affords? I know what triumphs of the gospel are talked of in this country; but I must contend, that mere assemblies of carnal, trifling, unawakened, flighty religious professors, however great their numbers and self-confidence, are no proof at all that the arm of the Lord is revealed among us. And, so far as my circle of observation extends – and I have for years investigated this subject with some degree of diligence, candour, and patience – I must testify that I see nothing almost that corresponds to my ideas of a flourishing state of true religion. I feel myself, and I see others preaching and hearing as if our subjects were idle tales, and as if there were no God of power among us. Where, where is the Lord God of Moses and Elijah – of Peter and John, of Paul and Barnabas – of the ever-glorious God-man,

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and particular exertion.’ The ‘H’ is probably a reference to Hampshire, the county in which Bogue’s Gosport congregation was situated. Love also asks for his affectionate respects to be passed on to Mrs. B.

the man Christ Jesus! Is it not apparent that the infinite solemnity, grandeur, sweetness, and certainty of the word of God are hid from many of the present race of professors? And, which most of all is to be lamented, they seem to have determined the point that nothing higher can be reasonably looked for, to attend the gospel revelation, than is included in their lethargic form or careless routine. ‘Thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.’

After a kind of martyrdom of more than seven years I need not to be informed, with what malignant rage hints of this sort are likely to be repulsed among the ordinary crowd of gospel talkers. Blessed be God! the vengeance of London professors is to me less and less formidable. But is it my aim to check the vigour of exertion at home or in distant countries? God forbid! Jehovah lives: Jesus lives: and his fountain of life, shut up for a time by the hypocrisy of men, is ready to burst forth upon the cry of contrite, believing hearts, to disperse its joyful streams in a thousand directions, all over this miserable world. Let us then move forward, as long as there remains a single step practicable. But let our advances be, as the matter requires, with deep humiliation; with weeping and with supplications; with heart-melting and travailing in birth, like Paul, or like David Brainerd; with solemn submission to the infinite sovereignty and justice of the Most High, and with that faith which against hope believes in hope, while it takes firm hold of Him who quickeneth the dead, and calleth the things which be not as though they were, and who hath sworn in his holiness, that he will not lie unto David. Perhaps the gospel standard must be lifted up, amidst the remotest armies of the aliens, and in the face of the blackest clouds of struggling fiends, that from thence the triumphant power of divine truth may rebound on backsliding churches at home. With affectionate respects to Mrs. B—, and wishing that grace and peace maybe multiplied to your family and congregation, I am, J. L.<sup>112</sup>

The zeal of the corresponding committee is further seen in their desire to ensure that everyone who attended the fortnightly meetings was fully committed to their pan-evangelical vision of world evangelisation and of their determination to form a missionary society in order to its achievement. The minute of a meeting, held on 17th February 1795, a little over a fortnight after John Love had sent out their first circular, contains a form of subscription for ministers to subscribe if they wished to attend the fortnightly meetings. The importance that the committee attached to the document is seen in the text being attached to the fly-leaf of the old minute-book. It commits those who sign the document to use their best endeavours to form a missionary society and was signed by thirty-four ministers; the second name on the list is that of John Love.<sup>113</sup> The form of subscription reads as follows:

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<sup>112</sup> *Letters of John Love*, pp. 141-144. The letter is interesting as it details Love’s rather sombre assessment of the prevailing state of evangelical religion in London in the mid-1790s, his optimism for the future, and his hope that foreign mission activity may be a means of reviving the churches at home.

<sup>113</sup> The last six names are on the reverse of the page and seem to have been added later. At an early date it appears that the adding of signatures in order to attend the meetings ceased. The signatories include James Steven, Alexander Waugh, and Alexander Easton, colleagues of John Love on the London Scots Presbytery; John Eyre and Thomas Haweis who would become leaders of the LMS; William Roby of Manchester; Matthew Wilks of Whitefield’s Tabernacle; Robert Simpson of Hoxton Academy; and Captain Jonathan Scott. It is to

We whose names are here subscribed, declare our earnest desire to exert ourselves for promoting the great work of introducing the Gospel and its ordinances to heathen and other unenlightened countries, and unite together, purposing to use our best endeavours, that we may bring forward the formation of an extensive and regularly organized society, to consist of evangelical ministers and lay brethren of all denominations, the object of which society shall be to concert and pursue the most effectual measures for accomplishing this important and glorious design.<sup>114</sup>

#### (f) George Burder's appeal

The committee's zeal was gathering momentum, and in April 1795 they circulated throughout the country an appeal written by George Burder of Coventry with the title *An address to the serious Professors of the Gospel of every denomination, respecting an attempt to evangelise the Heathen*.<sup>115</sup> The address enables the reader to appreciate the motivation of the founding fathers of the LMS in their striving to launch the Society in a Europe troubled with war and strife. Burder's address is one marked by a passion for the souls of the lost and a fervent love for the Lord Jesus Christ. The address is long: it takes up almost four large pages of the *Evangelical Magazine*.<sup>116</sup> Several citations will convey the vibrancy and the sense of urgency of Burder's appeal. The first citation reflects on the turmoil in Europe in consequence of the ongoing revolution in France, and the importance of the writings of William Carey and Melville Horne on the thinking of the founders of the LMS.

May we not indulge a hope that the happy period is approaching, when the Redeemer shall take unto Him His great power and reign? 'He *must* increase. His name *shall* be great.' And is there not a general apprehension that the Lord is about to produce some great event? Already have we witnessed the most astonishing transactions; and is it not probable that the great Disposer of all is now about, by shaking terribly the nations, to establish that spiritual and extensive kingdom which cannot be shaken? Let us then, utterly and sincerely disclaiming all political views and party designs; abhorring all attempts to disturb order and government in this or any other country; vigorously unite, in the fear of God, and in the love of Christ, to establish a *Missionary Society* upon a large and liberal plan, for sending ministers of Christ to preach the Gospel among the heathen.

Many thanks are due to some late writers on this important subject. About three years ago Mr. Carey, of Leicester, published *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians, to use Means for the Conversion of the Heathen in which the religious State of the different Nations of the World, the Success of former Undertakings,*

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the labours of Jonathan Scott, more than any other Evangelical, that congregationalism in Staffordshire owes its existence. Some twenty-two churches trace their origins to his labours as well as five in Shropshire, six in Cheshire, and four or five in Lancashire, and others in Derbyshire.

<sup>114</sup> The minute is dated 17th February 1795 and is cited in Lovett, *History of the LMS*, Vol. 1, pp. 15-16; Ellis, *History of the LMS*, Vol. 1, pp. 18-19.

<sup>115</sup> Burder had submitted his address to the committee and it had been carefully revised by John Eyre and Matthew Wilks prior to its circulation. See Lovett, *History of the LMS*, Vol. 1, p. 18.

<sup>116</sup> *Evangelical Magazine*, Vol. 3 (1795), pp. 160-163. The Address is reprinted in full in Lovett, *History of the LMS*, Vol. 1, pp. 18-24.

*and the Practicability of further Undertakings, are considered.* We beg leave to recommend the perusal of this well-meant pamphlet to our readers ; and to remind them that it derives no small addition of value from this consideration, that the author ‘has given to his precepts the force of example,’ by becoming a missionary himself, and is now a preacher on the banks of the Ganges.

The Rev. Melville Horne is also entitled to public thanks for his *Letters on Missions: addressed to the Protestant Ministers of the British Churches*. That gentleman has also been a volunteer in the service; and was, for a time, chaplain of Sierra Leone, in Africa; and though he declined the arduous task, for reasons which he very candidly assigns, he has pleaded the cause of missions in a manner more masterly and spirited than any of his predecessors. He has ably detected the mistakes which have too often occasioned the miscarriage, or small success, of former attempts: and, taught by painful experience, has pointed out a more excellent way. We most sincerely hope that this bold and zealous production will have the most beneficial effects, both in promoting and directing future missions. We must refer to both of these publications for answers to those objections which are so commonly started by *Laodicean professors*. We must not dream of missions destitute of difficulties; but these worthy men have showed, and experience has abundantly proved, that the difficulties are not insuperable.

George Burder concluded his address with a stirring call regarding the urgency of missions to the heathen and by outlining what needed to be achieved in order to the setting up of a missionary society.

Let us do something *immediately*. Life is short. Let us ‘work, while it is called to-day’; the night of death approaches; and our opportunities of being useful will close for ever. ‘Whatsoever then our hands find to do, let us do it with all our might’, and that without delay.

To make an entrance on this great work, we beg leave to propose, in the first place, that Gospel-ministers will take the pains to stir up their respective auditories to a more close and serious consideration of the object in view, and to confer with them upon it. We then wish that some estimate may be formed of what each society may be able and ready to contribute annually, to a common fund, without injury to themselves or to their ministers. This done, we earnestly desire that a minister, or some other intelligent person, be deputed by the united congregations of each county or counties to meet in London as soon as possible in the course of the ensuing summer, there to confer in a solemn manner on this important affair; and, if the attempt be resolved upon, to choose a committee, resident in London, connected with corresponding committees in different parts of the country, to carry the plan that may then be adopted into execution, as soon as circumstances will admit.<sup>117</sup>

### **(g) Preparation for launching a Society**

From the feedback that the corresponding committee had received they were encouraged to proceed with arranging a General Meeting that would lead to the formation of a missionary society. Accordingly, a circular letter was drafted and distributed widely amongst ministers both in London and throughout the country inviting them to such a gathering on 22nd, 23rd, and 24th September 1795 in London. The letter was sent out under the names of ten

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<sup>117</sup> The citations are from the *Evangelical Magazine*, Vol. 3 (1795), pp. 162, 163.



ministers, whose names are listed in the alphabetical order of their surnames. The ten include John Eyre, James Steven, Alexander Waugh, Matthew Wilks, and John Love, who, as the secretary of the provisional committee, was again most probably the main author.

The letter began by pointing out that a number of ministers of different denominations in London had been meeting regularly for several months with the determination to form a society to support missions to the heathen; and that those who had signed the letter were part of a larger number of ministers who had been seeking the Lord's direction and blessing on their plans. The letter explained that they were paedobaptists by conviction and that though their plans were distinct from the missionary activities of the Moravians, the Arminian Methodists, and of the Baptists, they applauded those churches for their efforts and rejoiced in their successes. The main thrust of the circular letter was to emphasise four matters:

(i) They wanted the proposed society to be an improvement on what had currently been attempted by the denominational societies. The plan they envisaged would be on a much larger scale.<sup>118</sup>

(ii) The importance of ministerial support for the enterprise. They exhorted their brethren in these terms: 'The success of the attempt appears, under God, to be almost wholly with the Ministers of Jesus, and where they lead, their flocks will probably follow – what *they* have faith and love to undertake, the people will easily find means to execute.' The letter then adds, 'We request you dear Brother, to make the congregation over which the Lord hath placed you, acquainted with our design, and to recommend earnestly to their serious, devotional, and practical regard.'

(iii) The need to find suitable missionaries – men of God, full of faith and of the Holy Ghost. To this end they ask their ministerial brethren, 'Is there among your acquaintance any one desirous to take advantage of the opportunity which, we trust, will shortly be furnished, to become instrumental in conveying the glad tidings of redemption into the regions of the shadow of death.'

(iv) The necessity of building up funds. As we have noted the plans of the committee were for missionary advance on a much larger scale than the denominational societies. They hoped to gather funds from a very wide base of support from all who loved the Saviour. To this end the letter comments: 'if each congregation contributes something, however small the ability of many may be, the aggregate amount will be considerable. By the most affluent, a due regard, we hope, will be paid to the example of princely generosity already given, by some who have set their shoulders to this sublime work.'

(v) The letter concludes with this exhortation reflecting the zeal and commitment of the provisional committee and its secretary, John Love:

The time of the proposed meeting speedily approaches. What your hands find to do, dear Brother, do it with all your might. Millions of immortal souls call upon us for the word of salvation. The honour of the holy and blessed

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<sup>118</sup> This is seen in the number of LMS missionaries. In its first fifty years it appointed 475 missionaries. See James Sibree, *London Missionary Society: A Register of Missionaries, Deputations, etc. from 1796 to 1923* (4th edn., London, 1923), p. 60.

Redeemer is bleeding in every climate, through the crimes of wicked men who assume the Christian name. What ought to be our feelings and exertions? Shall we not hope that the age of cold indifference is past, and that the Spirit of Christ has kindled in our hearts an unextinguishable flame of love to God and man? May He guide and prosper all our labours of love among the people of your immediate charge, and smile upon whatever you undertake for the furtherance if this grand object.

As the general concurrence in the formation of the plan is an object much to be desired, we shall be happy to see you among us; hoping to derive pleasure from your company, and assistance from your talents.

N.B. A consultation of the friends of the Institution will be held at the Castle and Falcon, Aldersgate Street, at six o'clock on the Monday evening preceding the general Meeting, when your attendance will be particularly acceptable.<sup>119</sup>

The scene was now set for the meetings that would launch the society that had been on the hearts of the founders for almost two years.

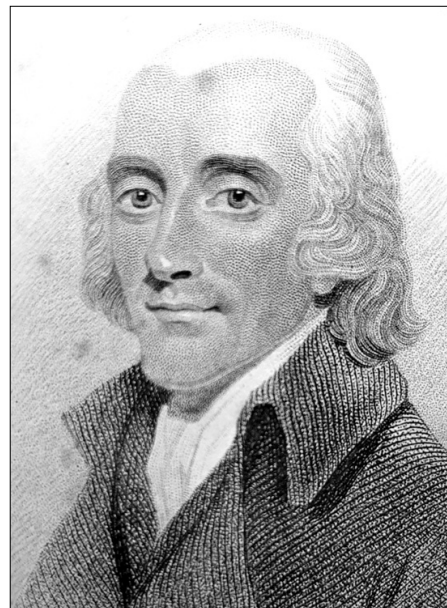
### 3. The Formation meetings of the London Missionary Society

It had originally been planned that the meetings would have taken place from 18th to 20th August 1795 but this was subsequently changed to late September.<sup>120</sup>

The meetings that constituted the formation of the LMS took place over an eight-day period commencing on Monday 21st September 1795. The week comprised of a series of public and private business meetings. Both public and business meetings were held from Tuesday to Thursday, with exclusively private business meetings being on Monday 21st, Friday 25th and Monday 28th September.

#### (a) The formation of the Society – Monday evening 21st September

The first business meeting was crucial. As Richard Lovett observes: 'it was at *this* meeting, on the evening of September 21st, intended to be merely preparatory, that the society was actually founded.'<sup>121</sup> A very large number of ministers and laymen assembled. Sir Egerton Leigh<sup>122</sup> of Little Harborough



*Sir Egerton Leigh, the chairman of the meeting at which the LMS was formed.*

<sup>119</sup> This important letter outlining the thinking of the corresponding committee prior to the September 1795 General meeting is printed in full in *Sermons preached in London at the formation on the Missionary Society, September 1795 to which are added Memorials*, pp. xix-xxi and in Morison, *Fathers and Founders of the LMS*, pp. xviii-xx. In both sources the letter is undated. It must have been written and circulated around June-July 1795.

<sup>120</sup> Lovett, *History of the LMS*, Vol. 1, p. 24.

<sup>121</sup> *ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 24.

<sup>122</sup> Sir Egerton Leigh (d. 1818) had the surname of a landed Cheshire family. His grandfather went to America where he held an honourable position in South Carolina and it was there

Hall, near Rugby was asked to take the chair. Leigh was an earnest Evangelical who did much for village preaching in the Midlands. He had come to the London meetings with George Burder of Coventry.<sup>123</sup> The meeting was opened with prayer by James Boden,<sup>124</sup> then of Hanley Tabernacle, Staffordshire, after which James Steven, minister of Crown Court Church of Scotland and a close colleague of John Love, ‘with great clearness and pathos’ – ‘opened the business of the meeting by relating what steps had been taken to bring the society to its present state.’<sup>125</sup> The secretary of the corresponding committee, John Love, was then called upon to read portions of the letters that had been received by the committee. The introduction to the first official publication that described the formation of the LMS details Love’s contribution to the meeting as follows: ‘After some remarks respecting the agency of the blessed Spirit of God, in uniting, and harmoniously animating, all his children, and bringing them to concur in important public exertions; a number of letters from ministers in the country were read, which afforded evident satisfaction to all present, particularly the intimation from a gentleman at Glasgow, that a number of praying-societies in that city and neighbourhood had resolved to devote themselves, on the ensuing day, to prayer for the success of this general meeting. It now appeared that a zealous union of spirit in favour of the attempt to enlighten the Heathen prevailed not only in the assembly present, but among serious Christians throughout the Island, from East to West, from South to North.’<sup>126</sup>

The letters from which Love read clearly indicated very wide support for the formation of a broadly-based missionary society. Whilst he read numerous

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that Egerton Leigh was born. His father possessed considerable estates in that State but in consequence of supporting the king in the American War of Independence he lost everything. Consequently, his son returned to England to seek possession of the family estates. Though not a great deal remained, he settled at Little Harborough Hall where he came in contact with a group of Evangelicals and was converted, becoming ‘a singular monument of sovereign grace.’ Leigh gave himself to village-preaching in which he was encouraged by Rowland Hill who ordained him in 1797 to an itinerant ministry. He later was persuaded of the Baptist position and was called the ‘Preaching Baronet’. For biographical details, see Morison, *Fathers and Founders of the LMS*, pp. 554-555; *Blackwell Dictionary of Evangelical Biography, 1730-1860*, Vol. 2, pp. 683-684; L. G. Champion, ‘The Preaching Baronet’, *Baptist Quarterly*, Vol. 10 (1941), pp. 429-433.

<sup>123</sup> Ernest A. Payne, *Before the Start: Steps towards the founding of the LMS* (London, 1945), p. 11.

<sup>124</sup> James Boden (1757-1841) was born in Chester, the city that had been blessed with the labours of Matthew Henry (1662-1714). Indeed, Boden was born in the house in which the commentator lived during his ministry in Chester. In the garden of the house in which he played as a boy there was an alcove or summerhouse, in which, it is said, a great part of Henry’s commentary was written. After Henry left Chester, the Presbyterian congregation to which he had ministered became Arian. The congregation which Boden attended as a youth was a small Congregational church, meeting in an upper room composed largely of those who had seceded from Henry’s former congregation to maintain Trinitarian orthodoxy. Perceiving his gifts, the congregation sent him to the Dissenting Academy at Homerton. After ministering in Hanley, he was called to Sheffield in 1796 where he laboured for forty-three years. He was a man given to prayer, and was an outstanding pastor, and an editor of the *Evangelical Magazine*. For biographical details, see Morison, *Fathers and Founders of the LMS*, pp. 522-528; *Blackwell Dictionary of Evangelical Biography, 1730-1860*, Vol. 1, p. 114.

<sup>125</sup> Lovett, *History of the LMS*, Vol. 1, p. 25; Ellis, *History of the LMS*, Vol. 1, p. 19 footnote\*.

<sup>126</sup> *Sermons preached in London at the formation on the Missionary Society, September 1795 to which are added Memorials*, p. xxii.

letters of support from individual ministers there were quite a number representing ministerial associations. These included supportive letters from James Small of Axminster, on behalf of the Western Association of twenty congregations; George Burder, on behalf of the Warwickshire Association; Richard Alliot, the minister of Castle Gate Church in Nottingham, on behalf of the associated churches in Nottingham and Derby; from the associations of Kent, Worcester and Northamptonshire; and from the Synod of the Burgher Seceders.<sup>127</sup> Though all the letters promised hearty co-operation, some expressed doubts on the subject of securing suitable missionaries. Thomas Haweis, with his characteristic energy and enthusiasm stated that in his view it would be possible to get suitable candidates. Backing up his opinion, he read some very striking letters from persons who had already offered themselves for this arduous service. He then, in words that would have a lasting impression on the man who would captain the first missionary expedition, expressed the firm opinion that ‘however difficult the work might appear, God would provide instruments for the execution of His own purposes, that means would never be wanting if we zealously set our shoulders to the yoke, and considered the glory of the object and the urgency of the call.’<sup>128</sup> John Morison has graphically described what happened next after Haweis had resumed his seat:

It was put to the vote of the meeting, whether they concurred in the idea of sending missionaries to the heathen, for the purpose of rescuing them from the worship of their dumb idols, and guiding them to ‘to the knowledge of the only living and true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he has sent?’ By one united and simultaneous act, the whole assembly testified its solemn determination to espouse the missionary cause. Tears of joy flowed in abundance from many eyes.<sup>129</sup>

At this stage John Eyre, in words broken by emotion, read the sketch of a plan of the society which had been drawn up by the provisional committee and which it was proposed to lay before the public meeting on the following day. The devotion and the enthusiasm exhibited at this preliminary meeting were clear to all, and meant that those who had been present went to the main meetings arranged for the following three days with a spirit of thankfulness and high expectation. The preliminary meeting closed with the opening of subscription-books<sup>130</sup> and votes of thanks to all who had aided in arrangements of the meeting, and more particularly to the provisional committee and to Sir Egerton Leigh, who presided over their deliberations. Rowland Hill then concluded the solemnities of the evening in prayer.

### **(b) Zealous missionary sermons**

From Tuesday to Thursday, 22nd to 24th of September 1795, were three days of both public meetings and private business meetings. The public meetings

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<sup>127</sup> Lovett, *History of the LMS*, Vol. 1, p. 25.

<sup>128</sup> John Griffin, *Memoirs of Captain James Wilson* (Boston, 1822), pp. 101-102.

<sup>129</sup> Morison, *Fathers and Founders of the LMS*, p. xxi.

<sup>130</sup> One of the earliest contributions to the LMS was from the George Burder’s church in Coventry. When he went to the London meetings, he took with him a contribution so that it could be claimed, ‘the first money ever contributed to the LMS was raised at a meeting held in the vestry of West Orchard Street Chapel.’ Payne, *Before the Start*, p. 10.

were services of worship when men who had been intimately involved in the preliminary arrangements to form a missionary society delivered sermons on the need to take the gospel to the heathen. Services took place both in the morning and evening each day when some of the most able preachers in England delivered stirring addresses. John Morison captures the spirit of the occasion when he writes regarding the opening service: ‘The morning of the 22nd dawned, while thousands of prayers, from all parts of the kingdom were rising to the throne of God, on behalf of its momentous proceedings.’<sup>131</sup> The accuracy of Morison’s statement is borne out by a letter John Love received from John Campbell, then an ironmonger in Edinburgh, two months later in November 1795. He wrote, ‘For months past a multitude of prayers for your direction and success have ascended from all the evangelical pulpits in and out of the Establishment; from a large number of private meetings of the friends of Jesus; and we trust, from all the private dwellings and closets of the righteous. And more; previous to the general meeting of your society all the societies for prayer in Edinburgh, who correspond with each other, to the number of about twenty, had a particular night appropriated for prayer.’<sup>132</sup>

John Campbell (1766-1840), who eventually engaged in missionary work himself, was brought up in the Relief Church and became an ironmonger in the city’s Grassmarket in 1786. His correspondence with John Newton, the minister of St Mary Woolnoth in London, influenced his life and led to a new appreciation of the gospel. His shop became a principal clearing-house for evangelical activity and for communication between the leaders of the evangelical revival in England and those of a similar persuasion in Scotland. He became a lay preacher in conjunction with James Haldane. Drawn towards Independency, he left the Church of Scotland and studied for the ministry in Greville Ewing’s Glasgow Seminary. In 1802 he was ordained as minister of Kingsland Chapel, near London where he became a director of the LMS and was able to pursue his long-standing enthusiasm for overseas missions. He undertook two extensive missionary tours to the southern Africa. He was set apart for his work in South Africa by Alexander Waugh in his Secession church at Miles Lane in London.<sup>133</sup>

### (c) The first day of public meetings – Tuesday 22nd September

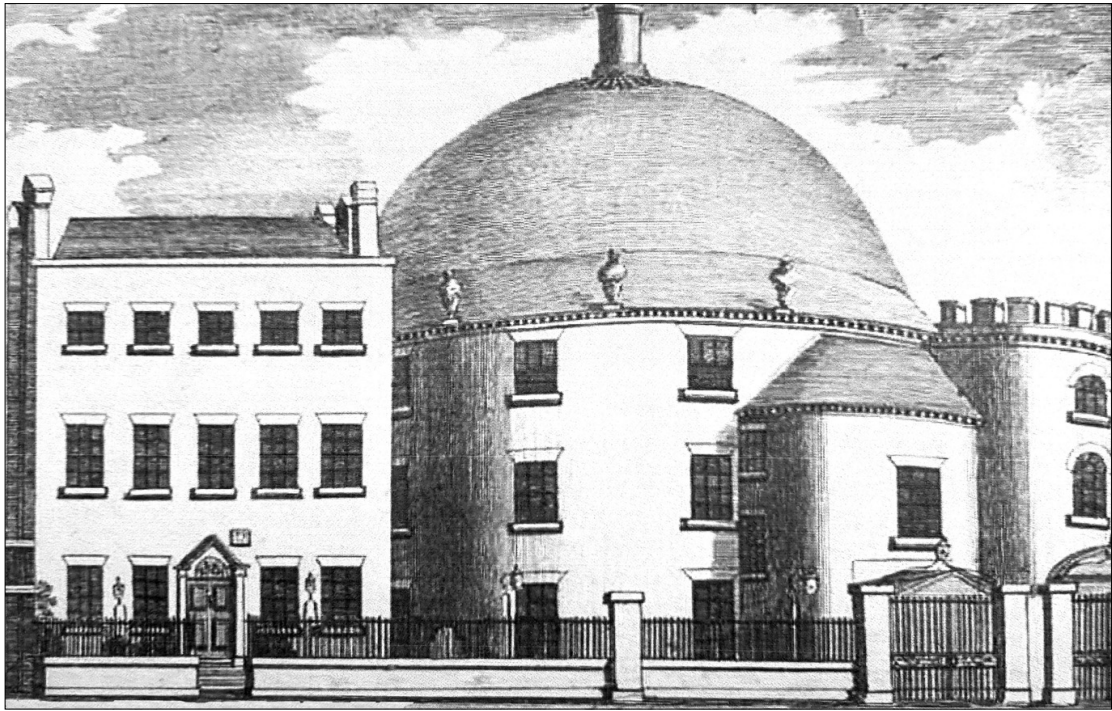
The first service was held in the Countess of Huntingdon’s Spa Fields Chapel<sup>134</sup> at ten in the morning where a very large congregation had assembled including

<sup>131</sup> Morison, *Fathers and Founders of the LMS*, p. xxi.

<sup>132</sup> Robert Philip, *The Life, Times and Missionary Enterprises of the Rev. John Campbell* (London, 1841), p. 325. Similar meetings for prayer were held amongst some then connected with the Reformed Presbyterians in Glasgow. They detail this in a pamphlet published three years later: ‘A proposal which was made in the summer of 1795, at a congregational meeting, furnished us with an opportunity publicly to evidence the friendship which we entertained for the missionary scheme: this proposal had for its object the formation of a corresponding meeting of delegates from the various societies belonging to our congregation, in and about Glasgow, for the purpose of social prayer and other religious exercises connected therewith.’ *An Adherence to the Missionary Society of Glasgow Defended, at the expense of being cut off from the Reformed Presbytery*, pp. 47-48.

<sup>133</sup> For biographical details, see Philip, *The Life, Times and Missionary Enterprises of the Rev. John Campbell* and the article on Campbell by D. W. Lovegrove in *DSCHT*, p. 129.

<sup>134</sup> There is an interesting requirement regarding the use of Spa Fields Chapel that was decided at a meeting of the management committee of the Chapel and recorded in their



*Spa Fields Chapel. The house in which the Countess of Huntingdon lived whilst in London in her later years is to the left of the Chapel.*

more than two hundred ministers. As William Ellis points out, ‘The ordinary modes of salutation were too cold for the exuberance of joy which all seemed to share.’<sup>135</sup> David Bogue, the Dissenter, rushed into the arms of John Eyre, the Anglican, when they met in the chapel house. The preacher for the first service was Thomas Haweis, the Anglican vicar of Aldwinckle: his sermon, entitled ‘The Apostolic Commission’, was from the great missionary text Mark 16:15-16, ‘Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned.’ Haweis began by stressing the interdenominational character of what the preliminary committee envisaged:

We meet under the conduct of the Prince of Peace, and, unfurling the banner of His cross, desire to carry the glad tidings of His salvation to the distant lands, deep sunk in heathen darkness, and covered with the shadow of death. The petty distinctions among us, of names and forms; the diversities of administrations, and modes of church order, we agree, shall this day all be merged in the greater, nobler, and characteristic name of Christians; and our one ambition be, to promote no partial interests, since Christ is not divided, but with united efforts to make known abroad the glory of His person—the perfection of His work—the wonders of His grace—and the transcendent

minutes of the 16th September 1795, six days before the service at which Haweis was to preach. It reads, ‘Resolved also that whereas Revd. Mr. Haweis is to preach a sermon in the chapel on Tuesday next, the 22d instant, to the ministers and others associated with a design to send missionaries abroad, it is expedient to inform Mr. Haweis previously that no collection can be made at our chapel for that society, the congregation at Spa Fields being already burthened enough.’ Edwin Welch (ed.), *Two Calvinistic Chapels, 1742-1811: The London Tabernacle and Spa-Fields Chapel* (London Record Society, 1975), p. 83.

<sup>135</sup> Ellis, *History of the LMS*, Vol. 1, p. 15.

blessings of His redemption—where His adorable name hath never yet been heard; but the god of this world still reigns the uncontrolled tyrant over the bodies and the souls of men.

Haweis then went on to deal with his text under four divisions, I. Where must we go? II. Who are to be sent? III. What they must preach? IV. The result of their mission. Under the first head he repeated his firmly-held desire that the first mission should be to Polynesia in the South Seas. The sermon closed with this appeal:

We know the time approaches when Ethiopia and Saba shall stretch out their hands unto God: when ‘the ends of the earth shall remember themselves, and be turned unto the Lord, and all flesh shall see the salvation of our God.’ From which extremity of the earth the lightning shall flash, we know not; but one thing we know, that when the blessed period fixed in His eternal counsels arrives, He will provide the means, and raise up the instruments, to fulfil all His pleasure. We hope He will favour and graciously accept our humble efforts to this end, and cause many to say, ‘Here am I, Lord, send me.’<sup>136</sup>

After the service was concluded by the singing of a hymn and prayer, it was intimated that anyone desiring to join the new Society should assemble in the area of the chapel for the first business meeting. However, so great was the interest that hardly an individual in the great congregation moved. William Kingsbury<sup>137</sup> of Southampton, the minister of one of the oldest Independent churches in the England, was called upon to engage in prayer and to preside at the meeting and George Burder was appointed secretary for the day. John Eyre then made a series of historical observations, pointing out the analogy between the first propagation of the gospel by the Apostles and others in the first century and the work now in view of sending the light of the gospel into heathen countries. After this he read again the ‘Plan of the Society’ that had been approved the previous evening for bringing forward to the General Meeting. A committee of thirteen ministers was then appointed including Thomas Haweis, Rowland Hill, David Bogue, Alexander Waugh, and John Love, to finalise the document. They retired immediately and having made a few alterations it was approved by the General Meeting, article by article.<sup>138</sup> On the Tuesday evening George Burder preached at the James Steven’s Scots

<sup>136</sup> Haweis’ sermon is reproduced in full in *Sermons preached in London at the formation on the Missionary Society, September 1795 to which are added Memorials*, pp. 5-23. The citations are from pp. 5-6, 22.

<sup>137</sup> William Kingsbury (1744-1818) was ordained in 1765 as the pastor of the Independent church at Southampton, a position which he held for forty-five years. In 1772 he established an Academy for the education of young men. He was one of the prime movers with respect to the founding of the LMS. For biographical details of Kingsbury, see John Bullar, *Memoirs of the late Rev. William Kingsbury* (London, 1819); Morison, *Fathers and Founders of the LMS*, pp. 528-539; and John McClintock and James Strong, *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature* (Grand Rapids, 1981 reprint), Vol. 5, p. 100. Both Lovett, *History of the LMS*, Vol. 1, p. 30 and Ellis, *History of the LMS*, Vol. 1, p. 26 wrongly identify Kingsbury as Thomas Kingsbury.

<sup>138</sup> The full text of ‘The Plan of the Society’ is printed in *Sermons preached in London at the formation on the Missionary Society, September 1795 to which are added Memorials*, p. xxxi; in Morison, *Fathers and Founders of the LMS*, pp. xxii-xxiii; and in Ellis, *History of the LMS*, Vol. 1, pp. 26-27.

Church at Crown Court on Jonah's message to Nineveh, 'Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee' (Jonah 3:2). Morison observes, 'The sermon was remarkable for two things – the vivid picture which it drew of the heathen world, and the heavy charge of guilt which it fastened upon all those who refuse to carry to dying men God's message of mercy and salvation.'<sup>139</sup> At the close of the meeting Kingsbury again took the chair and the plan of the Society was read aloud by George Burder. In addition, a committee was chosen to nominate gentlemen to act as directors of the Society.

#### **(d) LMS Directors nominated – Wednesday 23rd September**

On Wednesday 23rd September at ten in the morning Samuel Greatheed of Woburn, another of the founding fathers of the LMS, preached what was described as 'a most ingenious and impressive discourse' at Haberdashers' Hall Meeting House from the words of Luke 10:29, 'And who is my neighbour.'<sup>140</sup> Haberdashers' Hall Meeting House was first used by a Presbyterian congregation. When that congregation became extinct in the mid-1730s it was then taken over by an Independent congregation that had been meeting at Girdlers' Hall. The minister of the congregation in 1795 was Joseph Brooksbank, one of the eight men at the meeting at Baker's Coffee House the previous November that led to the preliminary committee being set up and the formation of the LMS. Samuel Greatheed (1759-1823) was born in London, the son of a bank clerk. As a young man he served as an army officer in the Engineers, including several years in Canada after the American War of Independence. His religious convictions were strengthened during this period and he became a member of a dissenting congregation in Newfoundland. On his return to Britain he was admitted in 1784 to Newport Pagnell Academy, where he became tutor in 1786. After supplying the congregation for several years, he accepted a call to be the minister at Woburn, Bedfordshire in 1791 although he continued to reside in Newport Pagnell. Besides playing an important role in the formation of the LMS he was also one of the founders and editors of the *Eclectic Review*. The circle of his friends included John Newton and William Cowper.<sup>141</sup>

Immediately after the worship was concluded, a meeting of the friends of the Society was held under the chairmanship of Henry Hunter, the minister of the Scots Church at London Wall. The purpose of this business meeting

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<sup>139</sup> Burder's sermon is printed in *Sermons preached in London at the formation on the Missionary Society, September 1795 to which are added Memorials*, pp. 26-44.

<sup>140</sup> Greatheed's sermon is printed in *Sermons preached in London at the formation on the Missionary Society, September 1795 to which are added Memorials*, pp. 46-70. The title of the sermon is 'A Mission to the heathen founded upon the moral law'.

<sup>141</sup> For biographical information on Greatheed, see Morison, *Fathers and Founders of the LMS*, pp. 392-397 and the *Dissenting Academies Database and Encyclopedia* at <http://dissacad.english.qmul.ac.uk/index.php> (accessed 1st August 2016). For interesting accounts of the Newport Pagnell Academy that was staffed by several generations of the Bull family, who, like Greatheed, had close links to John Newton, see Frederick W. Bull, 'The Newport Pagnell Academy', *Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society*, Vol. 4 (1909-1910), pp. 305-322; Marilyn Lewis, 'The Newport Pagnell Academy, 1782-1850', *Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society*, Vol. 5:5 (November 1994), pp. 273-282.



was for the committee that had been appointed the preceding day to withdraw to a vestry and prepare a list of persons whom they judged fit to be directors to take the oversight of the Society for the critical first year of its existence. That would be a year in which very considerable planning would have to be undertaken in organising the first missionary expedition and in the selection of suitable missionaries. When the committee returned, they submitted a list of twenty-five men they deemed to be suitable for the task ahead. The meeting approved the list and the men chosen were asked to make such additions as they considered appropriate. The list comprised of nineteen ministers and



*Joseph Hardcastle, the first treasurer of the LMS.*

and six laymen. Among the ministers appointed as the first directors of the LMS were three members of the Scots Presbytery: James Steven, Alexander Waugh, and John Love. As might have been expected John Eyre, David Bogue, and George Burder were also among the men appointed to be directors of the Society. At this business meeting following the Wednesday morning service it was proposed that Joseph Hardcastle be appointed as the first treasurer of the LMS.

Amongst the men with whom John Love associated in the formation of the LMS few deserve a higher place than Joseph Hardcastle (1752-1819). He was, in Silvester Horne's words, 'an English Merchant of the old school.' Born in Leeds, he had as one of

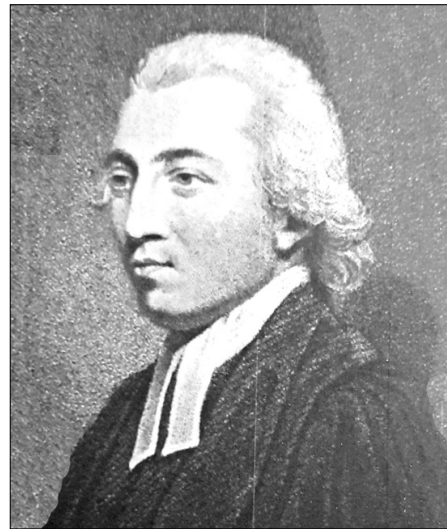
his descendants Thomas Hardcastle, the vicar of Bramham near Tadcaster, who was ejected from the Church of England for his nonconformity in 1662.<sup>142</sup> By profession, he was a cotton importer and shipper along with his business partner and fellow Calvinistic Independent Joseph Rayner.<sup>143</sup> He was on terms of close friendship with leading members of the Clapham Sect Evangelicals and co-operated with William Wilberforce, Granville Sharp, and Thomas Clarkson to ameliorate the condition of the slave. The Anti-Slavery Society often met at his country home in Hatcham, near Peckham. It was this friendship that earned him an appointment in the Sierra Leone Company as one of the very few non-Anglican directors. He was also a director of the

<sup>142</sup> For Thomas Hardcastle, see Samuel Palmer, *The Nonconformist's Memorial* (London, 1803), Vol. 3, pp. 426-427, 526-527; A.G. Matthews, *Calamy Revised* (Oxford, 1934), p. 247.

<sup>143</sup> Ford K. Brown, *Fathers of the Victorians* (Cambridge, 1961), p. 352 states that Hardcastle was a Methodist and that Rayner was a Baptist. This is incorrect. John H.Y. Briggs corrects Brown with regards to Rayner who was not a Baptist but an Independent. See Briggs' article on Rayner in *Blackwell Dictionary of Evangelical Biography, 1730-1860*, Vol. 2, p. 926. Hardcastle was also an Independent. He was a member of the Independent chapel at Bury Street in London though he often communicated in the Church of England. The succession of ministers at Bury Street included Joseph Caryl, John Owen, David Clarkson, and Isaac Watts. Hardcastle was a 'Methodist' only in the generic sense in which the term was used in the eighteenth century. It was then used in a similar way to that of 'Evangelical' at the present time and could be applied equally to both Calvinists and Arminians. Hardcastle was a Calvinist.

British and Foreign Bible Society and the Religious Tract Society. For many years, the committee meetings of these two societies, along with that of the directors' meetings of the LMS, were held in Hardcastle's offices sat Old Swan Stairs near London Bridge. In addition to being the treasurer of the LMS, he held the same post in the Village Itinerancy Society. Hardcastle was at the very centre of the evangelical enterprise for gospel advance that flowed from the revival of the eighteenth century. In Morison's *Fathers and Founders of the LMS*, the biographical account that comes directly after that of John Eyre is that of Joseph Hardcastle and his engraving forms the frontispiece of the volume. His biographer says of him, 'Of theology he was always a diligent student, and was well read in the works of the Puritan divines, such as Charnock, Bates, Flavel and Boston; but it was in the writings of Howe and Owen that he especially delighted.'<sup>144</sup>

On Wednesday evening John Hey, the Independent minister of Bristol, preached at Whitefield's Tabernacle on 'The Fulness of the Times' from Ephesians 1:10, 'That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him.'<sup>145</sup> A vast congregation assembled at the appointed hour, such that over a thousand people were unable to gain admission to the building. The front seats of the four extensive galleries, containing room for a hundred and fifty were occupied entirely by ministers besides others dispersed in the congregation.<sup>146</sup> It was whilst they were on a visit to Hey in Bristol that David Bogue and James Steven had heard William Carey's first letter home being read, resulting in Bogue's crucial article in the *Evangelical Magazine* urging Dissenters to their missionary responsibilities. Hey's sermon contained a brief but striking sketch of the opposition to the spread of the gospel and of the triumphs which had attended its declaration in the world. At the close of the meeting Matthew Wilks announced the twenty-five names of the intended directors that had been nominated in the morning.



*John Hey, Independent minister in Bristol and the Wednesday evening preacher at Whitefield's Tabernacle.*

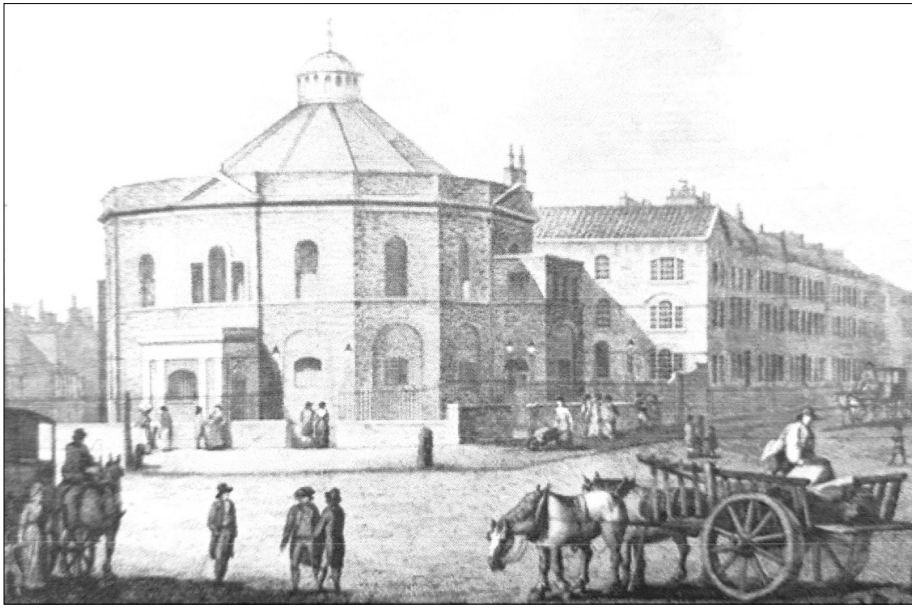
#### (e) The funeral of bigotry – Thursday 24th September

On Thursday 24th September 1795, the ministers assembled between eight and nine in the morning in the schoolroom of Surrey Chapel, where Rowland Hill was the minister, to deal with several matters of business. The first was to gather the names of the ministers that had attended the meetings, and of those

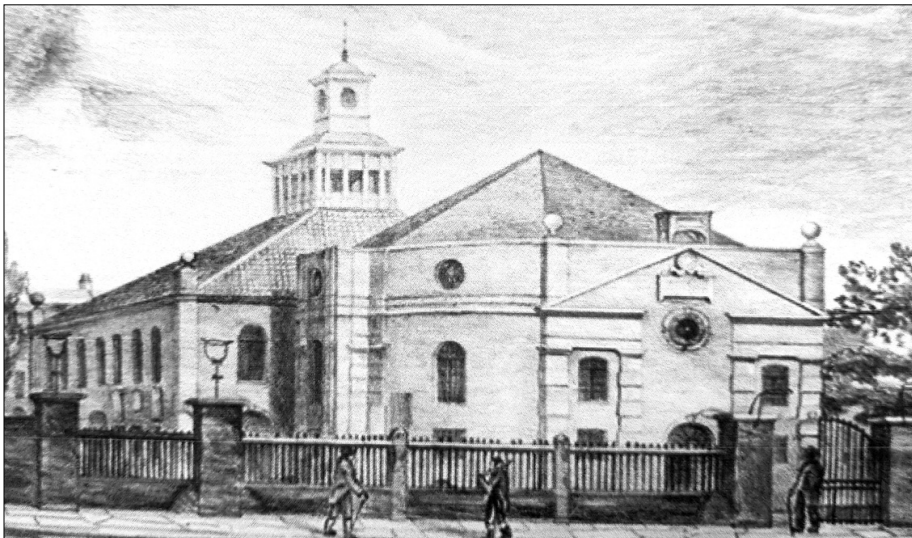
<sup>144</sup> Emma Corsbil Hardcastle, *Memoir of Joseph Hardcastle, Esq., First Treasurer of the London Missionary Society* (London, 1860), p. 9. See also Morison, *Fathers and Founders of the LMS*, pp. 47-131.

<sup>145</sup> John Hey's sermon is printed in *Sermons preached in London at the formation on the Missionary Society, September 1795 to which are added Memorials*, pp. 72-90.

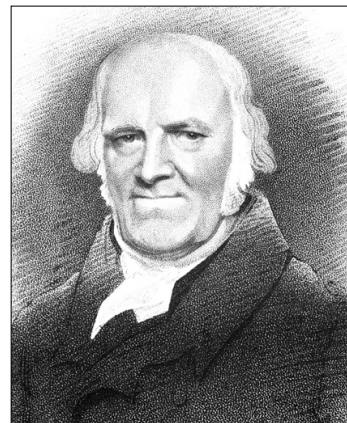
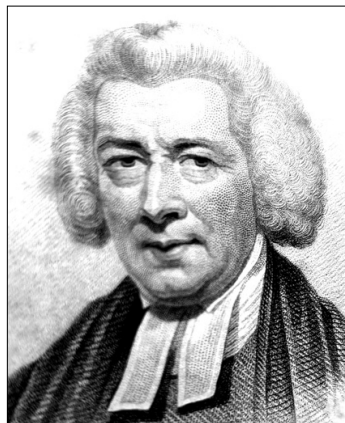
<sup>146</sup> Lovett, *History of the LMS*, Vol. 1, p. 33; Morison, *Fathers and Founders of the LMS*, p. xxiv.



*Surrey Chapel.*



*Whitefield's Tottenham Court Chapel.*



*(left to right) Rowland Hill, Thomas Haweis, and David Bogue, preachers and speakers at the final public meetings.*

who had been delegated to attend by congregations or associated bodies. This was clearly with a view to fund-raising in order to implement the Society's objectives. Matthew Wilks then proposed that the first attempt of the Society should be to send missionaries to the South Seas. Thomas Haweis, who had long been an advocate of a mission to the South Seas, was asked to speak on this subject at the close of the morning service. He also gave in the name of a volunteer that was ready to go; David Bogue mentioned a further name and stated that there were now seven volunteers for missionary service. The morning worship began at ten o'clock and another very large congregation had assembled. The preacher was Rowland Hill; his text was Matthew 24:14, 'And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto the nations; and then shall the end come.' John Morison says, 'It was evidently an extemporaneous effusion; but it was so replete with noble sentiments and faithful appeals that it produced a most hallowed feeling on behalf of the cause.'<sup>147</sup> At this point Thomas Haweis, the Rector of All-Saints, Aldwinckle, delivered a discourse of considerable length setting out the reasons for making the first missionary attempt among the inhabitants of the South Sea Islands. The speech was very wide-ranging covering matters like the climate, type of government, language, and the means of transporting missionaries. In concluding his address, he referred to the offer of James Wilson to captain the vessel that would take the missionaries to the South Seas, and his remarkable history.<sup>148</sup>

The last of the series of public services was held at Whitefield's Tottenham Court Chapel on the Thursday evening. The preacher was David Bogue; his text was Haggai 1:2, 'Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built.' This was a crucial sermon in setting the tone for the future of the LMS. Bogue took up and refuted one by one, ten objections which had been brought forward against the formation of the new Society. The objections are instructive, since they indicate the feeling on this subject at the end of the eighteenth century. They were as follows:

1. The work itself is so very arduous that success cannot be hoped for.
2. The time for the conversion of the heathen is not yet come, because the millennium is still at the distance of some hundred years.
3. What is there in the state of the Christian Church at present that flatters with peculiar hopes of success for a mission to the heathen? Many ages have elapsed and little has been done; what makes the time now so favourable? Are we better than our fathers?
4. The governments of the world will oppose the execution of the Society's plans, and defeat its design.

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<sup>147</sup> Morison, *Fathers and Founders of the LMS*, pp. xxv. Rowland Hill's sermon, entitled 'Glorious Displays of Gospel Grace', is printed in *Sermons preached in London at the formation on the Missionary Society, September 1795 to which are added Memorials*, pp. 91-117.

<sup>148</sup> Thomas Haweis' discourse is printed at the back of *Sermons preached in London at the formation on the Missionary Society, September 1795 to which are added Memorials*, pp. 160-183.

5. The present state of the heathen world is so unfavourable with respect to religion that little hope can be entertained of success.
6. How and where shall we find proper persons to undertake the arduous work of missionaries to the heathen?
7. Whence will the Society and the missionaries be able to find support?
8. There is no door opened by Providence for the entrance of the Gospel. We should wait till such an event takes place, and then diligently improve it.
9. What right have we to interfere with the religion of others?
10. We have heathen enough at home; let us convert them first before we go abroad.

Bogue did not deny that there would be difficulties.

Difficulties, the most tremendous difficulties are to be looked for. Will Satan suffer his kingdom to fall without a struggle? No, he will rouse all hell to arms against us; and his instruments on earth uniting themselves to the host from beneath; will do everything in their power to prevent the progress of the gospel of the Redeemer. But here is the foundation of our hope. Christ has all power both in heaven and in earth. He is infinitely mightier than his opposers, and all his enemies shall be made his footstool: and he has assured us, that He came to be a light to enlighten the heathen, as well as to be the glory of his people Israel. Carry this thought in your minds, my dear hearers, in the answer I propose to every objection; that, while I endeavour to shew it as void of strength, and point out the great encouragement we have to hope for success, our sole dependence, in the use of his appointed means, is placed here, namely, on the wisdom, grace, and power of the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>149</sup>

Bogue was to repeat this point again later in the sermon: the complete and unassailable answer to the faint-hearted was the power of the Lord Jesus Christ:

Why should we be cast down at the prospect of difficulties in the way? Let our whole dependence be placed in the wisdom, power, and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. He can exalt every valley, level every mountain and hill, make the way to places plain, and the crooked straight; and by removing every stumbling block, prepare the rough for his servants, and make the triumph of the cross, glorious in the eyes of the nations of the earth.<sup>150</sup>

A section of Bogue's sermon is of special interest as it became a hallmark of the early years of the LMS. It refers to the constitution of the Society, and is in the section of the sermon where he provides an answer the third objection: that mission work has not been achieved in the past due to the divided state of the Christian Church:

In the present century, the nature of the Church of Christ, as a spiritual kingdom, and not of the world, has been better understood than it ever was since the days of Constantine; and Christians have felt their obligations to send

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<sup>149</sup> *Sermons preached in London at the formation on the Missionary Society, September 1795 to which are added Memorials*, pp. 122-123.

<sup>150</sup> *ibid.*, p. 156.

the Gospel to the heathen nations. Some efforts have been made by different sects, but, with one exception, feeble in comparison of what might have been; and I know not that any denomination has missionaries among the heathen, much exceeding in number the apostles of our Lord. Every one, however, who is awake, hails with joy the dawning of a bright day of true Christian zeal for the spreading of the Gospel in the world, and salutes with affection the various societies engaged in this divine work. We have now before us a pleasing spectacle, Christians of different denominations, although differing in points of church government united in forming a society for propagating the Gospel among the heathen. This is a new thing in the Christian Church. Some former societies have accepted donations from men of different denominations; but the government was confined to one. But here are Episcopalians, Methodists, Presbyterians, and Independents, all united in one society, all joining to form its laws, to regulate its institutions, and manage its various concerns. Behold us here assembled with one accord to attend the funeral of bigotry: and may she be buried so deep that not a particle of her dust may ever be thrown up on the face of the earth. I could almost add, cursed be the man who shall attempt to raise her from the grave.

Bogue's words that the formation of the LMS was the 'funeral of bigotry' was the one statement that was most remembered in his address. He concluded with these words:

Now we do not think ourselves in danger of being mistaken when we say that we shall account it through eternity a distinguished favour, and the highest honour conferred on us during our pilgrimage on earth, that we appeared here and gave in our names among the Founders of the Missionary Society, and the time will be ever remembered by us, and may it be celebrated by future ages, as the era of Christian benevolence.<sup>151</sup>

#### **(f) Reflections on the public meetings**

There was a spirit of exultation as those who had attended the foundation-meetings returned home. George Burder recorded his impressions on leaving London: 'It was a memorable season, to me the most memorable of my life. The public services appeared to me to be favoured with an uncommon degree of divine influence. A set of feelings, partly new, or new in their degree, were experienced by me, and very many.'<sup>152</sup> An Edinburgh Baptist, writing at the end of the week to a friend, described the season in these terms: 'It seemed as if the Christian world had waked out of a long slumber, amazed at their former stupor. None concerned spoke of it in terms but of admiration. "Surely God is in this place. This is none other than the gate of heaven. If God shall work, who can let it?" Never did my eyes behold such a sight, and never shall they again, but in heaven. A glorious day, exceeded by none, since the day of Pentecost, the blessed effects of which, we hope, will extend themselves to distant lands, and to future generations.'<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> David Bogue's lengthy sermon is printed in *Sermons preached in London at the formation on the Missionary Society, September 1795 to which are added Memorials*, pp. 120-158. The two citations are on pp. 130, 158.

<sup>152</sup> Henry Foster Burder, *Memoir of George Burder* (New York, 1833), p. 141.

<sup>153</sup> Manuscript letter from Mr J. Hervey to John Campbell, cited in Lovett, *History of the LMS*, Vol. 1, p. 36 footnote.

Though John Love greatly appreciated the launch meetings of the LMS, he did not share the view that they were analogous to Pentecost. In a letter to a correspondent six weeks after the meetings he wrote:

I observe with pleasure your warm affection to the important cause in which the Missionary Society has lately engaged, and the ideas you exhibit of the generous zeal which the report of this undertaking had excited among the people of my country. The information given you by Mr. H is in general just. I cannot, however, approve of a comparison, though I heard the idea publicly suggested by one young minister, between the assemblies here and the day of Pentecost. Though I had much satisfaction in attending them, and saw tokens of Divine presence and approbation in them, yet there did not appear to me evidence of those solemn, deep-felt, and powerful impressions of a humbling and comforting kind which have been discernibly manifest on many occasions, since the first solemn descent of the Spirit on the apostles and their hearers. Still, however, and more especially in a time of such carnality and withdrawing of Divine power, there was in my view, enough to encourage us to go forward in the arduous attempt, hoping to find hereafter visitations of the Spirit more penetrating and peculiar, if the spirit of Laodicean arrogance and presumption, Revelation 3:17, 'Thou sayest that I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing', do not prevent it.<sup>154</sup>

#### **(g) Early dissensions – Friday 25th September**

On the Friday afternoon of 25th September 1795, the last of the series of meetings was held in which the LMS was formed. It was a General Meeting for business similar to that on the Monday evening, and was held at the Castle and Falcon. William Piercy, then the minister of Henry Peckwell's Westminster Chapel on Princes Street, London was in the chair. The history behind the very large and commodious Princes Street meeting house provides in microcosm the changes that were taking place in eighteenth-century dissent. It was originally a Presbyterian-Puritan cause with a succession of ministers that included men like Vincent Alsop, Daniel Mayo, and Edmund Calamy. In 1773 it became vacant by the removal of the congregation to a much smaller building due to their having become greatly reduced. An explanation for this decline was the absence of gospel preaching and the abandonment of Westminster orthodoxy because the minister, Andrew Kippis (1725-1795), had become an Arian. Kippis was one of the many students of Philip Doddridge who became Arian. Before his lapse into error he had rejected Calvinistic doctrine and was opposed to creedal subscription. The old building was taken over by Henry Peckwell (baptised 1746 -1787), an evangelical Church of England clergyman who had attracted the attention of the Countess of Huntingdon; she later made him one of her curates.<sup>155</sup> As a young man, Peckwell was a regular attender at George Whitefield's Tabernacle. The Princes Street building was repaired and enlarged with finance from both the Countess and Peckwell. It was re-opened by him in April 1774. For some time, the chapel was supplied by a rotation of

<sup>154</sup> *Letters of John Love*, pp. 153-154.

<sup>155</sup> For further details of Henry Peckwell and Westminster Chapel, see Aaron C.H. Seymour, *The Life and Times of Selina, Countess of Huntingdon* (2 vols., London, 1841), Vol. 2, pp. 295-296; Alan Harding, *The Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 292-293, 328; *DNB* and *ODNB*.

evangelical ministers in the Countess's Connexion but eventually Peckwell became the stated minister and changed its name to Westminster Chapel. Six years after Peckwell's death, William Piercy (1744-1819) was appointed minister of the Chapel in 1793.<sup>156</sup>

The main purpose of the Castle and Falcon meeting was formally to appoint the treasurer and directors of the Society, and to choose a secretary. After prayer the first item of business was the treasurer of the Society. All eyes turned to Joseph Hardcastle who had been proposed for the role at a business meeting following the Wednesday morning service. In John Morison's words, his 'education, sound judgment, urbane disposition, munificent liberality and fervent godliness marked him out as pre-eminently adapted for the responsible post.'<sup>157</sup> He was accordingly formally nominated and though in modesty shrinking from the responsibility, after further deliberation, he accepted the position. The meeting then proceeded formally to elect the twenty-five directors who had been nominated by the sub-committee and whose names had been read out publicly after the Wednesday evening service. When the list of gentlemen selected by the committee was again read, they were all requested to withdraw. Each name was then voted on individually. John Love was one of the twenty-five directors of the LMS that were chosen at this meeting. The directors, thus chosen, with full consent of the meeting nominated a further seven men to be associated with them in the great work they were called on to organise.<sup>158</sup>

The next business was the election of a secretary. Both the introductory memorial to the published sermons and John Morison are rather careful in their wording as this was a delicate issue. The words in the memorial are as follows, 'Some difficulties occurred in the selection of a secretary, on account of the great diversity of abilities, requisite to the advantageous fulfilment of the complex, and various duties, which might be presumed to belong to that office, in a society of this nature.'<sup>159</sup> So much was this the case that the election of a secretary was deferred to a subsequent meeting of the directors and made a matter of prayer. Irene Fletcher, the LMS archivist, writing a series of articles on the origin of the LMS almost one hundred and seventy years later in the *Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society* explained for

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<sup>156</sup> A good account of William Piercy is in William B. Sprague, *Annals of the American Pulpit* (New York, 1859), Vol. 5 (Episcopalians), pp. 293-296; see also *Blackwell Dictionary of Evangelical Biography, 1730-1860*, Vol. 2, p. 888. In 1771 Piercy, on behalf of the Countess of Huntingdon, led a party of her students to the Bethesda Orphan House in Georgia bequeathed to her by George Whitefield. His conduct whilst in America appears to have been less than honourable. See Faith Cook, *Selina Countess of Huntingdon* (Banner of Truth Trust, 2001), pp. 319-331.

<sup>157</sup> Morison, *Fathers and Founders of the LMS*, p. xxvi.

<sup>158</sup> The numbers of directors appointed are those detailed in the book produced directly after the meeting and published in 1795, *Sermons preached in London at the formation on the Missionary Society, September 1795 to which are added Memorials*, p. xxvi, and repeated in Morison, *Fathers and Founders of the LMS*, p. xxvi. Richard Lovett, writing at the centenary, has slightly different numbers. See Lovett, *History of the LMS*, Vol. 1, pp. 39-40.

<sup>159</sup> *Sermons preached in London at the formation on the Missionary Society, September 1795 to which are added Memorials*, p. xxvi.



the first time the nature of these difficulties: ‘There were at least two parties that came together in the founding and leadership of the Missionary Society. The one, loosely labelled Methodist, taking in those who were influenced by the Evangelical Revival, some ordained within the Countess of Huntingdon’s Connexion, others as Congregational ministers or Anglican priests, together with laymen of wealth in the mercantile world. The other party, labelled Presbyterian, comprised ministers of various branches of the Church in Scotland ministering to congregations in London.’<sup>160</sup>

Fletcher then quotes from the manuscript diary of John Reynolds,<sup>161</sup> which is held in the LMS archives. Reynolds was present at the meeting on 25th September 1795 concerning the choice of a secretary and he makes plain the division between the large broad-evangelical grouping and the Scots: ‘A meeting of ministers and delegates from various churches, etc. ... a long altercation took place respecting the appointment of a secretary. Mr. Shrubsole proposed by the Methodist party, opposed by the Scotch Presbyterians.’<sup>162</sup> Even more instructive with regard to this early division amongst the founders of the LMS is a letter from John Eyre to Thomas Haweis when he was about to resign as secretary in 1803. He wrote, ‘But who shall succeed me? It must not be one of the Party which have given us already so much trouble.’<sup>163</sup> The new secretary who succeeded was George Burder, who was both an Evangelical and a Congregationalist and clearly in the same Methodist, or evangelical party as Eyre and Haweis and the men of the Countess of Huntingdon’s Connexion. It, therefore, becomes clear that the party which had given them ‘so much trouble’ was most probably the Scottish Presbyterian ministers in London. Why the Scots had given them ‘so much trouble’ is not entirely clear; it may be that contrary to the majority view of the LMS directors they desired the missionaries to subscribe a confession of their faith.

The last matter of importance which engaged the prayerful deliberations of the meeting on 25th September 1795 was the selection of the first sphere of the Society’s labours. This was a matter of great importance and received considerable attention. After a full consideration of all the available information it was agreed, in line with Haweis’ wishes, that the first mission of the Society should be sent to Tahiti, or some other island among the South Sea Islands. In addition, it was agreed that as early as possible, missions should be attempted to other locations including the coast of Africa, the Malabar coast, Bengal, or the island of Sumatra.

#### **(h) The LMS Directors meet for the first time**

The first meeting of the directors of the LMS took place on the Monday of the week following the public meetings. Rowland Hill, the minister of Surrey

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<sup>160</sup> Irene Fletcher, ‘The Fundamental Principle of the London Missionary Society – Part 2’, *Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society*, Vol. 19:4 (May 1963), p. 192.

<sup>161</sup> John Reynolds (1739-1803), as we have noted, kept a diary account of the meeting at Baker’s Coffee House and was minister of Camomile Street Independent Church.

<sup>162</sup> MS. Diary of John Reynolds in the LMS Archives, cited in Fletcher, ‘The Fundamental Principle of the London Missionary Society – Part 2’, p. 192.

<sup>163</sup> ‘Report of Correspondence of Thomas Haweis’, Maggs Catalogue 616 (1935) – cited in Fletcher, ‘The Fundamental Principle of the London Missionary Society – Part 2’, p. 193.

Chapel presided. The first matter to be resolved was the key appointment of a secretary for the Society. John Love had been the secretary of the organising committee since January 1795 and had played a key role in the formation of the institution and he was the preferred choice of the Scots. However, the preferred candidate of the broad-based evangelical grouping was William Shrubsole,<sup>164</sup> an employee of the Bank of England. The matter was resolved by appointing two secretaries: Shrubsole as the secretary for home correspondence, and Love as the foreign secretary. This arrangement seems to have been a solution to resolve a difficulty. The original plan was most probably to appoint a single secretary. The twin-secretary role seems to have worked well although it is plain from John Morison's language that Shrubsole was regarded as having both the personal qualities and efficiency for business that qualified him peculiarly for the role. This is how Morison detailed the position: 'A happier choice, perhaps, could scarcely have been made.



*William Shrubsole of the  
Bank of England, joint LMS  
secretary with John Love.*

Mr. Love had a dignity of mind, and a depth of piety, seldom equalled; and, with an urbane and gentlemanly demeanour, Mr. Shrubsole combined habits of business, talents for correspondence, and a ready power of address, which qualified him, in a remarkable degree, for this new and responsible post.<sup>165</sup>

The next matter to be considered was one of the utmost importance. It was the acceptance of the offer of Captain James Wilson to take charge of any ship the Society might employ to transport the missionaries to the South Seas. Thomas Haweis regarded this was a most remarkable intervention of the providence of God. James Wilson (1760-1814) was a merchant-ship captain.

<sup>164</sup> William Shrubsole (1759–1829) was the son of William Shrubsole, senior (1729-1797) of Sheerness who was both a mast maker and the minister of Bethel Chapel, a small Independent church. He was converted through reading a book by the Puritan, Isaac Ambrose. His son became a shipwright in Sheerness dockyard, and subsequently clerk to one of the officers. In 1785 he went to London as a clerk in the Bank of England, where he ultimately became 'secretary to the committee of treasury'. He made his confession of faith in his father's church, but according to Irene Fletcher, was not a member of any church. He mixed with Evangelicals of all sorts and was well known both within and without the Established Church. He worshipped mostly at Whitefield's Tabernacle where his wife was a member. They lived on Old Street a few doors away from Matthew Wilks, the minister at the Whitefield's Tabernacle. Besides being one of the first secretaries of the LMS, Shrubsole took a special interest in religious and philanthropic societies. He also had poetical gifts, and contributed hymns to various religious publications from 1775 to 1813. Shrubsole died at Highbury on 23rd August 1829, and was buried in Bunhill Fields. For further biographical information, see the memorial notice written largely by his daughter, Mrs Cunliffe, in Morison, *Fathers and Founders of the LMS*, pp. 132-155; Fletcher, 'The Fundamental Principle of the LMS – Part 2', p. 197; John Julian, *Dictionary of Hymnology* (2 vols., New York, 1907), Vol. 2, pp. 1056, 1589.

<sup>165</sup> Morison, *Fathers and Founders of the LMS*, p. xxvi.

His dramatic conversion and life story is a gripping narrative of danger, escapes from death, and finally of salvation. He fought with the British army during the American War of Independence and then served nine years with



*James Wilson, the merchant shipman who volunteered to captain the LMS ship to the Pacific.*

the East India Company. While in India he was captured by Hyder Ali Khan,<sup>166</sup> the *de facto* ruler of the kingdom of Mysore which occupied the greater part of Southern India. After a daring bid for escape, Wilson was captured and imprisoned in the black hole of Seringapatam. After his release he returned to his career as a ship's captain and, despite illness and further dangerous missions, accumulated sufficient resources to retire. He made his fortune carrying cargo and messages through French lines.

Throughout it all, Wilson remained fast in his irreligious opinions. While living in England with his niece, however, he was converted under the preaching of John Griffin the minister of the Orange Street Independent church in Portsea. He was fond of debating with Christians and out-doing them in argument. A friend introduced him

to John Griffin, the Independent minister of Portsea, who reluctantly agreed to discuss matters with him. Griffin's gentlemanly conduct disarmed Wilson's prejudices. Griffin went on in a calm and dignified way to explain the external and internal evidences which prove the scriptures to be a revelation from God. By the end of the discussion Wilson acknowledged, that whilst not convinced, Griffin had made some points he would not forget. They change came when his niece took him to hear Griffin preach. His text on that occasion was Romans 8:29, 'For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.' It was a sermon on predestination that was the means used for his awakening.

Wilson felt called to volunteer for missionary service after reading the *Evangelical Magazine* and hearing Thomas Haweis address the Monday night business meeting in the Castle and Falcon on 21st September 1795. His conversion had taken place no more than a year before he volunteered to captain the LMS ship. Haweis did not know Wilson before he received his letter, during the week of the public meetings, in which Wilson volunteered to captain a ship to the Pacific. His skills and devotion to his Saviour seemed

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<sup>166</sup> Hyder Ali Khan (c.1720-1782) offered strong anti-colonial resistance against the military advances of the British East India Company during the First and Second Anglo-Mysore Wars. Though illiterate, he earned an important place in the history of southern India for his administrative acumen and military skills. He concluded an alliance with the French against the British and used the services of French workmen in raising his artillery and arsenal. His rule of Mysore was characterised by frequent warfare with his neighbours and rebellion within his territories. Seringapatam became the capital of Mysore under Hyder Ali.

perfectly suited to the situation, and Haweis saw him as ‘God’s man’. John Love as the Foreign Secretary of the LMS had frequent contact with Wilson and there a several letters to him printed in the *Letters of John Love*.<sup>167</sup> He did not become a member of Griffin’s church until early in 1796. After his return from the Pacific he took up residence in London and joined George Clayton’s Independent church in Walworth where he was subsequently chosen as a deacon.<sup>168</sup>

#### 4. The Fundamental Principle of the LMS

The Annual General Meetings of the LMS, and later of other inter-denominational societies, became a high-point in the calendar of Evangelicals, not only in central London but in a much larger area. At these gatherings, reports of progress were given in, business conducted, and sermons preached by some of the finest preachers in the country. The first of these regular meetings of the LMS took place on Wednesday 11th May 1796. The fourth article of ‘The Plan of the LMS’ agreed at its formation-meetings stated that General Meetings were:

To be held annually in London on the second Wednesday of May, and oftener if necessary, to choose a Treasurer, Directors, Secretary, and Collectors, and to receive reports, audit accounts, and deliberate on what further steps may best promote the objects of the society. At every such meeting one sermon, or more, shall be preached by one or more of the associated ministers, and notice given, as is usual, on such occasions; the President for the day shall open and conclude the meeting with prayer, and sign the minutes of the proceedings. All matters proposed shall be determined by the majority of the members present.<sup>169</sup>

What, however, was to distinguish this first annual gathering was a meeting of the directors held several days earlier at the Castle and Falcon on 9th May 1796, chaired by a thirty-two-year-old businessman, Thomas Wilson,<sup>170</sup> at

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<sup>167</sup> *Letters of John Love*, pp. 202-204, 222-224, 246-247.

<sup>168</sup> For biographical information on Wilson’s interesting life, see Griffin, *Memoirs of Captain James Wilson*; Morison, *Fathers and Founders of the LMS*, pp. 539-551; and the article on Wilson by Peter J. Lineham in *Blackwell Dictionary of Evangelical Biography, 1730-1860*, Vol. 2, p. 1207. George Clayton (1782-1862) had been an assistant to William Kingsbury at Southampton and then became in 1804 the minister of the Congregational church at York Street, Walworth in London. It was under Clayton’s ministry that Alexander Stewart of Cromarty was converted. Stewart came to London in the autumn of 1813 and was in Clayton’s congregation until he returned to Scotland in the spring of 1815. James Wilson died on 12th August 1814; it seems very probable, therefore, that Alexander Stewart would have met Wilson. For an account of Alexander Stewart’s conversion, see the current writer’s biographical introduction to Alexander Stewart, *The Tree of Promise* (Free Presbyterian Publications, 1999), p. 14. For biographical details of George Clayton, see Thomas W. Aveling, *Memorials of the Clayton Family* (London, 1867), pp. 219-296.

<sup>169</sup> *Sermons preached in London at the formation on the Missionary Society, September 1795 to which are added Memorials*, p. xxxi.

<sup>170</sup> Thomas Wilson (1764-1843) was a wealthy Congregational benefactor and a partner in his father’s silk manufacturing business. He was a founder of the three great inter-denominational organisations, the LMS, the Religious Tract Society, and the British and Foreign Bible Society. He was also among the founders of London University and was the treasurer both of Hoxton/Highbury Academy, a Congregational ministerial

which seventeen directors were present and presumably the two secretaries, John Love and William Shrubsole. At that meeting the directors approved unanimously what came to be called ‘The Fundamental Principle of the Society.’ This principle on which the society would proceed with its operations had been drawn up by Alexander Waugh, the Burgher Secession minister in London, and read as follows:

As the union of Christians of various denominations, in carrying on this great work, is a most desirable object; so to prevent, if possible, any cause of future dissension, it is declared to be a fundamental principle of the Missionary Society, that its design is not to send Presbyterianism, Independency, Episcopacy, or any other form of church order and government, (about which there may be difference of opinion among serious persons,) but the glorious Gospel of the blessed God to the heathen; and that it shall be left (as it ought to be left) to the minds of the persons whom God may call into the fellowship of his Son from among them, to assume for themselves such form of church government as to them shall appear most agreeable to the word of God.<sup>171</sup>

Writing about this fundamental principle, William Ellis makes the following observation: ‘The form of the declaration was penned by the Rev. Dr Waugh, whose sentiments and conduct so uniformly and beautifully exemplified the great principle it avowed, and whose whole life afforded the strongest practical evidence that the love of Christ in the heart, and the holiness of the Gospel in the life, were vastly more important than all other distinctions in his estimation.’<sup>172</sup>

The public Annual General Meeting was held two days later when, in Ellis’s words, ‘ministers and friends from various parts of the country repaired to the metropolis in greater numbers than at the formation of the society.’<sup>173</sup> At these meetings, held in the Countess of Huntingdon’s Spa Fields Chapel, sermons were preached by William Jay of Bath; Thomas Pentycross, vicar of St Mary’s Wallingford; George Lambert of Hull; and David Jones of Llangan. It is indicative of the prominent place that the infant Society had already achieved in English evangelicalism that these four outstanding Calvinistic preachers were called upon to minister at the first Annual General Meeting of the LMS. William Jay (1769-1853) was the youngest of the four; he had been trained in a small academy that was run by Cornelius Winter (1742-1808) who had been converted under the preaching of George Whitefield and become his secretary and assistant. Jay was minister of Argyle Chapel in Bath for sixty-two years and was appreciated by all classes of hearers for his plain gospel preaching.

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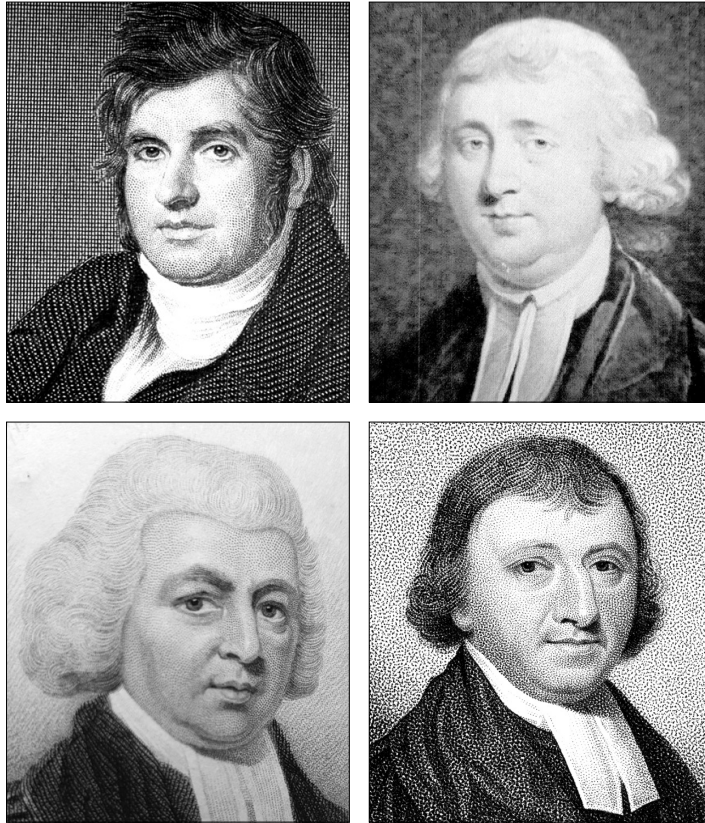
training institution, and of the LMS from 1832. For biographical information, see Joshua Wilson, *Memoir of Thomas Wilson* (London, 1846); Morison, *Fathers and Founders of the LMS*, pp. 573-580; Geoffrey F. Nuttall, ‘The Rise of Independency in Lincolnshire: Thomas Wilson and the Students’, *Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society*, Vol. 4:1 (October 1987), pp. 35-50; Peter Collins, ‘Thomas Wilson, 1764-1843’, in *1986 Congregational Studies Conference Papers* (Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches, 1986), pp. 33-46.

<sup>171</sup> The text is printed in Ellis, *History of the LMS*, Vol. 1, pp. 38-39 and Lovett, *History of the LMS*, Vol. 1, pp. 49-50.

<sup>172</sup> Ellis, *History of the LMS*, Vol. 1, p. 39 footnote\*.

<sup>173</sup> Ellis, *History of the LMS*, Vol. 1, p. 37.

It is said of him that he ‘combined the solemnity and substance of the old dissenting tradition with the warmth and appeal of the Methodist style.’<sup>174</sup> Thomas Pentycross (1747-1808) was at first a great favourite with the Countess of Huntingdon; she called him ‘Penty’ – an unusual favour for her. Though



*The four preachers at the first LMS annual meetings  
(top, left to right), William Jay, Thomas Pentycross  
(bottom, left to right), George Lambert, and David Jones.*

a minister in the Church of England, he still believed it was appropriate for him to continue to preach for her after her Connexion separated from the Establishment. His refusal to separate from the Church of England, however, led to a breakdown in relations with the Countess that was not repaired.<sup>175</sup> George Lambert (1742-1816) was the minister of Fish Street Congregational church in Kingston-upon-Hull for forty-six years. He was a stalwart supporter of the LMS and took part in the counsels of the Society’s founders.<sup>176</sup> With the help of the Countess of Huntingdon, David Jones (1736-1810) secured the living of Llangan in Glamorgan where he was ordained in 1767. He was the rector of Llangan parish church for forty-three years and drew hundreds

<sup>174</sup> *Blackwell Dictionary of Evangelical Biography, 1730-1860*, Vol. 1, p. 606. For biographical details of William Jay, see also George Redford and John Angell James (eds.), *The Autobiography of the Rev. William Jay* (Banner of Truth Trust, 1854 edn. reprinted 1974); Stephen Blair Waddell, ‘William Jay of Bath’ (PhD thesis, University of Stirling, 2012).

<sup>175</sup> For details of Thomas Pentycross, see *Blackwell Dictionary of Evangelical Biography, 1730-1860*, Vol. 2, p. 873; Harding, *The Countess of Huntingdon’s Connexion*, pp. 81-82, 347-348.

<sup>176</sup> For biographical details of George Lambert, see Morison, *Fathers and Founders of the LMS*, pp. 375-391; James G. Miall, *Congregationalism in Yorkshire* (London, 1868), p. 292.

to his congregation from Glamorgan and beyond. During his ministry, five revivals occurred at Llangan. His warm effective preaching greatly influenced the spiritual life of the people, and he became known as the 'Angel of Llangan'. He was another favourite preacher of the Countess of Huntingdon and preached her funeral sermon.<sup>177</sup> It was a singular blessing to John Love that during his decade in London, which was a difficult time with respect to his pastoral ministry, he became intimately associated with the zealous group of men that had formed the LMS. In addition, because of his links with the Society he became acquainted with some of the most outstanding ministers in England and Wales: men of the second generation of ministers that had been used mightily in the later years of the evangelical revival, and who had direct contact with George Whitefield, the Wesley brothers, the Countess of Huntingdon, and the other first-generation leaders of the revival movement.<sup>178</sup>

David Bogue presided at the first LMS annual meetings, at which the report of the directors was read, and public acknowledgement was made of the Society's appreciation of Captain Wilson's generous offer to navigate the missionary ship. The meeting also received several memorials from different individuals, recommending missions to different parts of the world including one by David Bogue to Surat in India, others to the West Indies, and to Madagascar, and one by John Love who presented a memorial to send a mission to the northern shores of the Caspian Sea.

The public meeting, however, was not entirely harmonious. The unanimity which had characterized the proceedings of the pre-meeting of the directors with regard to the 'Fundamental Principle of the Society' was largely shared by the meeting, and was generally, but not entirely, received with demonstrations of gladness. The discordant note came when 'it was moved and seconded that every missionary accepted by the society shall subscribe a Confession of Faith, to be drawn up for this purpose.' A counter-motion was proposed opposing the requirement for such a confession to be drawn up and subscription required. The counter-motion was carried, to which Lovett adds in his centenary history, 'No other result, perhaps, on a motion of this kind could have been expected, and in the light of a century's experience no other result was desirable.'<sup>179</sup>

Some debate has taken place as to how 'catholic' the founding fathers of the LMS initially intended their society to be. It is clear from the 'Fundamental Principle' that on points of ecclesiastical order and church government the directors were open-minded. Presbyterians, Independents, and Episcopalians

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<sup>177</sup> For biographical details of David Jones, see John Morgan Jones and William Morgan, *The Calvinistic Methodist Fathers of Wales*, trans. John Aaron (2 vols., Banner of Truth Trust, 2008), Vol. 1, pp. 690-714; Edward Morgan, *Ministerial Record or Brief Account of the Great Progress of Religion under the Ministry of the Rev. David Jones* (London, 1841); R. B. Higham, *David Jones of Llangan, 1735-1810, and his contribution to Welsh Calvinistic Methodism* (Edwin Mellen Press, 2009); R. B. Higham, 'David Jones: The Angel of Llangan', in *Ministers and Missionaries: Papers given at the Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches, 1995 Studies Conference* (London, 1995); Eifion Evans, *Fire in the Thatch* (Bridgend, 1996), pp. 134-145.

<sup>178</sup> Both John Wesley and the Countess of Huntingdon died in London during the period that John Love was a minister in the city.

<sup>179</sup> Lovett, *History of the LMS*, Vol. 1, p. 48.

would be sent to the mission field and would be able to establish whatever form of ecclesiastical polity they deemed appropriate. But were the directors also open-minded on diversity with regard to theology? Did they intend to send out Arminians as well as Calvinists, and Baptists as well as Paedobaptists? It is not entirely clear what the answer is to these questions; there are pointers in several directions. Following his discussion of a Confession of Faith being vetoed by the general meeting, Richard Lovett says, ‘As a matter of fact, almost every early missionary would have no difficulty whatever in signing the full Westminster Confession.’ He then details an incident that occurred when the first missionaries were onboard Captain Wilson’s missionary ship *Duff* to the South Pacific:

The missionaries on the *Duff*, who during the voyage formed themselves into a little church, were hardly as liberal in this respect as the general meeting.<sup>180</sup> In the very full journal of their voyage, which has been preserved, under the date January 18, 1797, an entry covering many folio pages exhibits the almost total inability of the great majority either to perceive or to recognize that truth may have more than one side and be capable of more than one presentation. Some of them, we read, ‘entertained a suspicion that Brother (John) Jefferson and Brother (John) Cock were not quite sound in their religious principles. Knowing that both of them had been members of Arminian Societies, they were fearful that the old leaven had not been thoroughly purged out.’ The origin of this suspicion was a conversation which Cock had held with (William) Henry ‘concerning the extent of Christ’s death,’ in which the former ‘at first showed some reluctance to declare his sentiments,’ but finally was driven to affirm that Christ died for all men. Brother Jefferson, ‘who did not appear to show so much openness,’ ‘seemed to evade giving a direct reply to the question by quoting several passages of Scripture which speak of the Redeemer as dying for all.’ It was the daily custom for the whole company of missionaries to meet and discuss in a kind of open debate some set passage of Scripture. The astute president on the day following this fateful conversation chose Romans viii. 29-30. Brother Cock, not unwisely, asserted that the interpretation of the passage was too difficult for him; Jefferson, that he had not yet arrived at any decisive judgment on the doctrine of ‘final perseverance.’ This state of affairs was so serious that Captain Wilson was called in, regular meetings of the whole company were held, the accused were examined and cross-examined, and finally, after a very long theological discussion, significant to us only because of the confident assertion by Captain Wilson, as a matter freely admitted on all hands, ‘that the Missionary Society was quite Calvinistical,’ the meeting was adjourned to the next day, January 19 when both the erring brothers were formally excommunicated. Some twenty folio pages of the journal describe how the two were led to see that in this case truth was with the majority, and on January 29 they were by open vote of all the brethren readmitted into ‘the Church of Christ on board the *Duff*’<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> This is a reference to the directors rejecting the need for a Confession of Faith.

<sup>181</sup> Lovett, *History of the LMS*, Vol. 1, pp. 48-49. On their way to Tahiti, the missionaries appointed a committee comprising eight of their number to draw what they entitled ‘Articles of Faith or, Principles of Religion’. These articles, to which they subscribed, are entirely Calvinistic. They are printed in *A Missionary Voyage to the Southern Pacific Ocean performed in the years 1796, 1797, 1798 in the ship Duff commanded by Captain James Wilson compiled from the journals of the officers and missionaries* (London, 1799), pp. 387-395.



Iain Murray understandably asserts from this narrative, and from John Love's involvement with the Society, along with comments of Rowland Hill in his sermon at the launch of the LMS, and David Bogue's known Calvinism and love of Puritan theology, that the LMS was a Calvinistic organisation.<sup>182</sup> In addition, David Bogue in addressing the May meetings in 1825 and looking back over thirty years expressed the view that the Fundamental Principle extended only to ecclesiology:

Thus, an important fact has been established, that Christians, who differ as to forms of Church government, can continue to act together in sending the pure gospel of Christ to the heathen. It is comparatively of small moment, that external forms and modes of worship should be the same in each congregation; if Jesus Christ be at the head, that is enough. Let there be communion among Ministers preaching for each other, and communion of Christians at the Lord's Table.<sup>183</sup>

However, an alternative interpretation cannot entirely be ruled out as Roger Martin has shown. He writes:

Few of the founding fathers ever declared, for example, that the London Missionary Society was exclusively designed to send out Calvinistic and paedobaptist missionaries. It is true, of course, that David Bogue had called for a rather denominational response to the challenge of the Baptist Missionary Society in his September 1794 *Evangelical Magazine* article...But Bogue was neither present at the earliest of the London Missionary Society's founding meetings in the spring of 1794, nor was his article the inspirational force that some historians have made it out to be. Indeed, the original founding fathers, several months before Bogue had joined their ranks, had been inspired by Melville Horne's *Letters on Missions* which they had read and discussed together at these early meetings...Horne, unlike Bogue, called for a missionary response that would include Arminians as well as Calvinists, Churchmen as well as Dissenters, and, by implication, Baptists as well as paedobaptists. It was Horne's pamphlet and not Bogue's article, it must again be stressed, that was first read by the founding fathers; it was Horne's vision of a mission embodying all denominational and theological persuasions, not Bogue's call for a mission sponsored solely by paedobaptists and Dissenters, that was the primary stimulus in leading these men to found the London Missionary Society in 1795.

Moreover, Horne's ecumenical vision was shared by almost all of the early directors. In his review of Horne's *Letters*, Thomas Haweis hoped that individuals would be 'united together, without respect of different denominations of Christians, or repulsive distance arising from points of dispute between Calvinists and Arminians.' After reading Horne's *Letters* and Thomas Haweis' review, John Townsend, another founding father and minister of the Independent Church at Bermondsey, said that he was 'powerfully stimulated to desire that some measure might be adopted to procure a simultaneous movement of British Christians in this honourable service.' In this statement, Townsend did not exclude Wesleyans or Baptists. Nor did John Love, the Scots Presbyterian minister at Artillery Street in

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<sup>182</sup> Murray, *The Puritan Hope*, pp. 147-148.

<sup>183</sup> *Evangelical Magazine and Missionary Chronicle*, Vol. 3, New Series (June 1825), p. 257.

London. Possibly as a corrective to David Bogue's call for a paedobaptist and Nonconformist missionary society, Love echoed Melville Horne in 1795 when he hoped that 'not only Evangelical Dissenters and Methodists will be found generally disposed to unite in instituting a society...but that many members of the established church of evangelical sentiments...will favour us with their kind co-operation.'<sup>184</sup>

Which of these interpretations is correct it is not easy to determine; what however, we can be sure of is that the LMS was founded on a liberal and catholic basis and was instrumental in establishing a broad evangelical approach that found acceptance in other inter-denominational societies like the Religious Tract Society and the British and Foreign Bible Society. Moreover, it was an approach that appears to have had the hearty support of John Love.

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<sup>184</sup> Martin, *Evangelicals United*, pp. 46-47.