

**A FEW HISTORICAL NOTES ON SCOTTISH
CONGREGATIONALISM**

W. D. McNaughton

Our fathers felt that *their* vocation was to *preach the gospel*. Our preachers were missionaries. Our churches were the mission churches. Our Union was a Missionary Union. The policy of our denomination was characteristically *aggressive*.¹

Angus Galbraith,² 1855.

One hundred and forty-five years ago, Angus Galbraith spoke of a golden age of Scottish Congregationalism that lay in the past, of an indigenous movement that arose almost naturally out of various factors at the close of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth.

A desire to spread the Gospel.

Evangelical developments south of the border, such as William Carey's success in founding the Baptist Missionary Society in 1792, publicly encouraging his fellows to -

*EXPECT GREAT THINGS from GOD
ATTEMPT GREAT THINGS for GOD.*³

and the formation of the London Missionary Society, two years later, served to heighten the conviction in Scotland that missionary endeavour was a necessary part of the Church's life. Missionary societies were established in Glasgow, Edinburgh and other places in 1796.⁴ Not everyone, however, shared the new found enthusiasm for mission.

At the General Assembly of 1796 a proposal that the Church should "contribute to the diffusion of the Gospel over the world", was met with a chilling response. It was argued that the Gospel could be preached only to the civilized, that missionary societies were supported by people from different denominations, that they would export sectarianism and, that they were associated with radical political elements and agitation against the slave trade; so the Assembly dismissed the appeal.⁵

A realisation of need for the Gospel at home.

The Assembly's deliberation failed to stem enthusiasm for the cause of missions and a further development took place in Scotland in the summer of 1796 with the publication of the *Missionary Magazine*: "A periodical Monthly Publication, Intended as a Repository of Discussion and Intelligence Respecting the Progress of the Gospel Throughout the World".⁶ Originally to advocate foreign missions, it soon became the means of communication between earnest Christians as to the best ways

of disseminating the Gospel, not only in foreign lands, but at home. The discussion contained within it, concerning how best to promote the Gospel at home, and the information given by correspondents regarding the low state of religion in Scotland, helped convince men that the ordinary religious agencies connected with the churches were quite inadequate to meet the spiritual needs of the people. If there had previously been any substance in the charge made by the Moderates, in their efforts to discredit supporters of missionary societies, that they neglected the need for the Gospel at home,⁷ the energy and enthusiasm of the evangelical minority reflected on the pages of the *Missionary Magazine* must have gone a long way in laying it to rest.

Reaction to the realisation of the need for the Gospel at home.

Two individuals in particular, James Haldane⁸ and John Aikman,⁹ resolved to make an evangelistic tour through the north of Scotland, accompanied by a divinity student, Joseph Rate,¹⁰ despite the feeling and opinion of most people at the time that only ordained ministers should be preachers of the Gospel. They set out on Wednesday, 12th July, 1797, and completed their labours on 7th November, having covered in excess of 1,000 miles, visiting Orkney in the process, preaching sometimes to a handful, often to huge crowds. The tour was a subject of controversy from start to finish. The publication of their Journal,¹¹ however, containing their findings on the state of religion and criticism of the ministry, created considerable antagonism and hostility. "To many it appeared to be a declaration of war against the Established Church".¹² But the three men had reported what they had seen and heard and done. Much good work had been accomplished and the conscience of the churches in Scotland challenged;¹³ individuals were astonished at their former apathy and alarmed at the condition of every religious denomination.

The previous year, the Relief Church Synod had adopted the following Overture on 18th May, 1796:

That when the stream of public benevolence has begun to flow, and promises soon to refresh many foreign lands, some exertions should be made to water the wilderness and solitary places at home. And, considering the present state of religion in the Highlands of Scotland, that they appoint a committee, to devise a scheme for sending evangelical ministers, or probationers, to those parts, ...¹⁴

This Overture led to the Relief Church appointing two Highlanders, Neil Douglas of Dundee¹⁵ and Daniel McNaught of Dumbarton,¹⁶ to visit Argyllshire. The two men commenced their labours, which were chiefly confined to Kintyre, in June/July 1797.¹⁷ On the whole, large numbers of folk turned out to hear these evangelists and welcome them with great kindness but, over the whole district, the clergy who were

Moderates opposed the evangelists at every possible opportunity and sought to dissuade people from attending their meetings. The two men were represented as dangerous characters, hostile to the civil and religious interests of the country, and, when exhortation proved unsuccessful, the clergy tended to resort to clerical domination. Socinian or Arminian in their sentiments, the clergy were, for the most part, deeply immersed in farming, fishing or trading in sheep and cattle. Their official duties, if performed at all, were performed in the most careless manner.¹⁸ At its best, the ideal virtue of the Moderates was a "sanctified commonsense" nurtured by general culture, and they were the sedatives of all enthusiasm. Indeed, many of the anecdotes in Douglas' Journal serve to highlight something of the religious destitution prevalent in the Kintyre of his day and the character of the clergy. For example, Douglas recalls his surprise on one occasion when, as people assembled for public worship, a man appeared at the skirt of the congregation, by order of the parish minister, lifted up his hand and made the following proclamation in Gaelic: "This is to give notice to you, the folk of this parish, that if any of you hear this man [Douglas] to-day, you will receive neither Baptism, Marriage nor Communion from Mr Alister".¹⁹ The Minister went so far in executing his threats that he insisted at his admissions to his next Communion that every one of his people who had attended the sermons of the evangelists should beg his pardon on bended knees, as the only condition on which he would serve them with tokens.

The clergy of Kintyre did not prevent the itinerancy of Douglas and McNaught from being a success and the following year the Relief Synod sent forth McNaught and two other Gaelic speakers, George Buchanan²⁰ and John McDiarmid,²¹ to Kintyre,²² while the Associate Antiburgher Synod empowered a Gaelic speaker, Eneas McBean of Inverness, "to preach in those places which are most necessitous in the northern counties".²³ In 1799, another two missionaries were sent out by the Relief Church and the Burgher Synod appointed Messrs Ebenezer Brown of Inverkeithing²⁴ and John King of Montrose²⁵ on a two month mission to preach the Gospel "in the dark parts of Aberdeenshire".²⁶ On their return, Brown and King in particular reported that:

the inhabitants where they had laboured discovered a sense of the want of the pure Gospel. Some of them travelled many miles across the mountains to hear them, and appeared to receive the word with gladness of mind. A person asleep during sermons they scarcely ever witnessed. Almost all eyes were fixed on the preacher from the beginning to the end of the discourse; and frequently tears were seen flowing down the cheeks of the hearers.²⁷

The Moderates' taunting reminder to advocates of foreign mission that there were enough heathen at home was a gibe that now appeared to many to contain more than a grain of truth.

An attempt to meet the need for the Gospel at home.

Individuals like James Haldane and his brother Robert²⁸ had become only too well aware of the truth and *The Society for Propagating the Gospel at Home* had come formally into being on 11th January, 1798, as a result. The S.P.G.H. consisted of persons of various denominations, holding unity of faith in the leading doctrines of Christianity, with twelve laymen as directors. Non-sectarian and interdenominational, the Society's declared aim was "to make known the everlasting Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ".²⁹ The Society's members had no "design of forming a new sect, but wished that Christians of all denominations should join in promoting pure and undefiled religion".³⁰ To further its aims, the Society proposed employing two classes of agent - first, catechists, pious young men, whose duty it would be to plant, superintend and teach evening schools in the villages, confining the attention of the children to the subject of religion; the second class were to be Ministers of known character, who would work under the direction of the Society.³¹ As the S.P.G.H.'s agents began to itinerate, a further development took place in the realm of home-mission. An anonymous article concerning patronage had appeared in the *Missionary Magazine* in 1797 suggesting that the evil of patronage could be relieved to some degree if wealthy individuals were willing to buy patronage put up for sale and install Gospel ministers in the event of the charge becoming vacant.³² We know not whether this ever materialised but, shortly after the article's publication, Robert Haldane embarked a slightly different course of action, which probably arose from a suggestion made by Charles Simeon,³³ during a visit to Scotland in the spring of 1798, to members of the S.P.G.H. anxious to extend their work in Edinburgh, that a *Tabernacle* be established.³⁴ *Tabernacles*, large places of worship, had existed in England for fifty years or so, places where the poor could hear the Gospel free of charge,³⁵ from a variety of gifted preachers. Haldane sold his estates, which had been on the market for around two years,³⁶ and in July, 1798, the *Circus*, a former variety theatre, in Little King Street, Edinburgh, was opened by himself and others³⁷ as an experiment in providing for those outwith the influence of the Gospel in large centres of population. Such was the success of the *Circus* venture that Robert Haldane resolved to use his wealth to promote similar independent undenominational preaching stations in centres of population throughout Scotland, where the Word would be preached "more plainly, and in more striking manner than heretofore".³⁸

The *Circus*'s promoters retained their membership of the Church of Scotland, having no thought of departing from it, and individuals were attracted from far and wide to the services in the *Circus*. For example,

Sometime in the year 1798 a few individuals connected with various religious bodies in this quarter (Kirkcaldy), becoming dissatisfied with the cold and formal manner in which the Word was preached, and the ordinances observed in their respective denominations, and hearing of what was doing in the circus at Edinburgh, were induced to attend the preaching of the Word there, and to unite in observing the Lord's Supper as dispensed in that place.³⁹

A parting of the ways.

A few months after the opening of the Circus a change in denominational loyalty became apparent. Greville Ewing⁴⁰ sent his formal letter of resignation to Edinburgh Presbytery, on 1st December, 1798,⁴¹ and

about twelve of the parties principally interested in the Circus and the Society for Propagating the Gospel at Home, including the two brothers (Haldane), Mr. Ewing, Mr. Aikman, Mr. Campbell,⁴² Mr. George Gibson, and Mr. John Ritchie,⁴³ began to meet in private for consultation, when, after prayer and deliberation, they resolved to form themselves into a Congregational Church. Mr. Ewing, as most familiar with such matters, was requested to draw out a plan for its government, and, after repeated conferences, they with one voice invited Mr. J. A. Haldane to be their pastor.⁴⁴

On Sunday, 3rd February, 1799, James Haldane was ordained to the Ministry and inducted to the pastoral charge of the Circus Church.⁴⁵

The New Way.

Comparing the Circus to the churches with which they were formally connected must have been a painful experience for many people and perhaps the greatest reason for their becoming Congregationalists lay in the inability to find real fellowship within the communions to which they belonged. Absence of real fellowship in churches often causes people to seek out fellowship among like-minded people. This certainly was the case as far as John Aikman was concerned,

The chief principle which influenced the minds of the brethren who, I believe, constituted the majority of the small company first associated for observance of divine ordinances in the Circus was the indispensable necessity of the people of God being separated in religious fellowship from all such societies as permitted unbelievers to continue in their communion. This was a yoke

under which we had long groaned; and we hailed with delight the arrival of that happy day when we first enjoyed the so much wished for privilege of separating from an impure communion, and for uniting exclusively with those whom it was meet and fit that we should judge to be all the children of God.⁴⁶

Reaction to attempts to meet the need for the Gospel at home.

Interdenominational Missionary Societies, Sabbath schools independent of official church supervision, lay preaching, the S.P.G.H., the Circus Church, etc., did not enthuse everyone.⁴⁷ The churches were not receptive to new ideas and the period was not one in which such new ideas were easily tolerated. Things reached such a pitch that, in May 1799, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, in response to complaints from all over Scotland, took severe measures in an attempt to crush the movement. It passed an Act which closed the livings of the Church to all but its own licentiates, and forbade any communion with, or granting of the freedom of the pulpit to, any except those regularly licensed. It also investigated the legal position of "*vagrant teachers and Sunday schools*", and enjoined presbyteries to be diligent in the exercise of their legal power to supervise all schools within their bounds.⁴⁸ In addition to these measures, the Assembly issued a *Pastoral Admonition*,⁴⁹ which the clergy were ordered to read from their pulpits on the first Sunday after receiving it. This document, which gave full vent to the hostility felt towards the missionary party, was carefully designed to play upon the fear of the new and the unknown prevalent in society. It sought to stigmatise the evangelistic movement, not only on the ground that it had schismatic tendencies, but as part of a political design to overturn the established institutions of the country, political and religious. Nothing could have been further from the truth. Written plainly into every part of the S.P.G.H. preliminary literature was the principle that submission to government was an essential part of New Testament Christianity.⁵⁰ The different aspects of the Society's work, like most things in human affairs, had clearly arisen one out of another, frequently without those involved realising the next step they were to take. The founders of the S.P.G.H. did not leave their respective churches on doing so. Nor did it seem to them obvious, for a while, that such a step was likely to arise out of the work undertaken and the sentiments they entertained. Having done so, it was never their intention to found a *new sect*. Only a month or so before the *Pastoral Admonition*

application having been made for preaching, from a Society of Christians in Paisley of the Congregational persuasion, they were answered, that is no part of the design of the Society to support any particular connection; their sole object being to diffuse the knowledge of Jesus Christ without showing any partiality for one form of church government above another. Similar applications

had been made from other quarters, to which the same answer was returned.⁵¹

Many spurious arguments were employed against the work of the S.P.G.H. and its agents, despite the legality of their endeavours.⁵² They were persecuted at times in a petty manner, at other times in a serious way. Likewise, those recognised as having countenanced in any way the work of the S.P.G.H. and its agents were persecuted to a greater or lesser extent.⁵³ Nevertheless, all over Scotland, people continued to be drawn to the missionary preachers, finding in their preaching that which they did not get from their own ministers. Struthers says of the north in particular:

Before the close of 1799, nearly forty catechists were travelling throughout the length and breadth of the land, thirty or forty thousand tracts had been distributed and the whole of the north of Scotland was thrown into a blaze. The Established clergy complained that the world was going out of its place, and the old land-marks of things, both civil and sacred, were fast disappearing.⁵⁴

The emergence of fellowships to meet the need for the Gospel at home.

"Thrown into a blaze" may be something of an exaggeration but the catechists and itinerants did tend to make a considerable impact wherever they went. Compared with the Moderates' cold dissertations on morality, the preaching of the itinerants felt like a new gospel. Everywhere crowds gathered to hear them, men and women were led to accept Christ and, with the growing awareness that the Church is a spiritual institution, that its essence is inward, of the heart, rather than external and physical, small Independent or Congregational fellowships sprang into being in some places. Individuals were moved to meet together for prayer and to read the scriptures. Out of their common prayer life, their study of the Word of God and their evangelical zeal there arose a desire to establish a fellowship of believers where a purity of communion might be enjoyed, as distinct from that arising out of promiscuous admission to the Lord's Table.

By the close of the eighteenth century around fourteen Congregational churches had come into being in Scotland. Seven years later there were around eighty-five.

An attempt to supply fellowships with an educated ministry.

Late in 1798, Robert Haldane had returned from England resolved on opening a chain of Gospel Tabernacles throughout Scotland. Aware, however, of existing difficulties in obtaining a suitable supply of ministers for the Circus and evangelists for the S.P.G.H. he also decided to educate young men for the ministry.⁵⁵ As a result, with no clear picture of the precise role his seminary would come to play - "I know

as little as the inquirer, where they (the students) may be afterwards employed"⁵⁶ - Robert Haldane began the institution that was to play a crucial role in meeting the needs of many, as yet unborn, Congregational churches. The first class was formed in January 1799 under the care of Greville Ewing and had twenty-four students, all of them presbyterian in sentiment. However, by the completion of their studies in December 1800 the students had become "*decided and intelligent Congregationalists*"⁵⁷ put under the charge of the S.P.G.H.

Theological controversy over the nature of the fellowships.

The indigenous nature of Scottish Congregationalism cannot be questioned, in the sense that its principles were adopted of necessity and spontaneously in order to give expression to the spiritual convictions and aspirations of individuals who had been enlivened spiritually, to whom spirituality and freedom of church-life had become a necessity. Had its progenitors been able to see their way clear to retaining their connection with the various Presbyterian churches to which they belonged they would not have formed a new connection. They were guided by two principles - the principle that the churches of Christ should be composed of believers in Christ and that every Church should be free to manage its own affairs in accordance with the teaching of Scripture. On the other hand, the young Congregational churches revealed a desire to adhere as closely as possible to the customs and usage of their former connections. The times of meeting and order of public worship underwent little or no change, the casual hearer could detect little difference in this respect between the worship in a Presbyterian and Congregational church. The only real exceptions to this concerned the observance of the Lord's Supper, celebrated by most Congregational churches on the first day of each week as part of the normal service,⁵⁸ and the *weekly meeting* where church business was transacted along with appropriate devotional exercises.⁵⁹

Earlier forms of Independency in Scotland, such as the Bereans,⁶⁰ Old Scots Independents⁶¹ and Glasites, had displayed an abhorrence of National Covenants, insisted on a believers' church and purity of communion, and were determined to reproduce the fellowship of the apostolic church by imitating every practice to be found in the New Testament churches, all of which, through lack of forbearance, resulted in division. Such forces were at work in Scottish Congregationalism from an early date. In particular, the teachings of Glas⁶² and Sandeman⁶³ began to make themselves increasingly felt and the ensuing debate was bitter, forbearance being foreign to many of the proponents of the teachings of Glas and Sandeman.

According to Ewing, Robert Haldane became enamoured with the teachings of Glas and Sandeman around 1804 and began to disseminate their views on church order.⁶⁴ Similar views, concerning mutual exhortation,⁶⁵ and plurality of elders, were expressed by James Haldane in *A View of the Social Worship and Ordinances observed by the First Christians*,⁶⁶ first published in 1805, "in a spirit with which

even the adversaries of his system could scarcely be offended".⁶⁷ In 1807, however, William Ballantine⁶⁸ published a pamphlet⁶⁹ which was widely circulated by Robert Haldane as representing his own views. This document struck at the entire order of the public worship of the churches and the debate mushroomed into a very bitter dispute, in which *"to train pious men for the ministry - to have public collections for the support of Gospel ordinances - for ministers to wear black clothes - was pronounced anti-Christian. Various other novelties were zealously enforced; while those who would not embrace these things, were accused of opposing the cause of God."*⁷⁰ Sensing that if the normal pastoral ministry be replaced with a system of uneducated plurality the lively churches would fossilise like Ballantine's - *"a desert of empty pews, enough to chill the spirits of an Archangel"*⁷¹ - Ewing published a reply, stating *"the Word of God is the only authority which we are bound to obey, in our Christian fellowship. But our heavenly Father has not thought it proper to give a minute detail of the formation and practice of his primitive churches"*.⁷² If the followers of Christ cannot exercise forbearance and recognise sincerely-held differences of opinion, they *"establish a tyranny of opinion, which binds the conscience, where Christ hath left it free; which intimidates every objector, or excludes him from communion; and denounces all other churches as ignorant, superstitious, prejudiced and corrupt"*.⁷³

The question of Baptism.

The trouble came to a head with James Haldane, after a considerable period of indecision,⁷⁴ finally rejecting infant baptism and being baptised himself.⁷⁵ For many in his congregation *this was the straw that broke the camel's back*. The congregation was torn asunder and a hundred or so of those who withdrew formed themselves once again into a Congregational Church in Bernard's Rooms, West Thistle Street, Edinburgh, on 26th March, 1808.⁷⁶ There were similar disruptions elsewhere. The spread of the new ideas throughout the new churches provoked *"contention, strife of words, and divisions"*⁷⁷ and many holding James Haldane's Baptist view allied themselves to the Old Scotch Baptists.⁷⁸

Robert Haldane shared his brother's sentiments and lent all the weight of his own great talents to advocating Baptist views. In the process, he felt it his duty to withdraw his financial assistance to those who did not share his views. The fact that he held the purse strings of the S.P.G.H. and had built many of the buildings in which Congregationalists worshipped, or given substantial loans for the erection of these buildings, meant that his decision had tremendous implications for those who did not share his views. Some had to vacate buildings owned by Haldane and others were faced with having to repay their debts immediately.⁷⁹

Many of the Churches were poor and if they had hitherto been unable to support their pastors, much less were they able to do so now that they were divided in sentiment, and fewer in number.

The consequences of those things were the retiring of some of the Pastors from the work - others who remained at their posts betook themselves either to teaching or still more secular occupations in connection with their official duties; whilst others continued to labour, and to exist with no other aid than the slender pittance which their flocks could give. This greatly marred their usefulness both in the Church and in the world, and consequently weakened and discouraged those who continued steadfast to their principles as Congregationalists.⁸⁰

No doubt some adopted the new ideas out of inexperienced rashness but the apparent anarchy that prevailed in the churches resulted in an odium being attached to attempts to establish true and Scriptural fellowship. But although many chuckled over this rupture, which laid in ruins "*one of the noblest schemes which modern times have witnessed for diffusing religion, and evangelizing the population of the country; yet the good and liberal of all parties who rejoiced in the spread of religion, grieved over it, ...*"⁸¹

In the midst of the above, as far as Ewing was concerned, "*One of the greatest injuries which the churches in our connection have received from Mr. Haldane was his clandestine endeavours to win over the students, who, from all parts of the country, were committed to his care, to views of church government subversive to the churches to which both he and they belonged*".⁸²

The desire to spread the Gospel persists and various new bodies arise to facilitate this desire:

eg. Associations to facilitate itinerancy.

The period outlined to date saw the rise, progress and eventual dissolution of the S.P.G.H., in 1808,⁸³ when the Haldanes finally adopted a Baptist view and Robert ceased to finance the Society.⁸⁴ These years, the years associated with the S.P.G.H., particularly the early ones, can perhaps be viewed as a golden age of itinerancy and the eventual loss of the Society, along with the poverty of the churches, contributed to a considerable reduction in the amount of itinerancy undertaken in Scotland.

Those who ministered to the little fellowships had itinerating in their blood and had continued to itinerate after acceptance of the pastoral office but there was now a heightened awareness of the need for Independent or Congregational societies which sought to facilitate itinerancy. One of the earliest of the societies to promote itinerancy, the *Aberdeenshire Association*, came into being around the time of the S.P.G.H.'s demise and it is tempting to speculate why it came into being when it did.

Had there been some mounting disquiet with the behaviour of the Haldanes and the conduct of the S.P.G.H.? Officially, we read:

On Thursday, the 7th of April 1808, a number of Christians of the congregational denomination, belonging to different churches, having met to deliberate on the best plan for promoting the spread of the gospel, unanimously agreed to form themselves into an association for the purpose of co-operation in the work.⁸⁵

Two years later, on "28th March, 1810, the following brethren met at Nairn; Messrs. James Dewar⁸⁶ and William McKay,⁸⁷ pastors of the church in that place; Alexr. Dewar,⁸⁸ Avoch; John Martin,⁸⁹ Forres; Neil McNeil,⁹⁰ Elgin; Wm. McWilliam,⁹¹ and John Munro⁹² from Knockando, met and formed an association similar to the Aberdeenshire one, *The Morayshire Association*.⁹³

The Glasgow Theological Academy.

1808 had seen the demise of Robert Haldane's Theological Seminary and highlighted the need for the young churches to make provision for ministerial education. Greville Ewing was foremost amongst those recognising the need for an educated ministry. Several years before, towards the end of 1803, in the light of his experience of Robert Haldane and his seminary, he had drawn up a paper entitled *A Memorial Concerning a Theological Academy*, asserting "nothing more directly tends to the progress and prosperity of the Gospel, than the multiplication of able preachers",⁹⁴ and stressing the advantages that would flow from the young churches organising their own institution. 1808 saw a revised version of the paper entitled *A memorial on Education for the Ministry of the Gospel* appear. The circulation of this paper served to increase interest in the subject and provoked discussion among the churches. Eventually, a meeting of pastors of Congregational churches who wished to confer on the subject was held on 13th March, 1811, and it was agreed to form the *Glasgow Theological Academy*.⁹⁵

The Congregational Union of Scotland.

The formation of a Theological Academy in Glasgow, to provide an educated ministry, was a major step forward in the work of reconstruction among the young churches - but something else was required. In light of the great personal family distress being experienced by many a pastor, the economic difficulties of many local churches, and the absence of any systematic co-operation, arising from the haphazard manner in which churches had originated, it was clear to some pastors and members of churches in more favourable circumstances that the situation must be improved. As a result, *The Congregational Union* came into being in November, 1812, to facilitate

The relief of Congregational Churches in Scotland, united in the faith and hope of the gospel, who, from their poverty, the fewness of their numbers, or from debt upon their places of worship, are unable to provide for the Ministration of the word of God, in that way, which would tend most to their own edification, and the eternal happiness of those around them.⁹⁶

Along with this primary aim went that of enabling the spread of the Gospel in the communities in which these churches were set. From the very outset, the reports of the Union show every pastor regarded as an evangelist and every church a home-mission agency.⁹⁷ There was no thought on the part of the Union's founders of creating a *denominational* institution, in the sense that it should be inclusive or representative of all Congregational churches in Scotland. The institution did not comprise of every Congregational church in Scotland, but simply belonged to such as chose to join it, and the fifty-five congregations who did join initially did so out of the will to survive. Their common necessity introduced them to the advantages of Interdependence.⁹⁸

The Itinerant Witness.

Of the funds distributed by the Union a part was in most cases for "the immediate relief of the Pastor, and a part to assist him in Itinerating".⁹⁹ The Union's finances were limited at this time, however, and to a considerable degree the golden age of itinerancy lay in the past. So much so that in March 1813 one writer sought to advocate *The Importance of Itinerancies* and breathe new life into the practice. He asked:

does not past experience furnish sufficient encouragement for adopting with vigour and perseverance, such a plan as we are now recommending? Were there not hundreds, perhaps thousands, even in Scotland, brought to repentance by means of itinerancies, of whom the greater part perhaps remain to this present, ...¹⁰⁰

The same month saw the inauguration of the *Association of the Congregational churches in the County of Stirling and its vicinity for the spread of the Gospel*.¹⁰¹

Then, in 1816,

a Society consisting of Members of the Edinburgh Congregational Churches was formed. Its object was the diffusion of evangelical truth in the Highlands, Islands and other destitute parts of Scotland, by employing Ministers of considerable standing in the Church without regard to the denomination to

which they belonged, to preach the Gospel, and to circulate suitable religious tracts. During the first three years of the Society's operations, upwards of 16 Ministers were employed in the summer months, in some of the most destitute districts of Scotland. These Ministers however were all Congregationalists, the Society not being able to find any others suitable for the work. In addition to the Northern and Western Islands visited by the Itinerants of this Association, the southern parts of the country were frequently and extensively traversed, upon some districts of which a darkness then settled that might be felt. The Society expended during the three first years of its existence upwards of £330 ...

The Society continued its operations every summer until the Congregational Union was able to undertake more extended Itinerances than it could do during its first years.¹⁰²

Shortly after the *Edinburgh Itinerant Society*¹⁰³ was formed, the *Society in Paisley and its Vicinity, for Gaelic Missions to the Highlands and Islands of Scotland*, came into being on 31st March, 1817.

This Society was instituted in 1817, and its object was to send the Gospel to the Highlands and Islands by means of Gaelic preachers. It originated in a deep conviction of the want of adequate instruction in these parts. ... The Ministers employed by the Society were all connected with the Congregational body of this Country viz. Mr. Alexander Mackay of Arran - Mr. Malcolm McLaurin¹⁰⁴ of Islay - Mr. James Dewar of Nairn - Mr. Alexander Dewar of Avoch - Mr. John Campbell¹⁰⁵ of Oban - Mr. Peter McLaren¹⁰⁶ of Callander and Mr. James Kennedy¹⁰⁷ then of Aberfeldy. These Brethren generally spent five or six weeks in summer for a number of seasons as agents of the Paisley Society, ...¹⁰⁸

Following the formation of the latter two societies, the *Annual Report* of the Union in 1818 was able to express "high approbation of a *Society in Paisley for Sending Itinerants to the Highlands*; and *The Edinburgh Association for Encouraging Itinerancies*." Both agencies, having enabled "some of our brethren ... still farther to extend their very requisite labours," were viewed "as necessary and powerful co-adjutors in the great work ..." ¹⁰⁹

Something of the golden age of itinerating was returning, as can be seen from the statement in the *Annual Report* in 1818:

during the past year, not fewer than *twenty-four* preachers have been enabled to extend their labours, by means of the Congregational Union, considerably beyond what they could otherwise have done. And nearly the one-half of these may be almost considered as regular itinerants.¹¹⁰

1825, saw the birth of two other agencies, *The Angus, Mearns, and Perth Shires Itinerant Society*¹¹¹ and *The Fifeshire Home Missionary Association*.¹¹² And a *Sale of Ladies' Work* in Edinburgh, in April, 1827, raised £164 and enabled six Gaelic speaking Congregational ministers to be employed to itinerate in the Highlands of Perthshire, the county of Sutherland, and in the Western Islands.

Those in the northern districts spent the summer months, the only time they could spare; but the one in Perthshire,¹¹³ and the one in the Western Isles, continued their exertions during the winter; as in that season they were more successful in finding the Highlanders at home the exertions of the minister who spent the winter months in the Islands ... [were] extensive ... [and] unremitting. In the various places he visited, he preached 132 sermons, from the beginning of November to the end of February, in general to attentive and sometimes pretty numerous congregations, under circumstances which would have deterred the less hardy inhabitants of our districts from attending. "I often wished," says Mr M. in his journal, "that our Edinburgh friends could witness, for one day, a congregation in ___ or ___, either in the open air or in one of their miserable places of worship, then they would have ocular demonstration of their indifferent accommodations, together with their dress and whole outward appearance. This would give them some idea of their own privileges and comforts. In _____, where public worship is conducted, many elderly people of both sexes assemble without shoes, good or bad, and though I felt grieved at their hardships, yet I was glad that none of their privations were ever urged as any apology for neglecting these opportunities."¹¹⁴

One of the S.P.G.H.'s first agents was a catechist, Alexander McKenzie,¹¹⁵ appointed to itinerate in the Northern Highlands in 1798. On conclusion of his task, McKenzie was sent to the Western Isles, where he laboured with some success.¹¹⁶ And it is worthy of note that some twenty-eight years or so later, as far as Argyll was concerned, Alexander McKay¹¹⁷ could reply to a request from the Secretary of the Congregational Union of Scotland regarding how far the Gospel was being preached by ministers connected with the Union in Argyllshire:

The field occupied by our Ministers on the mainland of Argyleshire [sic] in their stated and itinerant labours extends from the Mull of Kintyre on the south to Tyndrum on the north, and from Dunoon on the east to Ardrumurchan [sic] on the west, comprehending the whole length and breadth of the mainland.¹¹⁸

McKay adds the names of 20 islands belonging to Argyll in which missionaries connected with the Union had laboured, and says "I believe very few parts of the county of Argyle have escaped the notice of your preachers, and in many places good has been done."¹¹⁹

By 1828, in the Highlands and Islands alone, the Union was aiding fifteen brethren who preached in the Gaelic language, and four who preached in the Orkney and Shetland Isles.¹²⁰

It was an age in which there were regular itinerancies in regions immediately surrounding Independent fellowships and more extended itinerancies in remoter, distant, regions, an activity of which William McGavin¹²¹ was to say:

It is a fine thing, Sir, to preach in a pulpit, with a velvet cushion, surrounded by hundreds of well dressed admiring hearers; but it is a very different thing to leave home, and all the comforts connected with home, and to go to remote glens and solitudes, without shelter from the storm and rain, and where scarcely the necessities of life are to be obtained, seeking out persons who are perishing for lack of knowledge, that we may impart to them that Gospel which brings salvation to the guilty and the perishing. ... To go to the glens and the mountains - the high ways and hedges - to go to the lanes, and closes, and hovels of our city population - to instruct the ignorant, to restore the wandering, and to reclaim the vicious, is more honourable than to occupy the pulpit of the most splendid cathedral, and to preach to the greatest nobles of the land. This too is honourable work. It is a noble thing to preach the gospel in a cathedral; but I hold it more honourable to preach it in a hovel; because it indicates that humility, disinterestedness, and self-denial, which ought always to characterise the ministers of Christ.¹²²

English concern for the Gaels.

It should not go unnoted that the financial assistance received for itinerancy from English Independents at the beginning of the 1820s in particular was considerable. For example, the Union Treasurer's account for 1821 reveals that £833, of a total income of £1483, came from England and enabled the Congregational Union of

Scotland to greatly enlarge its witness. After £518 was allocated to thirty-five churches and preachers for the more general purposes of the Union, £799 was allocated as follows: £100 to the Glasgow Theological Academy, for the support of Gaelic Students, £25 for three itinerancies in the Highlands during the spring, £100 for itinerancies in the summer, "including Mr McNeil to Shetland, &c. &c.", £20 for tracts for distribution and £553, in various sums, to sixteen churches "that their pastors may not only be wholly devoted to the work of the ministry, but that they be enabled to add to their stated pastoral labours, the more extensive undertaking of itinerant preaching".¹²³ Nor should it go unnoticed that in 1832 it was reported

that of the expenditure, exceeding a Thousand Pounds, not much more than a fourth part has been appropriated to the original object of the Union, the support of the weaker churches; and such have been the extensive and aggressive operations of the Institution, now more than ever a Home Missionary Society, that besides promoting local itinerancies in the Lowlands, considerably more than one half of its Funds, or about £600, has been expended on the important labours of its numerous agents in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland.¹²⁴

A Wind of Change.

Ten years later, however, at least with regard to *Missions in the Highlands and Islands*, concern was beginning to be expressed. The question was posed as to how suitable men might be recruited for service, especially in the light of the fact that "*the present labourers in the field are, for the most part, in the decline of life, and others are not coming forward to supply their places?*"¹²⁵ In the meantime men like Alexander Dewar of Avoch continued to labour on in what was for them a never-ending crusade prosecuted through the medium of itinerancy. Often they battled on until they were no longer able. For example, it was reported in 1848 that

Owing to his growing infirmities, Mr Dewar was unable to perform his itinerating work this year. He made two unsuccessful attempts, and was obliged to return home without accomplishing the work on which his heart was set.¹²⁶

There was also a feeling, in the early 1840s, that *protracted meetings*¹²⁷ were commendable. In April, 1842, upwards of twenty pastors met ...

for the purpose of conferring with each other on the method of promoting the revival of religion, by means of *protracted meetings*. Much information was communicated of a very cheering nature, as to the benefit which has arisen in all the places where this mode of working has been adopted and carried fairly

through, and as to the stability of those whose conversion there was any reason to entertain well-grounded confidence. As much inconvenience had arisen from the injury done to the churches of some of the brethren who had been somewhat frequently away from home, a great deal of deliberation was had as to the best mode of obviating the evil, and at the same time spreading more widely the benefits of protracted meetings, the result of which deliberation was the appointment of ... a committee for making arrangements for holding meetings in connection with such churches as may be desirous of having them.¹²⁸

At any rate, c.1841, few thought of devoting themselves to Home missions longer than they could help it, believing that form of ministry to be subordinate to the pastoral, suggests an approach to things radically different from that pursued by men like Alexander Dewar, John Campbell of Oban, Alexander McKay, Malcolm Maclaurin, George Murray¹²⁹ and James Kennedy. Probably the difference arose to a degree out of a growing "*professionalism*" amongst the clergy over the years in a denomination which had by this time become "*respectable*". However, it would be wrong to assert that at any given time there was simply a first generation and second generation of Congregationalists holding specific sets of views. One man who never belittled the office of the home missionary was Greville Ewing.

The country pastors felt towards him as a father, and drew spirituality from his sanctified genius. He had learned during his itinerancies what a pastor's life in the country was, and he entered into the peculiar difficulties of their position with deep sympathy. No one in his hearing would have ventured to speak slightly of them.¹³⁰

Things seem to have been allowed to drift. In the financial year ending in 1850, grants were made to twenty-three churches, and two brethren engaged in itinerant labours, in the Lowlands, and to sixteen churches and nine preaching stations in the Highlands and Islands. The churches in the Lowlands were granted £537 to assist them support the ordinances of the Gospel among themselves and £445 for itinerancies, the churches in the Highlands and Islands received £270 for the former purpose and £550 for the latter.¹³¹

"Have we a mission, and are we discharging it?"

However, in an age of great change questions continued to be asked concerning the effectiveness of Scottish Congregationalism's witness, questions such as "have we a mission, and are we discharging it?"¹³² It now appeared other denominations were more attentive to the principle of purity of communion than they once were, more sympathetic to the idea of observing the sacrament of The Lord's Supper with greater

frequency than they used to do and more awake to the importance of itinerancies in the more destitute districts of Scotland.¹³³ It was felt that the whole aspect of the mission field had changed, others preached the Gospel in all its integrity, simplicity and fullness, and no longer was a Sabbath evening congregation necessarily composed of those who had not heard the Gospel during the day in their stated churches.¹³⁴ Much of the foregoing stemmed from the witness of Scottish Congregationalism down through the years and in this respect the spiritual witness of Scottish Congregationalism cannot be separated from the Disruption of the Established Church of Scotland in 1843. Until 1843, many of those who desired a more evangelical form of preaching than that offered in the Established Church often found it in a Congregational church.¹³⁵ After 1843, those amongst such individuals, who had never given up either their nominal connection with the Established Church or their Presbyterian views of church-order, could find their needs satisfied in the Free Church or newborn zeal of the residuaries. They carried with them into these bodies the spirituality which had been cherished and cultivated in the Congregational churches and were not slow to confess how the Congregational witness had enriched their lives spiritually. Nevertheless, the Free Church in particular deprived many of the Congregational churches of a large number of adherents and, being a large body actuated by a vigorous first love, spread its efforts over the length and breadth of the country and reduced the scope for evangelistic activity on the part of Congregationalists.

Had numbers been aimed at the rolls of Congregational churches would have had many upon them over the years who did not truly seek fellowship. It was a vital principle of the early Independents from the outset, however, that every communicant should be converted, and that no one should be admitted into a church who had not given evidence of being born again. They acted on this principle, and would not abandon it. As a result, over the wide districts of the country where their fellowship came to be known, the influence which they exerted was very much greater than the fewness of their number might have led us to anticipate. On the other hand, possibly the churches supported by the Congregational Union owed their poverty in some instances, perhaps in every instance in some degree, to the principle of purity of communion. The foregoing, coupled with depopulation of the Highlands and Islands through emigration and removal to towns and cities, was especially damaging. The following comment on removals from country churches appeared in the 1863 *Annual Report*:

The difficulties and hardships attendant on the attempt to keep the Church separate from the world, are described in various letters, and dwelt upon in such terms as to show how very needful it is for our Churches to be faithful to a principle they have ever esteemed as vital. Numbers could easily be secured by surrendering it, but, with the abandonment, a valuable testimony to Scriptural purity of communion would be removed from our land.¹³⁶

Urbanisation.

In 1855 a considerable proportion of the Union's funds was still being expended annually on the Highlands and Islands. The accounts for the year ending in 1855, reveal grants to churches in the Lowlands of £380 and £347 to churches in the Highlands for general purposes, plus £380 for itinerancies in the Lowlands and £411 in the Highlands.¹³⁷ However, an article published in the same year, *Our Weaker Churches*, sought to address the question facing the denomination of "the continued existence or non-existence" of some of the weaker churches.

Some of these are in number few, in resources limited, in moral influence small; around them a state of things has arisen which greatly circumscribes the sphere of their spiritual activities; and several of them are to a considerable extent, preserved from extinction solely by the external aid the funds of the Union afford.

Shall such assistance be continued or shall it not? Is it expedient that the resources of the Union, which have of late been scarcely equal to the demands made thereon, should be appropriated to the same extent as formerly, to the support of churches which are either relatively or absolutely what they once were; and whose dissolution would certainly not be attended or followed by such a decrease of spiritual agency, as the same event would have occasioned ten or fifteen years ago? And would it not be a wiser and a better thing to appropriate to other and more promising forms of evangelistic agency, the pecuniary power presently so applied?¹³⁸

After lengthy consideration of the subject, the writer concluded:

If the congregational churches of Scotland have aught peculiar in their mission, ... *that* appears to us to be primarily to the masses congregated in the towns and cities of our native land. Concentration, not diffusion is our need; the latter with our limited forces is weakness, the former strength.¹³⁹

This was a conclusion with which men like James Wilson¹⁴⁰ of Aberdeen had no difficulty in identifying. Some years before, Wilson had outlined to the *Annual Meeting* of the Union the history of the Ragged Kirk movement in Aberdeen and

urgently pressed the claims of the degraded classes in other large towns upon the sympathies of the Christian church, and hoped that as the effort in Aberdeen had been so signally blessed by God

... that the friends of humanity and religion in other places would be constrained to go and do likewise.¹⁴¹

Five years later, in 1857, Wilson gave expression to his belief that the Congregational Union was passing into a new phase in its history:

At first they had to look to the country; now it was mainly to the towns. Let them by all means support the earnest men in the country, but unless they planted more Churches in large towns, Congregationalism would not do its duty to the great masses of people it was so well adapted to improve. He hoped the churches would be encouraged to use their efforts, and that they would be ready to devote a portion, at least, of their funds to the evangelization of the masses in large cities.¹⁴²

The belief within the Union that a part of its funds might be profitably expended on missionary operations in larger towns was eventually encapsulated in a revision of the *Regulations of the Institution* in the late 1850s. To the two objects previously specified, namely, the aiding of poor churches and the employment of itinerants, there was added a third, the encouraging of "movements designed to originate new churches in the larger towns."¹⁴³ However, insufficient funds and the intention of the new provision being understood to be to extend the Union's operations, and not merely change their sphere, produced a reluctance to finance new initiatives at the expense of churches already receiving grants, or of itinerants employed by them, and led to delay in the implementation of any action in the spirit of the new provision.¹⁴⁴

"I have sometimes thought, that I have heard just a little too much about our principles, and seen too little of their practical outcome."

The issue of insufficient funds was not new. For example, between 1847 and 1867 the churches contributed £24,670 to Union funds, an average of £1,233 per annum. The income for the first year of the above period, 1847, being £1,442 and that of the last £1,199.¹⁴⁵ Bearing in mind the general rise in living standards over this period and increased membership in the city churches, David Arthur¹⁴⁶ was prompted to ask, "how shall we account for a stationary or decreasing measure of pecuniary support to that institution which is peculiarly and emphatically the institution of the denomination?"¹⁴⁷ Indeed, had the Union's objects as a *Church Aid and Home Mission Society* ever been adequately promoted, namely:

First, to afford to Churches connected with it such pecuniary aid as may be required, to enable them, to the best advantage, to maintain the ordinances of the Gospel among themselves, and to promote the interests in their neighbourhood; Secondly, To employ approved Preachers in more limited or more extended

itinerancies, throughout the country at large; and Thirdly, To encourage movements designed to originate new Churches in the larger towns.¹⁴⁸

Arthur concluded that the Union to a large extent had and was fulfilling its role well as a church aid society. As to itinerancy, he had nothing to say, believing "If the practice is not obsolete the need for it at least is not urgent, ..." On the other hand, lack of finance, Arthur asserted, had ensured that movements designed to form churches in the larger towns had never been prosecuted by the Union "to any considerable degree", though this object had always appeared to him of first importance.¹⁴⁹ In the course of his argument, Arthur stated:

In Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dundee, and Aberdeen, not to mention many other considerable towns, we have a population of eight or nine hundred thousand, or nearly a third of the inhabitants of Scotland, and I am not aware that in these vast accumulations of human beings the Union sustains so much as one agent whose business is to evangelize in order to the origination of new churches. Now, simply, and merely in contrast, let me remind you, that in Orkney and Shetland, containing a population of some sixty or seventy thousand inhabitants, you expended last year, and it has been the same for many years, some four hundred and fifty pounds. Now, mind you, I do not utter an opinion, far less pronounce an adverse judgment, on this expenditure. I only say if you do this, then that other, and in my estimate much more urgent work should not be left undone. ... I only put in a protest against the utter neglect of what we have declared to be one of our objects, viz., evangelistic effort in order to the "origination of new churches in our large towns." ... I have sometimes thought, that I have heard just a little too much about our principles, and seen too little of their practical outcome.¹⁵⁰

At the same meeting, David McLaren, the Union Treasurer asserted:

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

blessed by that sermon; and well do I recollect the happy expression of his countenance as he told us at breakfast immediately after, that that morning he completed his three-score years and ten. Things are somewhat changed with us since then, whether for better or for worse I shall not inquire. Nor shall I say what we may have less of. We have more members, we have more wealth, we have more rank, we have more intellectual power in our pulpits, we have more of the aesthetic in our worship and in our buildings; and if these have been our ambition it has been attained. God grant that it may not be also true of us which is written, "He gave them their desire, but he sent leanness into their souls."¹⁵¹

Middle Aged and Respectable.

By 1867 Scottish Congregationalism had aged greatly and in many respects ceased to be the vibrant body of its youth. Many changes had taken place in Scotland since the first young Congregational itinerants ventured forth with their radical message that "*Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*",¹⁵² a message that had attracted young people in particular.¹⁵³ And, apart from their form of church polity, very little now distinguished Scottish Congregationalists from their fellow Christians in Scotland.

In light of the foregoing, perhaps David Arthur's assertion, *I have sometimes thought, that I have heard just a little too much about our principles, and seen too little of their practical outcome*, should be read out at periodic intervals during every meeting of those who describe themselves as Congregationalist in Scotland. The sentiment expressed is as true today as when it was first uttered. Congregationalism still remains a form of church polity which demands an extremely high standard of commitment to maintain it and in practice it often falls sadly below the ideal.

Postscript - A missed opportunity.

Hopefully, Scottish Congregationalism today would affirm that *in its essence Christianity is following Christ, that is, it is a way of living based on the values and attitudes Jesus embodied in his life and teaching, that this desire to follow Jesus is the sole requirement of church membership and no formulation of the Christian Faith can be made binding upon the conscience of a Christian man, and that the bond of Christian unity and the sufficient test for membership of a Congregational Church is the confession of a personal faith in Jesus as Saviour and Lord.*¹⁵⁴ Sadly, the above has not always been the case.

John Kirk,¹⁵⁵ minister of the Hamilton Congregational Church, published a series of addresses in 1842, entitled *The Way of Life Made Plain*,¹⁵⁶ arguing that "*not only*

*did Jesus die for every man, but that God's Spirit strives with every man, and that they who yield are saved, and those who resist are unsaved".*¹⁵⁷ This was an opinion that had been strenuously opposed several years before¹⁵⁸ by Kirk's former tutor, Ralph Wardlaw,¹⁵⁹ the doyen of *Moderate* Calvinists in Scotland, and most Congregationalists, as moderate Calvinists, accepted the doctrine of limited atonement in full conformity with the Westminster Confession's statements on divine sovereignty and the doctrine of election, hence Arminianizing tendencies in Scottish Congregationalism, such as Kirk's, were strongly resisted. For those involved in the controversy the points in question were believed to have a direct bearing on their attempts to win men and women for Christ. One camp sought to impress on people that every obstacle for the conversion and salvation of the sinner had been removed, except the sinner's unbelief, and the other sought to uphold the sovereignty of God in every facet of conversion and salvation. And as each church was free and independent of others in regard to the religious doctrine it might hold or teach, those who opposed Kirk's assertion that the influence of the Spirit was as universal as the atonement of Christ made use of the churches' two instruments for common action - the Theological Academy and the Congregational Union. The Academy's students had three questions put to them, one of which was, "Do you hold, or do you not, the necessity of a special influence of the Holy Spirit, in order to the regeneration of the sinner, or his conversion to God, distinct from the influence of the Word or of Providential circumstances, but accompanying these means, and rendering them efficacious?"¹⁶⁰ Nine students were expelled as a result of their answers and about a month later in May 1844, seven of these students applied to the Committee of the Congregational Union to be employed as preachers connected with the Union, but were refused.¹⁶¹ Shortly after, as a result of correspondence on the subject of Kirk's views, the four Glasgow churches found they could no longer continue to hold fellowship with the churches in Hamilton, Bellshill, Bridgeton, Cambuslang and Ardrossan,¹⁶² and the Congregational churches in Aberdeen likewise found they could no longer hold fellowship with the churches in Blackhills and Printfield.¹⁶³

Scottish Congregationalism, which had commenced with a radical message some forty years before, failed with others in Scotland to appreciate Kirk's message and the nascent Evangelical Union benefitted tremendously from the events outlined above.

NOTES

1. **Scottish Congregational Magazine**, Edinburgh, 1855, p.191.
2. Angus Galbraith (1827-1901), cf. McNaughton, William D. **The Scottish Congregational Ministry 1794-1993**, Glasgow, 1993, p.50.
3. Smith, George. **The Life of William Carey, D.D. Shoemaker and Missionary, Professor of Sanskrit, Bengali and Marathi in the College of Fort William, Calcutta**, 2nd Edition, 1887, p.48.
4. cf. **Missionary Magazine**, Edinburgh, 1796, p.45.
5. Drummond, Andrew L. & Bulloch, James. **The Scottish Church, 1688-1843**, Edinburgh, 1973, p.152.
6. **Missionary Magazine**, Edinburgh, 1796, Title-page.
7. cf. (Heron, Robert.) **An Account of the Proceedings and Debate in the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, 27th May, 1796, on the Overtures from the Provincial Synods of Fife and Moray, Respecting the Propagation of the Gospel Among the Heathen**, Edinburgh, 1796.
8. James Alexander Haldane (1768-1851), cf. **McNaughton 1993**, op.cit., p.60.
9. John Aikman (1770-1834), cf. **McNaughton 1993**, op.cit., p.4.
10. Joseph Rate (d.1846), cf. **McNaughton 1993**, op.cit., p.131.
11. cf. Haldane, James Alex., Aikman, John & Rate, Joseph. **Journal of a Tour Through the Northern Counties of Scotland and the Orkney Isles in Autumn 1797. Undertaken with a View to Promote the Knowledge of the Gospel of Jesus Christ**, Edinburgh, 1798.
12. Gray, Nelson. **Greville Ewing Architect of Scottish Congregationalism**, Ph.D. Thesis, Edinburgh, 1961, Vol. 1, p.136.

13. cf. Haldane, Alexander. **Memoirs of the Lives of Robert Haldane of Airthrey, and of His Brother, James Alexander Haldane**, London, 1852, p.188.
14. **Missionary Magazine**, Edinburgh, 1796, p.285.
15. Neil Douglas, M.A. (1750-1823), cf. Small, Rev. Robert, D.D. **History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church from 1733 to 1900**, Edinburgh, 1904, Vol. I, p.296.
16. Daniel McNaught (d.1808), cf. *Ibid.*, p.228.
17. cf. **Missionary Magazine**, Edinburgh, 1797, pp.286-289.

cp. Douglas, Niel. **Journal of a Mission to part of the Highlands of Scotland, in Summer and Harvest 1797, by appointment of The Relief Synod, in a Series of Letters to a Friend, designed to shew The State of Religion in that Country, and the claim the inhabitants have on the compassion of fellow Christians**, Edinburgh, 1799.
18. cf. Struthers, Rev. Gavin, D.D. **The History of the Rise, Progress, and Principles of the Relief Church**, Glasgow, MDCCCLIII, p.399.
19. Douglas, Niel. **Journal of a Mission to part of the Highlands of Scotland, in Summer and Harvest 1797, by appointment of The Relief Synod, in a Series of Letters to a Friend, designed to shew The State of Religion in that Country, and the claim the inhabitants have on the compassion of fellow Christians**, Edinburgh, 1799, p.90.
20. George Buchanan, cf. **Small 1904**, op.cit., Vol. I, p.205.
21. John McDermid, cf. **Small 1904**, op.cit., Vol. I, p.124.
22. cf. **Struthers 1843**, op.cit., p.400.

NB. In September, 1798, it was reported that "Mr McDiarmid of Banff is just returned from a Missionary tour through the Highlands, in which he has been engaged for about two months. He went round by Inverness, Fort Augustus, Fort William, Nether Lorn, Lochawe, Glenorchy, Breadalbane, Glenlion, Rainneach, Badenoch, and Strathspey", cf. **Missionary Magazine**, Edinburgh, 1798, p.430.

23. **Missionary Magazine**, Edinburgh, 1798, p.237.
Eneas McBean, cf. **Small 1904**, op.cit., Vol. I, p.642.
24. Ebenezer Brown (d.1836), cf. **Small 1904**, op.cit., Vol. I, p.364.
25. John King, cf. **Small 1904**, op.cit., Vol. I, p.72.
26. **Missionary Magazine**, Edinburgh, 1799, p.231.
27. **General Account of Congregationalism in Scotland from 1798 to 1848 and Particular Accounts Referring to Separate Counties**, Typescript, no date (c.1848), Section 2, pp.5-6.
28. Robert Haldane (1764-1842), cf. **Haldane 1852**, op.cit.
29. **Missionary Magazine**, Edinburgh, 1798, p.58.
30. **An Account of the Proceedings of the Society for Propagating the Gospel at Home, from their Commencement, Dec 28. 1797, to May 16. 1799**, Edinburgh, 1799, p.2.
31. cf. Ibid.
32. cf. **Missionary Magazine**, Edinburgh, 1797, p.162.
33. Charles Simeon (1759-1836), cf. Cross, F. L. & Livingstone, E. A. (Editors), **The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church**, Oxford, 1988, p.1276.
34. cf. **Haldane 1852**, op.cit., p.216.
35. cf. Haldane, Robert. **Address to the Public, Concerning Political Opinions and Plans Lately Adopted to Promote Religion in Scotland, &c. &c.**, Edinburgh, 1800, p.75.

At this time, seat rents were the rule in Scottish churches and a system of payment at the door was quite common, sometimes extending even to standing room.
36. cf. **Haldane 1852**, op.cit., p.208.
37. cf. **Haldane 1800**, op.cit., p.71.
38. **The Edinburgh Quarterly Review**, Vol. I, 1798, p.315.

39. **General Account**, op.cit., Section 4, p.5.

The individuals mentioned above were eventually admitted to the church worshipping in the Circus, possibly among the thirty or so people received as occasional communicants when the Circus was formally constituted as a church in January, 1799, cf. Ibid. and **Haldane 1852**, op.cit., p.235.

40. Greville Ewing (1767-1841), cf. **McNaughton 1993**, op.cit., p.43.

41. cf. Ewing, Greville. **Facts and Documents Respecting the Connections which have Subsisted between Robert Haldane, Esq. and Greville Ewing, Laid before the Public, in Consequence of Letters which the Former had Addressed to the Latter, respecting the Tabernacle at Glasgow**, Glasgow, 1809, pp.8 & 16.

42. John Campbell (1766-1840), cf. **McNaughton 1993**, op.cit., p.23.

43. John Ritchie (1768-1843), cf. **McNaughton 1993**, op.cit., p.135.

44. cf. **Haldane 1852**, op.cit., p.232.

45. cf. **Missionary Magazine**, Edinburgh, 1799, pp.76-80.

46. cf. **Haldane 1852**, op.cit., p.233.

47. cf. (1) McKerrow, Rev. John. **History of the Secession Church**, Edinburgh, 1845, p.384.

(2) **An Adherence to the Missionary Society of Glasgow, defended, at the expence of being cut off from the communion of the Reformed Presbytery, with an Appendix, on Occasional Hearing, Compulsory Measures in Matters of Religion, and Sketches on Terms of Communion, tending to show, that all the Friends of our Lord Jesus Christ ought to unite on the basis of Evangelical Truth**, Glasgow, 1796. (cp. **Struthers 1843**, op.cit., p.403.)

(3) **Laing MSS.**, Edinburgh University, La. II, 500, 24th January, 1797. cf. Ibid., 20th February, 1797.

(4) **Laing MSS.**, Edinburgh University, La. II, 500, 21st February, 1798.

- (5) **McKerrow 1845**, op.cit., pp.393-394.
- (6) **Struthers 1843**, op.cit., p.405.
48. cf. **Acts of the General Assembly**, 1799.
49. **Pastoral Admonition, Addressed by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, met at Edinburgh, May 23, 1799, to all the people under their charge**, Edinburgh, June 3, 1799.
50. cf. **Haldane 1800**, op.cit., p.5 & Appendix, pp.9,11,25.
51. **An Account of the Proceedings of the Society for Propagating The Gospel at Home, from their Commencement, Dec 28. 1787, to May 16. 1799**, Edinburgh, 1799, p.79.
52. cf. **Missionary Magazine**, Edinburgh, 1799, pp.480 & 527, for opinion of the three advocates consulted by the S.P.G.H.
53. cf. **General Account**, op.cit., *passim*.
54. **Struthers 1843**, op.cit., p.402.
55. cf. **Haldane 1852**, op.cit., p.230.
56. **Haldane 1800**, op.cit., p.84.
57. **Haldane 1852**, op.cit., pp.247-248.
58. cf. Matheson, J. J. **A Memoir of Greville Ewing, Minister of the Gospel, By His Daughter**, London, 1843, p.198 (footnote).
59. cf. Ross, James. **A History of Congregational Independency in Scotland**, 1900, Chapter VIII.
60. cf. **Dictionary of Scottish Church History & Theology**, Edinburgh, 1993, pp.61 & 70.
61. cf. *Ibid.*, p.428.
62. John Glas (1695-1773), cf. *Ibid.*, p.364.
63. Robert Sandeman (1718-1771), cf. *Ibid.*, p.744
64. cf. **Ewing 1809**, op.cit., p.82.

65. *Mutual exhortation* involved the exhortation of one another by members of the church in the course of worship. In the Glasite tradition, exhortations consisted of "*scriptural phrases connected together by a theme, concluding without any application*", cf. Murray, D. B. **Records of the Scottish Church History Society**, Vol. XXII, 1986, pp.50 & 53-54.
66. cf. Haldane, James Alex. **A View of the Social Worship and Ordinances observed by the First Christians, drawn from the Sacred Scriptures Alone: being an Attempt to Enforce Their Divine Obligation; and to represent the guilt and evil consequences of neglecting them**, Second Edition, corrected, Edinburgh, 1806.
67. (Orme, William.) **The London Christian Instructor**, London, 1819, p.781.
68. William Ballantine (d.1836), cf. **McNaughton 1993**, op.cit., p.10.
69. Ballantine, William. **A Treatise on the Elder's Office: showing the Qualifications of Elders, and how the First Churches obtained them; also, their Appointment, Duties and Maintenance; the Necessity of a Presbytery in every Church, and Exhortation, and the Observance of every Church Ordinance on the Lord's Day, in order, amongst other ends, to the obtaining of Elders**, Edinburgh, 1807.
70. **Matheson**, op.cit., pp.327-328.
71. **General Account**, Section 10, p.11.
72. Ewing, Greville. **An Attempt Towards a Statement of the Doctrine of Scriptures on Some Disputed Points Respecting the Constitution, Governments, Worship and Discipline of the Church of Christ**, Glasgow, 1807, (Preface).
73. *Ibid.*, p.4.
74. cf. **Haldane 1852**, op.cit., p.357.
75. cf. Yuille, George (Editor). **History of the Baptists in Scotland**, Glasgow, 1926, p.58.

- cp. (Orme, William.) **The London Christian Instructor**, London. 1819, p.783.
76. cf. Escott, Harry. **A History of Scottish Congregationalism**, Glasgow, 1960, p.286.
- cf. **Haldane 1852, op.cit.**, pp.357-359.
77. **General Account**, op.cit., Section 1, p.27.
78. cf. **Yuille**, op.cit., p.59.
79. cf. (Orme, William.) **The London Christian Instructor**, London. 1819, p.784.
80. **General Account**, op.cit., Section 1, pp.27-28.
81. **Struthers 1843**, op.cit., p.407.
82. **Ewing 1809**, op.cit., 1809, p.93.
83. cf. *Ibid.*, p.112.
84. cf. **General Account**, op.cit., Section 1, pp.18-19, 27.
85. **Missionary Magazine**, Edinburgh, 1808, p.211.
- The Aberdeenshire Association* later known as *The Aberdeen and Banff Shires' Itinerant Society*.
86. James Dewar (1780-1842), cf. **McNaughton 1993**, op.cit., p.35.
87. William McKay, cf. **McNaughton 1993**, op.cit., p.93.
88. Alexander Dewar (1785-1849), cf. **McNaughton 1993**, op.cit., p.35.
89. John Martin (1772-1834), cf. **McNaughton 1993**, op.cit., p.105.
90. Neil McNeil (1782-1855), cf. **McNaughton 1993**, op.cit., p.101.
91. William McWilliam, cf. **McNaughton 1993**, op.cit., p.103.
92. John Munro (c.1774-1853), cf. **McNaughton 1993**, op.cit., p.116.

93. cf. **Missionary Magazine**, Edinburgh, 1811, pp.65-67 & **General Account**, op.cit., Section 10, p.21.
94. **Ewing 1809**, op.cit., p.83, as quoted by Nelson Gray in his Ph.D. Thesis, op.cit.
95. cf. **The Glasgow Theological Academy Minutes, 1811-1842**, with note on "Origin of the Institution" (Holograph).
96. **Annual Report of the Committee of the Congregational Union**, Edinburgh, 1813, p.4.
97. cf. **Annual Reports of the Committee of the Congregational Union**, from 1813 onwards.
98. Between 1798 and 1807, around 85 churches were formed in Scotland on New Testament principles and had pastors ordained over them (cf. **General Account**, Section 1, p.26). 55 churches joined the Union at its inception and by 1824 the Union consisted of 78 churches. Over the years the number increased, always remaining around 100 until 1896.
99. **Annual Report**, op.cit., 1813, p.18.
- NB. Thomas Low, Inverkip, received £10 from the Union, but as it was thought that "he did not itinerate enough £5 of that was withheld" each year, cf. **General Account**, Section 13, p.22.
100. **Missionary Magazine**, Edinburgh, 1813, p.100.
101. On 11th March, 1813, cf. **Missionary Magazine**, Edinburgh, 1813, pp.312-314.
102. **General Account**, op.cit., Section 1, pp.33-34.
- cp. **Christian Herald**, Edinburgh, 1821, p.90f.
- John Aikman was Chairman of the Edinburgh Itinerant Society and Robert Kinniburgh was Secretary, cf. **General Account**, op.cit., Section 1, p.34.
- Robert Kinniburgh (1780-1851), cf. **McNaughton 1993**, op.cit., p.78.

103. Also known as *The Edinburgh Association for the diffusion of the Gospel in the more destitute parts of Scotland*, cf. **Christian Herald**, Edinburgh, 1820, p.429.
104. (John) Malcolm Maclaurin (1785-1859), cf. **McNaughton 1993**, op.cit., p.98.
105. John Campbell (c.1780-1853), cf. **McNaughton 1993**, op.cit., p.23.
106. Peter McLaren (1777-1849), cf. **McNaughton 1993**, op.cit., p.98.
107. James Kennedy (1777-1863), cf. **McNaughton 1993**, op.cit., p.76.
108. **General Account**, op.cit., Section 1, p.35.
cp. **Christian Herald**, Edinburgh, 1818, pp.393-396.
109. **Annual Report**, op.cit., 1818, p.17.
110. Ibid., p.14.
111. cf. **Christian Herald**, Edinburgh, 1825, pp.397-401.
112. cf. **Christian Herald**, Edinburgh, 1826, p.28.
113. ie. Peter McLaren, cf. **Annual Report**, op.cit., 1828, p.17.
114. *Extracts from a Sketch of the Itinerant Labours of some Ministers in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, supported from the proceeds of a Sale of Ladies' Work in Edinburgh, April 1827*, in **Christian Herald**, Edinburgh, 1828, pp.278-280.
cf. **General Account**, op.cit., Section 1, p.37.
115. Alexander McKenzie, cf. **McNaughton 1993**, op.cit., p.94.
116. cf. **An Account of the Proceedings of the Society for Propagating The Gospel at Home, from their Commencement, Dec 28. 1787, to May 16. 1799**, Edinburgh, p.60.

In July 1800, it was asserted that one of the S.P.G.H. catechists was stationed in the Western Isles "by particular desire of one

- of the principal proprietors", cf. **Missionary Magazine**, Edinburgh, 1800, p.309.
117. Alexander McKay (1780-1856), cf. **McNaughton 1993**, op.cit., p.92.
118. **General Account**, op.cit., Section 2, p.12.
119. Ibid.
120. cf. **Annual Report**, op.cit., 1828, p.15.
 cp. **Christian Herald**, Edinburgh, 1827, p.171.
121. William McGavin (1773-1832), cf. **McNaughton 1993**, op.cit., p.90.
122. **Christian Herald**, Edinburgh, 1822,p.167.
123. cf. **Annual Report**, op.cit., 1821, pp.26-36.
 cf. McNaughton, William D. **Early Congregational Independency in the Highlands and North East Scotland**, to be published in 1999, Part I, Chapter 13, The Highlands and Islands & Finance.
124. **Christian Herald**, Edinburgh, 1832, pp.175-176.
125. **Scottish Congregational Magazine**, Glasgow, 1841, p.367.
126. **Annual Report**, op.cit., 1848, pp.26-27.
127. "In the spring of 1839, a protracted revival meeting was held at Denholm, - the first of the kind in Scotland" and the Protracted Meeting format appears to have been readily adopted by the churches, resulting in a remarkable revival of religion among many of the Congregational churches in Scotland, the spirit of which continued for some years. cf. **Scottish Congregational Magazine**, Glasgow, 1841, pp.32-33.
128. **Scottish Congregational Magazine**, Glasgow, 1842, pp.215-216.
129. George Murray (1775-1862), **McNaughton 1993**, op.cit., p.117.

130. **Scottish Congregationalist**, 1882, p.115.
131. cf. **Annual Report**, op.cit., 1850, pp.10 & 33.
cp. Ibid., 1848, pp.10-11, 36; 1849, pp.10 & 27; 1851, pp.10-11 & 27.
Scottish Congregational Magazine, Edinburgh, 1852, p.145.
132. **Scottish Congregational Magazine**, Edinburgh, 1851, p.192.
133. cf. **Annual Report**, op.cit., 1848, p.30.
134. cf. **Scottish Congregational Magazine**, Edinburgh, 1851, p.192.
135. Some years later, James Stark wrote: "It is to the credit too, of Congregational Churches throughout the country, that, while anyone with an eye in his head could see that the formation of the Free Church would diminish the attendance in all churches outside the Establishment, yet they felt and expressed a cordial feeling of regard for those who were struggling to effect their emancipation. A considerable proportion of the evening congregation, and not a few present at the morning service, in many of our chapels, were drawn by spiritual affinity, and for the sake of spiritual nutriment, rather from ecclesiastical identity, the consequence being that, when a Church was formed after their own heart, they, as Presbyterians, felt it, of course, to be their duty to stand by it in every way. All the more honour to the ministers and members of dissenting churches, who did not allow selfish and denominational considerations to interfere with the enlightened judgement and generous sympathy", cf. Stark, James. **John Murker of Banff. A Picture of Religious Life and Character in the North**, London, 1887, pp.141-142.
136. **Annual Report**, op.cit., 1863, pp.15-16.
137. cf. Ibid., 1855, p.34.
138. **Scottish Congregational Magazine**, Edinburgh, 1855, pp.40-41.
cp. Ibid., 1856, p.137.
139. **Scottish Congregational Magazine**, Edinburgh, 1855, p.90.

140. James Hall Wilson (1811-1897), cf. **McNaughton 1993**, op.cit., p.172.
141. **Scottish Congregational Magazine**, Edinburgh, 1852, p.161.
142. **Scottish Congregational Magazine**, Edinburgh, 1857, p.152.
143. cf. **Annual Report**, op.cit., 1860, p.3.
cp. Ibid., 1861, p.9.
144. cf. **Annual Report**, op.cit., 1861, p.9.
145. cp. **Scottish Congregational Magazine**, Edinburgh, 1867, p.187.
146. David Arthur (1806-1890), **McNaughton 1993**, op.cit., p.9.
147. **Scottish Congregational Magazine**, Edinburgh, 1867, p.184.
148. **Annual Report**, op.cit., 1860, p.3.
149. cf. **Scottish Congregational Magazine**, Edinburgh, 1867, pp.181-183.
150. Ibid., pp.183-185.
151. Ibid., pp.190-191.
152. John 3, verse 16.
153. cf. McNaughton, William D. **Early Congregational Independency in the Highlands and North East Scotland**, to be published in 2003, *passim*.
154. cf. **Congregational Union of Scotland *Statement of Belief and Syllabus***, Glasgow, 1949.
155. John Kirk (1813-1886), cf. **McNaughton 1993**, op.cit., p.18.
156. John Kirk. **The Way of Life Made Plain: being Twelve Lectures on Important Propositions**, Glasgow, MDCCCXLII.
157. cf. Ferguson, Fergus. **A History of The Evangelical Union**, Glasgow, 1876, p.281.

158. cf. Wardlaw, Ralph. **Two Essays: I. On the Assurance of Faith: II. On the Extent of the Atonement, and Universal Pardon**, Glasgow, 1830.
159. Ralph Wardlaw (1779-1853), cf. **McNaughton 1993**, op.cit., p.166.
160. **Scottish Congregational Magazine**, Glasgow, 1844, p.269.
161. cf. *Ibid.*, pp.349-350.
162. cf. **The Entire Correspondence between The Four Congregational Churches in Glasgow, and The Congregational Churches at Hamilton, Bellshill, Bridgeton, Cambuslang, and Ardrossan: On the Doctrines of Election and the Influence of the Holy Spirit in Conversion**, Glasgow, MDCCCXLV.
163. cf. **Letter from The Three Congregational Churches in Aberdeen to the Congregational Church in Printfield**, 21st February, 1845 (Concerning work of Holy Spirit and Election) (Manuscript)
- Letter from the Three Congregational Churches in Aberdeen to the Congregational Church in Printfield**, 28th March, 1845 (Concerning work of Holy Spirit and Election) and **Copy Answer from Church in Printfield**, 23rd April, 1845 (Manuscript)
- Letter from the Three Congregational Churches in Aberdeen to the Congregational Church in Printfield**, 13th May, 1845 (Concerning work of Holy Spirit and Election) (Manuscript)
- cp. **Correspondence between three Congregational Churches in Aberdeen, and Congregational Churches at Blackhills and Printfield, relative to their views of work of Holy Spirit**, Aberdeen, 1845.

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