

**Congregational Polity and Associational Authority:
The Evolution of Nonconformity in Britain, 1765-1865**

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I, Cullen Thomas Clark, declare that this thesis has been composed by me and that the work which it embodies is my work and has not been included in another thesis.

Signed:

Cullen Thomas Clark, 31 July 2015

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Abstract

Following the Evangelical Awakening, many of the Nonconformist traditions experienced an evolution in their ecclesiastical structure, resulting in the formation of new associations that frequently acted to establish pragmatic agencies like missionary societies, educational boards and social charities. The transition required new expressions of authority. Understanding the nature of this authority is the chief objective of this study.

Chapter One introduces the various themes and goals of the study. Chapter Two explores the Hampshire Congregational Union. In addition to the Union's structure, David Bogue and the Gosport Academy were central to this group's identity. Chapter Three focuses on the Lancashire Congregational Union in the North West of England, home to William Roby, the central figure within Lancashire Congregationalism. Chapter Four covers the Lancashire and Yorkshire Baptist Association and the later Lancashire and Cheshire Baptist Association, where John Fawcett was the primary influence. The New Connexion of General Baptists, Chapter Five, was under the authoritative direction of Dan Taylor, a former Methodist and a zealous evangelist. Chapter Six analyses the Scotch Baptists. Peculiar among Baptists, it was created under the leadership of Archibald McLean. The British Churches of Christ, Chapter Seven, closely resembled the Scotch Baptists but were different in some fundamental ways. Finally, in Chapter Eight, patterns of associational authority among these associations will be compared and assessed.

Authority among Nonconformist associations, particularly those denominations practising congregational polity, was exercised on the grounds of doctrinal purity and evangelistic expansion. As the nineteenth century continued, the organisational structures grew more complex. In turn, increased control was voluntarily granted to the

organisations' governing bodies so they might more efficiently minister. Following the Awakening, these voluntary bodies found new life as a pragmatic expression of Evangelical zeal.

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List of Abbreviations

HCU	Hampshire Congregational Union
HRO	Hampshire Records Office, Winchester
LCBA	Lancashire and Cheshire Baptist Association
LCU	Lancashire Congregational Union
LRO	Lancashire Records Office, Preston
NCGB	New Connexion of General Baptists
NLS	National Library of Scotland
ODNB	Oxford Dictionary of National Biography
YLBA	Yorkshire and Lancashire Baptist Association

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Nonconformists, those Protestants outside the established churches of Britain, have maintained historically a level of caution and even scepticism toward government involvement in church life, resisting any efforts by the state to infringe on their freedom of religious expression. By contrast to the more common episcopal and presbyterian forms of ecclesiastical government in Britain, a large number of the Nonconformists were distinguished by their use of congregational polity. This form of ecclesiology, commonly referred to as congregationalism (not to be confused with the ‘Congregationalists’ denomination), was motivated by the principles of independence and autonomy, wherein each local church was self-governed by the members, free from any hierarchical rule. Theoretically, the members and not a council or a bishop, were the final authority in matters of faith, practice and leadership.¹ Led numerically by Congregationalists and Baptists, and joined by smaller emerging sects like the Churches of Christ, the churches practising congregational polity in Britain were sizeable participants in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Protestant Nonconformity. In the North America, those who followed this ecclesiastical pattern have often been labelled Free Churches, indicating that they were free from the external control of a synod, council or the like.² In Britain, however, the term ‘Free Church’ is synonymous with Protestant Nonconformity in general, including the centrally organised branches of Methodism. In order to prevent confusion and remain geographically consistent, the

¹ James Leo Garrett, *Baptist Theology: A Four-Century Study* (Macon, GA: Mercer University

² James Leo Garrett, *Baptist Theology*, xv.

phrase Free Church has not been adopted. The associations and connexions examined here have all upheld congregational polity.

Although the defining characteristic of congregational Nonconformity was the autonomous nature of the congregations, the assertion of independence was often tempered by a secondary emphasis on co-operation, demonstrated by forming voluntary connexions, or associations, with like-minded churches. These organisations served a variety of purposes and functioned in numerous ways. Whereas early associations existed primarily for mutual advice and fellowship,³ some later associations were formed to support evangelistic or educational efforts, especially following the Evangelical Revival. Others made doctrinal purity and uniformity their chief objective. Regardless, churches that joined connexions voluntarily relinquished some degree of independence for the sake of interdependence.

This study will examine any tensions that might have existed between autonomy and co-operation within associations and connexions with particular reference to how authority and freedom were exercised between 1765 and 1865. These dates were chosen because 1765 was the year that the Scotch Baptists, the earliest of the six groups, was founded. A scope of one hundred years was considered adequate time to investigate any major changes or movements that occurred within Nonconformity. The research will concentrate on six groups from various theological and ecclesiastical traditions: the Hampshire Congregational Union, Lancashire Congregational Union, Lancashire and Yorkshire Baptist Association, New Connexion of General Baptists, Scotch Baptists and the Churches of Christ. Together, they represent the diverse geographical and theological settings from which the congregational traditions of Nonconformity are derived.

³ B. R. White, *The English Baptists of the Seventeenth Century* (Didcot: Baptist Historical Society, 1996), 69.

The development of associationalism in Britain should not be viewed in isolation from its larger context within Protestant Nonconformity, which consisted of Old and New Dissent. The Old Dissent included the Independents, Presbyterians, General (Arminian) and Particular (Calvinist) Baptists and Quakers. For this set of Nonconformists, the eighteenth century brought about the rise of Rational Dissent and a period of numerical decline.⁴ Some churches, however, found renewal in the Evangelical Awakening that spread throughout the eighteenth-century English-speaking world, while remaining within their ecclesiastical traditions.⁵ The denominations of New Dissent, alternatively, were fresh products of the revival of the eighteenth century and primarily consisted of those who had withdrawn from their churches (Established and otherwise) or were requested to depart, and possessed greater evangelistic zeal. The most popular of the new denominations were the various Wesleyan and Calvinistic forms of Methodism and the New Connexion of General Baptists, but the separatist spirit generated by the revivals also led to the founding of numerous smaller sects.⁶ Both traditions of Nonconformity provide a wider context for this study.

The six selected bodies were chosen from both old and new Dissenting traditions, and each embraced aspects of the Evangelical revivals of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, though they are not all to be considered Evangelicals. As Deryck Lovegrove and others have demonstrated, these revivals led to a renewed

⁴ David M. Thompson, ed., *Nonconformity in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Routledge & Kegan, 1972), 1-2.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

interest in co-operation and inter-church associations.⁷ Such was the case with the selected bodies, and a leading criterion for their being chosen. Each of these groups was formed during or after 1765, and three were not established until the turn of the nineteenth century.⁸ The revivalist roots of the associations and connexions may prove helpful in understanding why they functioned as they did.

The justification for this thesis is two-fold. First, the subject has largely been ignored in the historiography, including many of the important supporting themes. There is a shortage of studies analysing the congregational polity among Nonconformists, even though some of the largest British denominations held the position. Instead, the practice is typically mentioned only in passing within broader histories, like Thompson's *Nonconformity in the Nineteenth Century*, which briefly discusses the growth of denominational organisation.⁹ In other cases, like William Brackney's *Genetic History of Baptist Thought* (2004), the denominational history is only briefly placed in the context of Free Churchmanship, in the North American sense.¹⁰ The issue of associationalism has fared little better. Full-length studies on the

⁷ Among others see Deryck W. Lovegrove, *Established Church, Sectarian People: Itinerancy and the Transformation of English Dissent, 1780-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Deryck W. Lovegrove, 'Idealism and Association in Early Nineteenth-Century Dissent' in W.J. Shiels and Diana Wood, eds, *Voluntary Religion* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 303-317; Geoffrey F. Nuttall, 'Assembly and Association in Dissent, 1689-1831' in G.J. Cuming and D. Baker, eds, *Councils and Assemblies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 289-309; W.R. Ward, 'The Religion of the People and the Problem of Control, 1790-1830' in G.J. Cuming and D. Baker, eds, *Popular Belief and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 237-257; David M. Thompson, *Denominationalism and Dissent, 1795-1835: A Question of Identity* (London: Dr. Williams's Trust, 1985).

⁸ Lancashire and Yorkshire Baptist Association (1786/87), Lancashire Congregational Union (1806), Hampshire Congregational Union (1781), Scotch Baptists (1765), Churches of Christ (1842), New Connexion of General Baptists (1770).

⁹ Thompson, ed., *Nonconformity in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Routledge & Kegan, 1972), 3-5.

¹⁰ William H. Brackney, *A Genetic History of Baptist Thought: With Special Reference to Baptists in Britain and North America* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2004), 1-2.

principle are rare, and almost all deal exclusively with Baptists in America.¹¹ In Britain, associationalism is chiefly restricted to the occasional article,¹² but Lovegrove's *Established Church, Sectarian People* (1988) is the welcome exception.¹³ The thesis will aid in reducing the void within the Nonconformist historiography.

Second, an investigation into the British associational tradition is largely relevant to the greater field of historical religious studies, especially Nonconformity. This is especially true on a transatlantic level because in America denominations that have applied congregational polity have dominated the Protestant landscape with Baptists taking the lead as the largest non-Catholic faith group. Likewise, the various expressions of the Churches (Disciples) of Christ maintain a sizable presence within American Christianity and operate numerous academic institutions including Pepperdine University and Texas Christian University. The usefulness of such a study is also strengthened by its multi-denominational approach. It allows this set of Nonconformists to be studied as particular units while placing the individual denominations within a wider context. Although denominational histories and studies have an important place within the wider discipline of religious history and can be of great benefit, examining associations and connexions from various branches of the tradition allows for wider comparison and synthesis. By analysing a range of Nonconformists' perspectives rather than an individual denomination, the study gains greater analytical depth.

¹¹ Paul M. Harrison, *Authority and Power in the Free Church Tradition: A Social Case Study of the American Baptist Convention* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1959); Francis W. Sacks, *The Philadelphia Baptist Tradition of Church and Church Authority, 1707-1814* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1989); Walter Shurden, *Associationalism Among Baptists in America, 1707-1814* (New York: Arno Press, 1980); Gregory A. Wills, *Democratic Religion: Freedom, Authority, and Church Discipline in the Baptist South, 1785-1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

¹² See Note 7.

¹³ Lovegrove, *Established Church, Sectarian People* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

With the exception of a few radicals, most Nonconformists felt an obligation to act in co-operation with other likeminded congregations. While frequently considered champions of autonomy and freedom, it was the custom of these churches to form and work within associational bodies. Considering how numerically significant those who adopted congregational polity were to Nonconformity, surpassed only by the Methodists, and given the importance of connexions to their faith and practice, it is desirable that more research be devoted to these issues.

Studies of associationalism are not uncommon in the United States, but almost all of them focus on Baptists only. Nevertheless, they can provide a wider context for a British study. *Associationalism Among Baptists in America: 1707-1814*, a reprint of Walter Shurden's doctoral thesis, is focused on Baptists in America.¹⁴ Although dated, this book remains a standard work on the subject. The weaknesses of this work, as it relates to this study, are the chapters on the biblical and theological bases for associations, but these are positively overshadowed by the historical chapters. He rightly points out that just as Baptist churches were considered autonomous, associations were equally autonomous, determining their own confessions of faith and membership. Shurden convincingly presents various aspects of associational polity and purpose, strengthened by his abundant use of annual minutes by groups from across the United States. His insights on Baptist ecclesiology are an important resource for similar studies on both sides of the Atlantic.

For a more specific approach to the history of associations and assemblies in Britain, including both Baptists and other Dissenters, essays by Geoffrey Nuttall and

¹⁴ Walter Shurden, *Associationalism Among Baptists in America, 1707-1814* (New York: Arno Press, 1980).

Deryck Lovegrove prove very insightful.¹⁵ Using assembly/association minutes, Nuttall approaches the topic broadly, covering the years 1689 to 1831. Here he intertwines the histories of Independent, Presbyterian and Baptist assemblies. Nuttall's essay provides a judicious description of the inner workings of association and assembly meetings, including their purposes and organisation. His description of associational conflicts proves very beneficial, providing clues about how various Dissenting traditions approached issues of authority, especially in matters of doctrinal conflict.¹⁶ One controversy especially important involved subscription to orthodox Trinitarianism and the Exeter Assembly. Also demonstrated are how eighteenth-century Baptist and Independent associations became more missional in purpose rather than advisory, qualities not immediately found among Presbyterians who were less affected by the Revival.¹⁷

Deryck Lovegrove's essay deals specifically with the rise of voluntary associations and societies within early nineteenth-century Evangelical Calvinistic Dissent, including Baptists, Congregationalists and Methodists. This growth of co-operation corresponds directly to the renewal of evangelistic zeal, which he attributes to the emergence of moderate Calvinism. Lovegrove also points to 'Enlightenment optimism and humanitarian concern' as factors leading to the rise.¹⁸ Although this seems acceptable, more care should have been taken to emphasise the direct connection

¹⁵ Geoffrey F. Nuttall, 'Assembly and Association in Dissent, 1689-1831', in *Councils and Assemblies: Papers Read at the Eighth Summer Meeting and the Ninth Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, ed. G.J. Cuming and Derek Baker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 289-309; and Deryck Lovegrove, 'Idealism and Association in early Nineteenth-Century Dissent' in *Voluntary Religion: Papers Read at the 1985 Summer Meeting and the 1986 Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, ed. W.J. Sheils and Diana Wood (The Ecclesiastical History Society, 1986) 303-317.

¹⁶ Geoffrey F. Nuttall, 'Assembly and Association in Dissent, 1689-1831', 296.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 306.

¹⁸ Deryck Lovegrove, 'Idealism and Association in early Nineteenth-Century Dissent', 304.

between the Enlightenment and the moderation of Calvinism. The author also presents the introduction and growth of society-funded educational services and schools that provided literacy, a necessary means for individual Bible study. These literacy classes often evolved, however, into Sunday schools and Bible classes, which raises questions concerning the initial motivation for their founding.¹⁹ Shurden, Nuttall and Lovegrove each provides a wider framework from which to address the topic of Nonconformist associations and connexions in Britain.

The primary objective of the thesis is to investigate how and to what extent authority was exercised among these six associations and connexions. The conclusions, like the research subjects themselves, will be neither straightforward nor uniform. One of the first matters needing brief attention concerns the broad motivating factors for the creation of each group. In certain instances, understanding the motivation might help explain the priorities of an association and thus illuminate what was considered authoritative for decision-making, especially as it related to organisation. In his article on Dissenting associations from 1689 to 1831, Geoffrey Nuttall observed a shift in function from advisory councils to evangelistic agencies, especially among Congregationalists and Baptists.²⁰ In some instances, the changes in associationalism were theological. This was certainly the case for the New Connexion and leader Dan Taylor, who separated from the other General Baptists, at least in part, because of the doctrinal laxity found within the Old Dissent.²¹ Determining the factors that led to their establishment will not only provide important insights into their original intent, but also

¹⁹ Ibid., 309-311.

²⁰ Geoffrey F. Nuttall, 'Assembly and Association in Dissent, 1689-1831' in G.J. Cuming and D. Baker, eds, *Councils and Assemblies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 303-309.

²¹ See Frank W. Rinaldi, *The Tribe of Dan: The New Connexion of General Baptists 1770-1891: A Study in the Transition from Revival Movement to Established Denomination* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008).

provide a point of reference for how they changed over time.

Although the internal relationships within the associations are of primary importance, there is also a need to explore the relationships with movements and ideas outside the group. The records demonstrate the extent of freedom given to churches in rejecting or adopting contemporary social developments. In some places the leadership of the associations used their authority to encourage the churches to engage their society by joining certain reform campaigns, like abolition of the slave trade or increased religious freedom. It is equally probable that external social and cultural factors influenced the inter-workings of the associations. For example, what role did education play in shaping an association? No church or association is immune to its surrounding environment, therefore, influences and interactions must be ascertained. These factors may have shaped what the groups regarded as authoritative.

Another important method of measuring the extent of the connexions' authority is by determining what role they played in discipline. The religious climate of Britain had undergone tremendous change and diversification since the dawning of the Enlightenment, and heterodoxy found its way to all regions of the country. In their respective studies, Frank W. Rinaldi and Brian Talbot both argue that Dan Taylor (New Connexion of General Baptists) and Archibald McLean (Scotch Baptists), respectively, maintained a high degree of involvement in the discipline of their groups, especially in matters of doctrine.²² It is worth investigating whether the level of authority they were afforded was found to the same extent among leaders of the other connexions. Other issues of discipline beyond doctrinal orthodoxy may include conflicts concerning membership (including exclusion), morality or personal conflicts. It is essential to

²² Rinaldi, *The Tribe of Dan*, 143; Brian Talbot, *The Search for a Common Identity: The Origins of the Baptist Union of Scotland, 1800-1870* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2003), 62.

analyse church and association records to see how matters of conflict were handled. At times the matters may have been left for the individual congregations to resolve, which would demonstrate a high priority placed on autonomy, but in other cases, the connexions may have intervened or been consulted, limiting congregational freedom for the sake of consistency.

For each association or connexion, one of the most fundamental challenges is an attempt to determine within what or with whom authority was placed. If asked directly, the answer most commonly given by leaders would have been the Bible. Between 1765 and 1865 each of the six groups maintained a high view of scripture and considered it the divinely inspired authority for faith and practice. However, each group interpreted the scriptures differently, and arrived at different conclusions. In each case, some other form of authority was appealed to or consulted. Other sources of authority may include historic personalities, such as the Reformers or the Fathers, confessions of faith, like the Savoy Declaration, and other periodical literature, like the Churches of Christ magazine, *Millennial Harbinger*. As with scripture, calculating degrees of authority may prove challenging, but the obstacle may be overcome by observing how frequently and successfully congregations and connexions appealed to the sources in times of dispute. By addressing these various issues, the project will benefit from a more comprehensive and coherent approach.

It is essential to any study of a Dissenting religious group to have an understanding of against what or whom the group is reacting. In this particular study, the reaction was against the established churches of Britain. In one of the more exhaustive survey works on English ecclesiastical history, Doreen Rosman points out that in the early years of the eighteenth century fewer than a combined ten percent of

the English were Dissenters or Catholics.²³ She rightly asserts that the Church of England, with its local expressions, was a massive unavoidable institution that moved beyond its role within religion and affected numerous aspects of a person's daily life, including family rites of passage, public entertainment and secular business. This ecclesiastical 'multi-tasking' was no doubt a lingering effect of Britain's Roman Catholic past, but if the Church of England was such a pillar of society, what led to its decline and the rise of Dissent from the mid-eighteenth century?

W.R. Ward, with whom Rosman surprisingly fails to interact, explores this question in his classic, *Religion and Society in England, 1790-1850*.²⁴ Therein, Ward argues convincingly that both in England and abroad spiritual revival and the necessary rise of the laity to active leadership led to the decline of the establishment. In the mid-to-late eighteenth century, the English government grew too weak to establish Anglicanism deeply abroad or to maintain Anglicanism's vitality locally. The Church of England was in desperate need of spiritual renewal and the government was incapable of helping. As a result, the laity took action to counter spiritual decline. This action often took the form of Methodism, parachurch organisations, including mission and education societies, and itinerant preaching.

Building on Ward's acknowledgement of the phenomenon, Deryck Lovegrove, *Established Church, Sectarian People*, delves fully into the role and effects of rural itinerant preaching.²⁵ Although these travelling evangelists/preachers efficiently spread spiritual rejuvenation, their itinerancy led to increased scrutiny by the Church of

²³ Doreen Rosman, *The Evolution of the English Churches, 1500-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 136.

²⁴ W. R. Ward, *Religion and Society in England, 1790-1850* (New York: Schocken Books, 1973).

²⁵ Deryk Lovegrove, *Established Church, Sectarian People: Itinerancy and the Transformation of English Dissent, 1780-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

England and indirectly the government because of inadvertent similarities to the French uprisings. Throughout the text, Lovegrove effectively argues that itinerancy successfully advanced orthodox Dissent in rural England.

Seeing its grip over religious life rapidly slipping, the government scrambled to regain and centralize control in an attempt to unify the kingdom. In a move to do so under a common Protestant belief system, the government sought to renew the established churches in England, Scotland, and Ireland. No book describes the events surrounding these establishments better than *The National Churches of England, Ireland, and Scotland, 1801-1845*.²⁶ Stewart J. Brown goes to great lengths to document the controversies and reactions, as well as the results, surrounding this centralization of power. Since Dissenters by their very nature abhorred external control in religious life, the events described by Brown only fuelled their cause.

Ultimately the movement to unify the United Kingdom through the established churches failed under the rapidly expanding Dissent stimulated by Enlightenment thinking. Scholars often interpret the Enlightenment as a hindrance to religion, but in the case of religious Dissent (including orthodox Dissent), some component ideas were cornerstone. While other studies fail to emphasise the correlation between the Enlightenment and Dissent, *Enlightenment and Religion* explores the relationship with rational Dissent.²⁷ Especially important to the study is the shared common dislike for the subordination insisted upon by established churches. Episcopal ecclesiology was a means by which the government sought to recapture control, encourage unity and advance spirituality.

²⁶ Stewart J. Brown, *The National Churches of England, Ireland, and Scotland, 1801-1845* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

²⁷ Knud Haakonssen ed. *Enlightenment and Religion: Rational Dissent in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

In Scotland, the failure of the government to enforce unity was especially visible in the Disruption of 1843. In their respective books, Callum G. Brown and Alec Cheyne explore the Disruption, which they both consider *the* major crisis of nineteenth-century Scottish church history. Brown's *Religion and Society in Scotland Since 1707*, a significantly revised and updated version of an earlier work, calls the Disruption 'the most spectacular ecclesiastical event in modern Scotland'.²⁸ He presents the mass exodus of clergy and laity from the established church as the result of decades of growing disenchantment with state-sponsored religion and though he places the Disruption within a broad social framework, he fails to contextualize it by largely ignoring the Ten Years' Conflict. Cheyne's *Studies in Scottish Church History* does not make the same mistake.²⁹ For him, the Disruption is the final dramatic act of the Ten Years' Conflict when there was a growing plea for disestablishment for the sake of voluntarism and a more democratic ecclesiology.³⁰ If Cheyne falls short in any aspect of his analysis it is perhaps in his lack of emphasis on the role of Evangelicalism, but he goes to great lengths to place the Conflict and Disruption in their proper social and historical contexts, emphasising the growing role of industrialization and urbanization.

British Evangelicalism is a vital aspect of this study. Since the 1980s, academic awareness and interest have spread concerning the religious, social and political roles Evangelicalism has played and continues to play in Britain and North America. Volumes of academic and popular titles concerning Evangelicalism saturate the market. InterVarsity Press has created the most important multi-volume series to

²⁸ Callum G. Brown, *Religion and Society in Scotland Since 1707* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), 25.

²⁹ Alec Cheyne, *Studies in Scottish Church History* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999). See especially his chapter entitled, "The Ten Years' Conflict and the Disruption: An Overview."

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 108.

day: A History of Evangelicalism: People, Movements and Ideas in the English-Speaking World.

The editors, David W. Bebbington and Mark A. Noll, have developed a significant scholarly series that adds fresh insight and depth to the discussion. The continuing project, an estimated five volumes,³¹ progresses chronologically beginning with important transatlantic people, events and movements immediately preceding and influencing the eighteenth-century British and North American revivals. The first two volumes of the series, authored by Noll and Wolffe respectively, provide the broader framework and background as well as significant bibliography from which to build a more focused and concentrated study.

When discussing British Evangelicalism in particular, the standard survey to which other books on the subject are compared remains Bebbington's *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*.³² Therein the author establishes the most popular, though occasionally disputed, definition of historic Evangelicalism presently used by scholars, including those of the InterVarsity Press series mentioned above. Often referred to as the 'Bebbington Quadrilateral', the book identifies four marks of Evangelical belief: 'conversionism, the belief that lives need to be changed; activism, the expression of the gospel in effort; biblicism, a particular regard for the Bible; and what may be called crucicentrism, a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.'³³ The definition has also

³¹ Books in the IVP series published thus far include: Mark A. Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), John Wolffe, *The Expansion of Evangelicalism: The Age of Wilberforce, More, Chalmers and Finney* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007) and David W. Bebbington, *The Dominance of Evangelicalism: The Age of Spurgeon and Moody* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005); Brian Stanley, *The Global Diffusion of Evangelicalism: The Age of Billy Graham and John Stott* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013).

³² David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988).

³³ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

been adopted for the current study. According to Bebbington, Evangelicals of this definition thrived both within and outside established churches. The book goes on to show how British Evangelicalism, which included those within the working classes and the aristocracy, developed in the 1730s not as a protest against but as an expression of the emerging Enlightenment. This movement embraced popular Enlightenment ideas of rational argument and the validity of personal experience in determining truth.

While some, such as W.R. Ward in *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening*, dismiss the lasting hold of Evangelicalism in Britain,³⁴ Bebbington convincingly shows how the diverse group made definite inroads into mainstream society, even going as far as helping shape the culture. It appears that as valuable as Ward's work remains, he seems to have had difficulty separating revivalism from Evangelicalism. He argues that the Great Awakening while having great lasting effects in America produced few lasting effects in Britain. Even so, Ward's strength rests in his unmatched multi-national synthesis. While a large portion of the book's setting resides beyond the time and location of the current study it is still somewhat useful in that he clearly presents the 'Great Awakening', a term he redefines, as a phenomenon and movement that influenced not only North America but also much of Europe as well.

Many of the British Evangelical histories spend most of their efforts on England. After all, it was the home of the Wesleys, George Whitefield, and William Carey. In a much-needed contrast, however, David Hempton takes interest in Scotland and asserts that the Evangelical faith influenced that country more significantly than England.³⁵

Religion and Political Culture in Britain and Ireland looks at the role of religion in the

³⁴ W. R. Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 354.

³⁵ David Hempton, *Religion and Political Culture in Britain and Ireland: From The Glorious Revolution to the Decline of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 49. He makes the same claim for Wales.

formation of national and regional identity. He attributes much of the success of Evangelicalism in Scotland to the followers of Thomas Chalmers and their Evangelical enthusiasm.

Hempton interprets the turmoil that surrounded the Ten Years' Conflict as a 'national movement directed against Westminster indifference and an anglicised landed elite', and describes the Chalmers-led Disruption as a "powerful assertion of Evangelical middle-class values."³⁶ He rightly and importantly notes that Dissent-driven separation from the Established Church for the sake of voluntaryism was not the goal of Chalmers. On the contrary, Chalmers was a believer in state-sponsored religion, just not the current one. By establishing the Free Church of Scotland, he established a national church with a true Scottish identity, led and maintained by Scottish Evangelicals, not Westminster. Whether or not Chalmers recognised the success of the Free Church of Scotland as primarily dependent on the Evangelical enthusiasm of its members has not yet been explored.

Evangelical Faith and Public Zeal further explores the theme of Evangelical activism briefly described by Hempton in *Religion and Political Culture in Britain and Ireland*. The book, a collection of essays by prominent scholars of Evangelicalism, including Hempton, explores British Evangelicals' 'engagement with contemporary society' and its decline.³⁷ In short, this collection of essays deals with activism. In the first chapter, Hempton attempts to chart the Evangelical contribution to social change from 1780 to 1832. Although degree of contribution is difficult to measure, he is successful in uncovering patterns and trends. The chapter presents abolitionism, the first activist movement considered, as an ideology that was not uniquely an Evangelical

³⁶ Ibid., 67-68.

³⁷ John Wolfe ed. *Evangelical Faith and Public Zeal: Evangelicals and Society in Britain, 1780-1980* (London: SPCK, 1995), 1.

cause but also attracted a multitude of religious groups and sub-cultures. Even so, one cannot ignore the Evangelical contribution. Although in the eighteenth century middle and working classes formed the constituency of Evangelicalism, the advent of the nineteenth century brought more Evangelical aristocracy, politicians and bishops. Growth among affluent Evangelicals without alienating others made the group increasingly capable of influencing culture concerning slavery, education and other social causes of the age. The essayists describe other instances of Evangelical activism, but possibly the most relevant to the future discussion is Stanley's essay 'British Evangelicals and Overseas Concerns, 1833-1970'.³⁸ Stanley, a leading figure in the study of the history of overseas mission, describes how abolitionism led to increased mission awareness for Africa. Granted, missions was only one of several plans for humanitarian aid in Africa, but the inclusion of spiritual regeneration as a means of aiding an ailing continent was presented because of Evangelical influence. How to go about this endeavour was not as easy as deciding to do so. As previously described, Evangelicals often found themselves in conflict over the role of the government in religious affairs. The relationship between Church and State was a significant hurdle within the missionary enterprise, and it presented itself as an issue in many forms including financing, policy making, and trade.

Michael Watts extensively expounds the evolution of Evangelical mission in his massive *The Dissenters*.³⁹ Using a vast amount of statistical and primary research material, Watts explores many aspects of Nonconformity, but it is his treatment of primarily domestic missionary endeavours that is relevant to this discussion. A key strength of the Evangelical home mission movement was its flexibility, a quality the

³⁸ Ibid., 81-96.

³⁹ Michael Watts, *The Dissenters*, vol. 2, *The Expansion of Evangelical Nonconformity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

Church of England lacked. Until the nineteenth century, approval from Parliament was required to create a new Anglican parish,⁴⁰ while many of the nonconforming Evangelicals were free to hold services or start churches in a variety of unconventional locations. With precision Watts charts and interprets the expansion of Evangelicalism, as well as its challenges, and while missions is not the book's focus, his understanding of British Evangelical expansion is invaluable.

For a discussion more focused on international expansion of British Evangelicalism, *Christian Missions and the Enlightenment*, a collection of essays edited by Stanley, has significant benefit.⁴¹ One of the strengths of this collection is its portrayal of missionaries as not only evangelists, but also as communicators of Evangelical Enlightenment thought. Several of the essays have particular relevance to this study and explore missiological conflict, debate and methodology among Scottish Evangelicals. Especially pertinent is Carson's essay, which deals in part with the Baptist Missionary Society with which the Scotch Baptists co-operated.

For the purposes of analysis, the groups have been divided into three broad traditions: Congregationalists, Baptists and Primitivists. While there appears to be no shortage of secondary sources for some of these, significant gaps exist for others. The inconsistency corresponds directly to the historical size and the longevity of the denominations. Larger and more established traditions like Baptists and Congregationalists have a great deal more literature than the more recent or less common groups. The quantity of secondary sources is much less important than the quality of the studies produced for each of the associations.

The twentieth century provided numerous denominational histories for

⁴⁰ Ibid., 113.

⁴¹ Brian Stanley, *Christian Missions and the Enlightenment* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2001).

Congregationalists in Britain. For England, the most popular surveys were produced by R.W. Dale, *History of English Congregationalism* (1907), Albert Peel, *These Hundred Years* (1931), and R. Tudur Jones, *Congregationalism in England* (1962).⁴² Of these, the latter two have proved the most useful: Peel for his insights into the inner workings of the Congregational Union and Jones for his breadth of research. For all their benefits, however, these surveys provide no coverage of the issue of authority, while associations and their functions received only brief passing remarks but little more. Although these studies are largely dated and often lack adequate objectivity, they are useful for the broad framework they provide.

Specific context for the Lancashire Congregational Union and the Hampshire Congregational Union is provided in more specific works. Histories by Richard Slate (1840), Benjamin Nightingale (1906) and W. Gordon Robinson (1955) provide an account of the Lancashire Union from inception to the time of publication.⁴³ Slate gives a chronological account briefly detailing major LCU events almost every year, while Nightingale delivers a more topical approach, including chapters on ‘Heroic Itinerancy’ and ‘Congregational Architecture’. Comparatively, one would expect Robinson to benefit from the distance of time, but, though he provides some useful tables and charts, his work is largely pedestrian. By contrast, his biographical study of William Roby, the Lancashire Congregationalist leader, is detailed and the only one of its kind, but

⁴² R.W. Dale, *History of English Congregationalism* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1907); Albert Peel, *These Hundred Years: A History of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, 1831-1931* (London: S. Tinsley & Co., 1931); R. Tudur Jones, *Congregationalism in England, 1662-1962* (London: Independent Press, 1962).

⁴³ Richard Slate, *A Brief History of the Rise and Progress of the Lancashire Congregational Union and of the Blackburn Independent Academy* (London: Hamilton, Adams and Co., 1840); Benjamin Nightingale, *The Story of the Lancashire Congregational Union, 1806-1906* (Manchester: John Heywood, 1906); W. Gordon Robinson, *A History of the Lancashire Congregational Union, 1806-1956* (Manchester: Lancashire Congregational Union, 1955).

there is no discussion of his unsurpassed authority within the LCU.⁴⁴ Studies dealing primarily with the Hampshire Congregational Union are scant and general surveys are non-existent. Two books on the history of Congregational mission have proved beneficial. *British Zion* by Michael Rutz explores the theological motivations of Congregational missionaries in their participation in colonial politics, especially in relation to the indigenous populations to whom they ministered.⁴⁵ Rutz's work places Congregationalism well within its rightful place in the history of mission, and even features Bogue, the Hampshire Congregationalist divine, sporadically throughout, but the magnitude of his leadership, especially as an educator, is absent. Neither is there any mention of the HCU or the Gosport Academy. On the other hand, Christopher Daily's study of Robert Morrison, pioneer missionary to China, presents David Bogue and the Academy prominently in the early chapters, and argues convincingly for the centrality of Bogue and his Gosport Academy in any future study of the British mission enterprise.⁴⁶

More plentiful than the historiography of the Congregationalists is that of the Baptists, but while numerous surveys are available, few are applicable to the present topic. The best multi-volume survey relevant to the current discussion is the English Baptists series, published by the Baptist Historical Society.⁴⁷ Particularly important are

⁴⁴ W. Gordon Robinson, *William Roby and the Revival of Independency in the North* (London: Independent Press, 1954).

⁴⁵ Michael A. Rutz, *The British Zion: Congregationalism, Politics, and Empire, 1790-1850* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2011).

⁴⁶ Christopher A. Daily, *Robert Morrison and the Protestant Plan for China* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2013).

⁴⁷ This series from the Baptist Historical Society consists of four volumes, each written by a notable Baptist historian. Included are, B.R. White, *The English Baptists of the Seventeenth Century* (1996); Raymond Brown, *The English Baptists of the Eighteenth Century* (1986); J.H.Y. Briggs, *The English Baptists of the Nineteenth Century* (1994); Ian M. Randall, *The English Baptists of the Twentieth Century* (2005).

the volumes on the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, by Raymond Brown and John H.Y. Briggs, respectively.⁴⁸ The integration of associations into their works is especially commendable since that aspect of Baptist history is frequently ignored. Also worthy of attention is W.T. Whitley's *History of British Baptists* (1923), which, despite its age, is still valuable for its insights into role of associations among the Baptists.⁴⁹ Because of the chronological and geographical breadth of most surveys, theology is often ignored or over simplified. In response David Bebbington, *Baptist Through the Centuries* (2010), William Brackney, *Genetic History of Baptist Thought* (2004), and James Leo Garrett, *Baptist Theology* (2009), have produced quality overviews of the changes and developments in Baptist thought, a welcome change.⁵⁰ Their approaches differ, however, as Bebbington and Brackney structure their works thematically, while Garrett organises his biographically. All three fill a void left by most traditional surveys.

Also filling the gaps left by general surveys are histories of the specific Baptist associations and connexions. The history of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Association has been explored by W.T. Whitley, *Baptists of North-West England* (1913), and Ian Sellers, *Our Heritage: The Baptists of Yorkshire, Lancashire and Cheshire* (1987).⁵¹ Whitley's study focuses on the northwest region of England, so it is broader in scope and includes churches and organisations beyond the association. Sellers, however, is

⁴⁸ Raymond Brown, *The English Baptists of the Eighteenth Century* (London: Baptist Historical Society, 1986); John H. Y. Briggs, *The English Baptists of the Nineteenth Century* (Didcot: The Baptist Historical Society, 1994).

⁴⁹ W. T. Whitley, *History of British Baptists* (London: Charles Griffin & Co., 1923).

⁵⁰ David W. Bebbington, *Baptists Through the Centuries: A History of a Global People* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2010). Brackney, *A Genetic History of Baptist Thought* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2004); James Leo Garrett, *Baptist Theology: A Four-Century Study* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2009).

⁵¹ Whitley, *Baptists of North-West England* (London: Kingsgate Press, 1913); Ian Sellers, ed., *Our Heritage: The Baptists of Yorkshire, Lancashire and Cheshire, 1647-1987* (Headingley: Yorkshire Baptist Association and the Lancashire and Cheshire Baptist Association, 1987).

purposefully more narrow, and all the included articles relate specifically to the Lancashire and Yorkshire Association, which amicably split in 1837 into the Yorkshire Baptist Association and the Lancashire and Cheshire Baptist Association.⁵² Frank Rinaldi's *Tribe of Dan* (2008) is a full-length study of the New Connexion of General Baptists.⁵³ Therein, he chronicles the connexion's journey from its revivalist origins to its merger with the Baptist Union (1891). Rinaldi's strength rests in his excellent use of records from assembly meetings and local congregations. Particularly insightful are the details of the connexion's ecclesiology,⁵⁴ but attention to the nature of the New Connexion's founder Dan Taylor's authority is lacking.⁵⁵ By augmenting the general surveys with these specialised histories, a more detailed understanding of the Baptist tradition of co-operation emerges.

The secondary literature related to the Primitivists, including the Scotch Baptists and the Churches of Christ, may be less common, but should not be interpreted as inferior in quality. The first academic study of the movement was the University of Edinburgh PhD thesis of A.C. Watters (1940), 'History of the British Churches of Christ',⁵⁶ which was revised and published under the same title eight years later, primarily for US circulation.⁵⁷ Watters's research into the origins of British Churches of Christ is minimal, though he correctly emphasises the roles of William Jones, James

⁵² Whitley, *Baptists of North-West England*, 180.

⁵³ Rinaldi, *The Tribe of Dan* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008).

⁵⁴ Especially chapter six, 143ff.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 143-144.

⁵⁶ A.C. Watters, 'History of the British Churches of Christ' (University of Edinburgh, PhD, 1940).

⁵⁷ A.C. Watters, *History of the British Churches of Christ* (Indianapolis: School of Religion, Butler University, and Birmingham: Berean Press, 1948).

Wallis and the Scotch Baptists.⁵⁸ Particularly beneficial is his chapter on the early evolution of the congregations into an organised connexion, which held their first co-operative meeting in South Bridge Hall at Edinburgh, 1842.⁵⁹ Building upon the tradition of Watters, David Thompson's *Let Sects and Parties Fall* (1980) is the most recent full-length survey of the Churches and the most detailed.⁶⁰ What may be considered an earlier outline of the book appears in article form in the *Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society*, 1973.⁶¹ Thompson, who is a respected Cambridge historian, has claimed that the book is not a scholarly study but a popular work, commissioned by and written for the members of the denomination.⁶² This claim, however, was a gross overstatement. While the book appeals to the sympathetic reader it is also well researched and written. As such, it is the best available survey of British Churches of Christ and is especially useful for its treatment of origins and early developments.

The Baptists in Scotland, a collection of articles edited by David Bebbington, is a broad survey of Baptist history in Scotland.⁶³ Therein, Derek Murray's article on Scottish Baptists in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries clearly introduces Archibald McLean, together with lesser-known Scotch Baptist leader Robert Carmichael, to the reader. Murray demonstrates that McLean and his followers

⁵⁸ Ibid., 29-32.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 36.

⁶⁰ David M. Thompson, *Let Sects and Parties Fall: A Short History of the Association of Churches of Christ in Great Britain and Ireland* (Birmingham: Berean Press, 1980).

⁶¹ David M. Thompson, 'Churches of Christ in the British Isles, 1842-1972', *Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society*, 1:1 (April, 1973), 23-34.

⁶² Thompson, *Let Sects and Parties Fall*, 5-6.

⁶³ D.W. Bebbington ed. *The Baptists in Scotland: A History* (Glasgow: The Baptist Union of Scotland, 1988).

maintained a unique polity and collection of distinctives, but contrary to their claim to take inspiration from the Bible alone, the Scotch Baptist churches were highly influenced by external intellectual sources, especially the Glasites. Murray provides useful insights into Scotch Baptist ecclesiology including a high view of eldership and belief in the necessity of unanimous agreement. Unfortunately, absent from Murray's study is an appraisal of the connectivity between the churches. He briefly mentions an informal connexion between the churches and the interchurch distribution of annual letters and correspondence, but does not go into detail.⁶⁴ The most recent publication that significantly deals with the Scotch Baptist tradition is Brian Talbot's *The Search for a Common Identity*.⁶⁵ Although his study primarily focuses on the origins and development of the Baptist Union of Scotland, it also includes one of the most complete published studies of Scotch Baptists produced to date. Talbot spends considerable time detailing the various unique beliefs of the group, but more importantly, he presents the Scotch Baptists' relationship with other Baptists, including the Haldanes and English Particular Baptists. The 'Scotch' have been generally interpreted as highly exclusive, and rightly so, but Talbot presents a more moderate view, demonstrating the relationships McLean developed with Northamptonshire minister Andrew Fuller and the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS).⁶⁶

Because the secondary literature is frequently inadequate in addressing the subjects of authority and associationalism, the availability and use of primary sources is even more critical. These include circular letters, association and church minutes,

⁶⁴ Ibid. For more on Scotch Baptist origins, faith and practice, see Derek Murray's article, 'The Scotch Baptist Tradition in Great Britain', *Baptist Quarterly* 33:4 (1999) 186-198.

⁶⁵ Brian Talbot, *The Search for a Common Identity: The Origins of the Baptist Union of Scotland, 1800-1870* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2003).

⁶⁶ Ibid., 48-49.

published tracts or essays, sermons, contemporary periodicals and various types of correspondence. Following the pattern established for the secondary literature, the discussion of primary sources will be structured according to the three traditions.

Original sources for the two Congregational associations were largely accessible. The primary collection of materials related to the Lancashire Congregational Union (1786-1974) is held at the Lancashire Records Office in Preston.⁶⁷ The deposit varies widely and includes items such as minutes, articles of an early constitution and financial records. Available from a variety of sources, periodical materials like *Missionary Magazine* (1796-1813), *Christian Herald* (1814-1823), *London Christian Instructor* (1818-1824) and *Congregational Magazine* (1825-1845), were important forums for theological debate and missionary news.⁶⁸ They often provide details and accounts ignored by the secondary literature for reasons of discretion or diplomacy. For the study of William Roby, a detailed personal collection held by the John Rylands Library is the most helpful and contains a variety of correspondence, diaries and sermons.⁶⁹

Primary sources for the Yorkshire and Lancashire Association and the New Connexion of General Baptists are far from sparse. Challenges have been encountered when historians like Ian Sellers, *Our Heritage*, and W.T. Whitley, *Baptists of North-West England*, who proved useful for providing context, frequently fail to cite sources or supply bibliographies. Baptist periodicals are easily located and almost always included news of associations and accounts of annual meetings. As with the other

⁶⁷ 'Lancashire Congregational Union', Lancashire Records Office, Preston.

⁶⁸ *Missionary Magazine*, (Edinburgh, 1796-1813); *The Christian Herald*, Vols 1-8 (Edinburgh, 1814-1823); *The Scottish Congregationalist*, Vols 1-29 (Edinburgh, 1835-1880); *London Christian Instructor, or, Congregational Magazine*, Vols 1-7 (London: 1818-1824); *Congregational Magazine*, Vols 1-12 (London, 1825-1836).

⁶⁹ 'Roby Collection', Northern College Archives, John Rylands University Library, Manchester.

traditions, these publications are invaluable sources of Baptist information, especially the *Baptist Annual Register*, *General Baptist Magazine*, *General Baptist Repository* and the *Baptist Magazine*.⁷⁰ Finding these and other periodicals has been made considerably easier with the aid of Rosemary Taylor's *Baptist Quarterly* article, 'English Baptist Periodicals, 1790-1865'.⁷¹ The Angus Library (Regent's Park College, Oxford), however, has proven to be the most important archive for both of these groups. The Angus holds the largest collection of British Baptist historical materials in the world, and is the official archive for the Baptist Union, Baptist Historical Society and the Baptist Missionary Society. It also has a large holding of association records, but many remain uncatalogued and thus cannot be searched electronically.

Primary sources for the Scotch Baptists are mostly found in Edinburgh. Official church correspondence is available in limited quantities but enough is available to be of notable value. The greatest number of these letters can be found in the National Library of Scotland (NLS). More specifically, the NLS Manuscript Division contains a collection of letters and documents particularly concerned with the Scotch Baptists between the years 1820 and 1850.⁷² Likewise, the New College Library, University of Edinburgh, contains a series of published and bound letters entitled 'The Church Assembling in the Pleasance, Edinburgh; To the Church of Christ Assembling in _____', named after the first circular letter of the set.⁷³ The letters revolved around the

⁷⁰ *Baptist Annual Register*, Vols 1-4 (London: 1791-1803); *The General Baptist Magazine*, Vols 1-3 (London: 1798-1800); *The General Baptist Repository*, Vols 1-10 (London: 1802-1821); *The Baptist Magazine*, Vols 1-57 (London: 1809-1865).

⁷¹ Rosemary Taylor, 'English Baptist Periodicals, 1790-1865', *Baptist Quarterly*, 27:2 (April, 1977), 50-82.

⁷² Manuscript Letters Relating to the Scotch Baptist Churches Mainly in the Year 1820-1850. Acc. 11076 in the National Library of Scotland (NLS) Manuscripts Division. From this point forward referred to as the 'Scotch Baptist Collection'.

⁷³ 'The Church Assembling in the Pleasance, Edinburgh; To the Church of Christ Assembling in...' (Edinburgh, 1834). New College Library, University of Edinburgh.

merger of the Baptist church in Aberdeen with another, for which permission was not sought, and the disapproval of the Edinburgh. Lastly, four magazines were produced that promoted Scotch Baptist principles and doctrine: *The Christian Advocate*, *The New Evangelical*, *The Theological Repository*, and *The New Theological Repository*. All four of these magazines were published by William Jones, a leader among the Scotch Baptists and close friend of Archibald McLean. They are especially valuable for their recordings of theological debate. Scotch Baptist sources are ample.

As with the secondary, the availability of primary literature pertaining to the Churches of Christ is limited. The archival collection of the Churches of Christ Historical Society has been deposited in recent years into the holdings of the University of Birmingham.⁷⁴ The National Library of Scotland also possesses a small collection of related manuscripts.⁷⁵ Although the holdings are primarily concerned with the Scotch Baptists, many of the letters discuss the early relationship and conflicts between the Baptists congregations and the emerging Churches of Christ. Following the Nonconformist tradition, the Churches of Christ were regular publishers of periodicals. The magazine were frequently used to reproduce Alexander Campbell's American writings, but were also the primary source of connexional communication. One of the most important of these is the *Christian Messenger and Reformer* (1837-1845), which details the earliest formal co-operation and statistics.⁷⁶ In 1848, the *British Millennial Harbinger* began production and became the organ of the connexion, supplying the minutes of annual meetings and writings from prominent members. The primary

⁷⁴ 'Records of the Churches of Christ', Orchard Learning Resources Centre, University of Birmingham, Birmingham.

⁷⁵ 'Manuscript Letters Relating to the Scotch Baptist Churches, Mainly in the Years 1820-1850', Acc. 11076, National Library of Scotland Manuscripts Division, Edinburgh.

⁷⁶ *The Christian Messenger and Reformer*, vols 1-9 (London: 1837-1845).

sources related to the six associations and connexions will provide the essential basis for this study.

The structure of this study aims to investigate six particular associations and connexions within their own specific context in order to assess the manner and degree in which authority was exercised. Each body will be studied in its own separate chapter, yet also organised according to the larger tradition of which each is a part.

The first two chapters will focus on associations of Congregationalism, also called Independents. Chapter Two explores the Hampshire Congregational Union, which, perhaps because of its rural setting, is the least discussed organisation of the secondary literature. In addition to the Union's structure, David Bogue and the Gosport Academy were central to this group's identity. Chapter Three focuses on the Lancashire Congregational Union in the North West of England where Manchester dominated the industrial, financial and political scene. It was also home to William Roby, former member of Lady Huntingdon's Connexion, who was a central figure within Lancashire Congregationalism.

The study will then proceed to explore the Baptists, the first, Particular, and the second, General. Remaining in the region, Chapter Four covers the Lancashire and Yorkshire Baptist Association and the later Lancashire and Cheshire Baptist Association. John Fawcett of Hebden Bridge, in the Upper Calder Valley region of the West Riding, influenced this association of moderate Calvinists early. It maintained a highly organised structure and was well connected to other Evangelical Baptists. The New Connexion of General Baptists, the subject of Chapter Five, was a product of New Dissent. Although the New Connexion is approached as a whole, the chapter is primarily concerned with the Leicestershire and the Midland Conferences. As a hub for Evangelical Nonconformity, the Midlands played central role in the New

Connexion, and so the chapter is primarily concerned with the Leicestershire Conference, which was later renamed the Midland Conference in 1810 after a merger with the Nottingham Conference.

The final Nonconformist tradition to be explored is the Primitivists. These connexions were distinctive in their pursuit to recapture not only apostolic belief, but also to precisely reproduce the ecclesiastical practices of the Early Church. Chapter Six will analyse the Scotch Baptists, who were considered peculiar among British Baptists. This group was formed and developed under the leadership of Archibald McLean. While the connexion was most prominent in Scotland, its churches could be found throughout Britain. The British Churches of Christ, Chapter Seven, closely resembled the Scotch Baptists but were, in fact, doctrinally different in some fundamental ways. With early influences arising from both domestic and American sources, under the leadership of Nottingham elder, James Wallis, it became its own unique connexion. Finally, in Chapter Eight, patterns of associational authority among Nonconformist associations that practised congregational polity will be compared and assessed. The result will be an account that will contribute to Protestant Nonconformist studies by exploring the topic of authority in a context that has been generally ignored in the larger historiography.

Authority among Nonconformists associations in Britain, especially those that practised congregational polity, has been greatly neglected, but it is worthy of further research. Previous studies have focused on the autonomous character of the groups with little discussion about the interconnectivity. Additionally, the relevance of the topic not only applies to British denominations, but also to a variety of Nonconforming traditions both domestically and internationally. For Nonconformists utilising this form of church government, the principles of independence and interdependence were

both valuable. Attempts to balance the two priorities were most clearly demonstrated when churches joined associations following the Evangelical Awakening. While historians have previously acknowledged the presence of both aspects within the Protestant Nonconformist tradition, they generally fail to explore the issues further. This thesis will seek to rectify this absence and fill the void left by previous research.

CHAPTER TWO

Hampshire Congregational Union

Like other Nonconformists, the Congregationalists, or Independents as they were often called, believed in the centrality of autonomous churches voluntarily co-operating together to achieve common purposes. Although Independency in Hampshire may be traced back to the seventeenth century,⁷⁷ R. Tudur Jones's *Congregationalism in England* notes that Hampshire Congregationalists found renewed life from the flames of the Evangelical Awakening and organised the earliest of all the post-revival county unions in 1781.⁷⁸ At that time, the founders referred to the new society as the 'Association of Protestant Dissenting Ministers'. On the other hand, while acknowledging the importance of the event, Deryck Lovegrove's *Established Church, Sectarian People* placed a greater emphasis on an apparent restructuring of the group in 1797.⁷⁹ His reasoning was based on the fact that the various Hampshire congregations desired to reform themselves into a group that primarily existed to support itinerant

⁷⁷ See the article by George Brownen, 'Hampshire Congregationalism' in *Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society*, 5 (January 1904), 283-298.

⁷⁸ R. Tudur Jones, *Congregationalism in England, 1662-1962* (London: Independent Press, 1962), 175.

⁷⁹ Deryck Lovegrove, *Established Church, Sectarian People* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 183.

evangelism throughout the county.

In 1796, the Association voted that at its next meeting (June 1797), the topic of discussion was to be ‘What are the best means to be used, as to matter, method, and manner, for conveying the knowledge of the Gospel to the ignorant people in the county villages?’.⁸⁰ Additionally, a sermon on the same subject was to be written by David Bogue, minister at Gosport, and then published as a circular letter. In April 1797, a large number of the Hampshire ministers gathered at Romsey for the ordination service of David Bennett, just two months before the regularly scheduled semi-annual meeting. During a break in the day’s activities, Bogue called together the ministers to present a ‘plan for spreading the Gospel through every part of Hampshire’.⁸¹ The group, without fanfare, tentatively agreed to ‘form themselves into a Society for that purpose’ pending final approval at the forthcoming meeting.⁸² During the June gathering, the proposal was discussed further and unanimously adopted. Immediately following this decision, the members in attendance discussed the practicalities of the move. It was at this time that an additional scheme was projected ‘to erect schools with a view to diffuse religious knowledge’, but no resolution was adopted.⁸³ Lovegrove’s emphasis on the 1797 decision is reasonable, but there is no evidence suggesting that one should view the body begun in that year as a new Association rather than a significant reordering of priorities.

Annual Meetings. When the Hampshire Association first began meeting

⁸⁰ Minutes of the Hampshire Congregational Union [hereafter HCU], Hampshire Records Office, Winchester, 4 May 1796.

⁸¹ MS Minutes of the Association of Protestant Dissenting Ministers, 5 April 1797, Hampshire Records Office [hereafter HRO], 127M94/1.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ HCU, 7 June 1797.

regularly, there was no clear pattern about the dates chosen to assemble except that members generally avoided travelling during the harsher winter months. Between 1781 and 1787, the most common dates fell between April and October, with only a few exceptions. The milder weather allowed for a maximum number of participants.

Eighteenth-century Hampshire Congregationalists primarily functioned together within the confines of frequent corporate meetings. From the time of the earliest gathering in the 1780s, these regular assemblies were central to the identity of the Association. The emphasis on these recurrent meetings may in large part be traced to the absence of any normal organisation beyond the county level. Whereas many contemporary Nonconformist associations gathered once or twice a year, it was not unusual for the Association of Protestant Dissenting Ministers, by which name it was first designated, to meet as many as four times annually. In fact, between September 1781 and October 1791, the organisation met approximately thirty-six times.⁸⁴ At that time, the general meetings were at the core of all association life for Hampshire Congregationalists.

The early Hampshire Association meetings maintained a similar structure to those of the other associations of that era, except that they were shorter. The members would gather together and hear a sermon or two, and thereafter they would proceed to undertake the day's business, after which the meeting was adjourned. Rarely did it last for more than a single day until the nineteenth century when the group began holding a worship service on the evening preceding the actual assembly.

During the earliest decades, the business portion of the agenda was largely insignificant. Authority was of little importance because there were very few assets and ministries for the churches to control or manage. Many times, the Association's

⁸⁴ MS Minutes of the Association of Protestant Dissenting Ministers, HRO 127M94/1.

minutes do not record any significant business, if any at all. Of course there were exceptions. As will be further discussed below, at a regular meeting held on 9 September 1795, members voted to send the ministers David Bogue (Gosport) and William Kingsbury (Southampton) as representatives to an assembly that would become known as the birth of the London Missionary Society.⁸⁵ However, during the majority of the first two decades of the association's existence, the primary emphases were placed upon preaching and fellowship. Frequently, in fact, the only recorded resolutions passed during many of the eighteenth-century meetings followed a similar pattern to that of the brief and mundane minutes recorded 10 June 1789: '1. Resolved that the next Meeting be at Portsmouth on Aug. 26th 1789; 2. That the Rev. Mr J. Berry of Romsey preach on "The Depravity & Misery of Man as Fallen"'.⁸⁶ The focus was rarely on passing detailed resolutions or other business in the earliest years. Unlike the Baptists of the same period and locale, there was no use of the gatherings as a doctrinal or ecclesial advisory board for the churches because the Association consisted of ministers only. The men in attendance were primarily concerned with fellowship, edification and preaching.

Following the decision to reorganise themselves into the Hampshire Congregational Union (HCU) in 1797, the churches increased their focus on pragmatic matters, thus naturally building a more complex organisational structure and, as a result, creating further opportunities for the expression of authority. Sometime between this meeting and 1812 the HCU began accepting laymen as members of the group. A gap in the records has prevented specifics. By 1800, the business portion of the meetings

⁸⁵ MS Minutes of the Association of Protestant Dissenting Ministers, 9 September 1795, HRO, 127M94/1.

⁸⁶ MS Minutes of the Association of Protestant Dissenting Ministers, HRO, 26 August 1789, 127M94/1.

had gained considerable prominence, and decisions were being made beyond the typical concerns of time, date and location of the next gathering. That same year it was determined that a committee would be appointed ‘to procure supplies for Guernsey’ in the Channel Islands.⁸⁷ Based on the extant minutes, this seems to have been one of the earliest mission endeavours, if not the earliest, pursued by the Hampshire Congregational Union. At that same meeting, further evidence of increased organisation was evident in the growth of official business as members designated £298 for the construction of a chapel at Ryde on the Isle of Wight. Likewise, members also selected a committee to correspond with the ‘Baptist Brethren’ and responded to a letter from the Wiltshire Association by means of yet another committee.⁸⁸ Two years later (1802) a resolution was passed declaring ‘That a fund be immediately formed for supporting the County Itinerants’, which meant that the Hampshire Association had suddenly become an employer and not just a gathering of ministers and church representatives, requiring financial and personnel oversight.⁸⁹ In an 1813 published report, it was noted that since its ‘formation’ (or reorganisation) in 1797, just over fifteen years before, the Association had supported the building of eighteen chapels, renovated two other buildings for the use of public worship, maintained numerous ‘Itinerant station[s]’ and sub-divided into four manageable districts.⁹⁰ By mid-century, the Association was further divided into five districts (Northern, Southern, Eastern, Western and Central) and had passed the power of expanding membership to the

⁸⁷ MS Minutes of the Association of Protestant Dissenting Ministers, 23 April 1800, HRO, 127M94/1.

⁸⁸ MS Minutes of the Association of Protestant Dissenting Ministers, 23 April 1800, HRO, 127M94/1.

⁸⁹ MS Minutes of the Association of Protestant Dissenting Ministers, 14 April 1802, HRO, 127M94/59.

⁹⁰ HCU, 9 September 1813.

district committees.⁹¹ This pattern of expansion continued through much of the mid-Victorian era causing the formation of further organisational structures.

The expansion of structures was largely the result of a change in focus. Like many of its Evangelical contemporaries, when the Hampshire Association refocused its efforts on zealously spreading the gospel throughout Hampshire and beyond, a more systematic approach to the meetings was adopted, rather than continuing the basic sermon series model of the past. When David Bogue presented his plan at Bennett's ordination in 1797, his specific intent was to mobilise the churches and their ministers for the advancement of 'the Gospel through every part of Hampshire'.⁹² As a result, the assembled ministers immediately sought to 'form themselves into a Society for that purpose'.⁹³ In other words, the response of the ministers to the challenge of reaching 'the heathens abroad' and the 'heathens at home' was to form a new society, not to preach more sermons at their regularly scheduled gatherings.⁹⁴ Fifty years later, as Congregationalists reflected back upon the historical shift in the priorities of the Association, the following statement was printed in the *Congregational Year Book* of 1847: 'Delightful though it be to maintain Christian fellowship and fraternal intercourse amongst the churches, yet the chief object of [our] union should be to effect aggressive movements on the territories of ignorance, vice, and ungodliness.'⁹⁵ In other words, while fellowship among members was desirable, the true purpose of county unions, especially the HCU, was the expansion of Evangelical religion at home

⁹¹ HCU, 1843.

⁹² MS Minutes of the Association of Protestant Dissenting Ministers, 5 April 1797, HRO, 127M94/1.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ HCU, 7 June 1797.

⁹⁵ Congregational Year Book, 1847, 73.

and abroad. Those in attendance in 1797 believed that the restructuring of the Association was essential to accomplish this goal.

David Bogue. The single most influential leader among Hampshire Congregationalists between 1765 and 1865 was David Bogue (1750-1825) of Gosport. Bogue has largely been overlooked in the historiography, or at the least underrepresented. Although he was included in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, as well as a very brief article in the *Dictionary of Evangelical Biography*, he is absent from other notable works like the *Biographical Dictionary of Evangelicals* and Clyde Binfield's classic *So Down to Prayers*.⁹⁶ Bogue's influence, however, among Congregationalists in Hampshire, as well as on a national level, calls for greater inclusion in Evangelical and Nonconformist literature.

In addition to his traditional ministry, Bogue's role as an influential educator was one that lasted throughout his career. In 1771, after receiving his Master's degree from the University of Edinburgh and his licence to preach in the Church of Scotland, he moved south and took multiple tutoring jobs in Edmonton, Middlesex, and various parts of London.⁹⁷ This also provided him with the opportunity to assist William Smith, a fellow Scotsman and minister of the Silver Street Independent Chapel (London), with whom he lived for five years.⁹⁸ In 1777, Bogue received an invitation to become the

⁹⁶ Michael Laird, 'Bogue, David (1750-1825)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). Timothy Larsen, et al., eds., *Biographical Dictionary of Evangelicals* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003); Donald M. Lewis, ed., *Dictionary of Evangelical Biography, 1730-1860*, 2 Vols (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004); Clyde Binfield, *So Down To Prayers: Studies in English Nonconformity, 1780-1920* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1977).

⁹⁷ Bogue, David (1750-1825)', *ODNB*; Christopher A. Daily, 'David Bogue (1750-1825)', *Dissenting Academies Online: Database and Encyclopedia*, Dr Williams's Centre for Dissenting Studies, March 2012; Chester Terpstra, 'David Bogue, D.D., 1750-1825: Pioneer and Missionary Educator' (University of Edinburgh, PhD, 1959), 85.

⁹⁸ Terpstra, 'David Bogue', 88. See also James Bennett, *The History of Dissenters During the Last Thirty Years: From 1808 to 1838* (London: Hamilton, Adams and Co., 1839), 144.

minister of the Congregational church in Gosport, Hampshire, where he was ordained and remained until his death almost fifty years later.⁹⁹ It was also at Gosport where he would exert his greatest influence.

David Bogue the minister should not be interpreted apart from David Bogue the educator. Upon his arrival in Hampshire, Bogue continued his role as an educator alongside his ministerial position. It has been assumed by many that the Gosport Academy did not commence operation until 1789, when George Welch, a wealthy London banker, began to sponsor the school financially. Michael Laird in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, Stuart Piggin in the *Dictionary of Scottish Church History & Theology* and Noel Gibbard in his article 'David Bogue and the Gosport Academy' have perpetuated this mistake.¹⁰⁰ In actuality, Bogue began tutoring just a few months following his arrival in 1777, though with only a single pupil.¹⁰¹ Upon the death of Welch, in 1796, other sources of income were secured for the on going work of the Gosport Academy. Bogue's former student, wealthy Scottish Independent Robert Haldane, provided most of the financial backing over the course of the next three years.¹⁰² Additionally, Haldane pledged £10 per year per student for tuition.¹⁰³ The remainder of the students' expenses were to be covered by the Hampshire

⁹⁹ Noel Gibbard, 'David Bogue and the Gosport Academy', *Foundations*, 20 (Spring 1988), 36.

¹⁰⁰ Bogue, David (1750-1825)', *ODNB*; Stuart Piggin, 'Bogue, David' *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993); Gibbard, 'David Bogue and the Gosport Academy', 36.

¹⁰¹ For further discussion of dating the Gosport Academy see Christopher A. Daily, *Robert Morrison and the Protestant Plan for China* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2013), 42-43; Chester Terpstra, 'David Bogue, D.D., 1750-1825' (University of Edinburgh, PhD, 1959), 27-28.

¹⁰² Christopher A. Daily, *Robert Morrison and the Protestant Plan for China* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2013), 44.

¹⁰³ James Bennett, *The History of Dissenters During the Last Thirty Years: From 1808 to 1838* (London: Hamilton, Adams and Co., 1839), 143.

Association.¹⁰⁴ Haldane's contribution allowed Bogue to keep the Gosport Academy open.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, a dramatic shift occurred in the Gosport Academy that would expand Bogue's influence further. In 1800, the London Missionary Society (LMS), as it would later be named, resolved to make the Academy the official seminary for all its missionary candidates. This decision was the result of a proposal by a specially elected LMS committee whose members believed it was necessary to provide further training for potential missionaries, and instead of looking beyond the ranks of the organisation for someone to develop a programme, committee members approached Bogue, who was already one of the society's directors.¹⁰⁵ Gosport Academy had been transformed from a small educational institution, largely supporting Congregationalists in Hampshire, to a hub organisation providing theological education and training for all LMS candidates.

Bogue's tenure as an educator at Gosport lasted until his death in 1825. During that time he saw the school move from a private academy to a sponsored academy under the patronage of various donors and finally to an official training academy for the London Missionary Society. It is estimated that Gosport Academy educated over two hundred students under Bogue's leadership, more than half of whom were training for service with the London Missionary Society.¹⁰⁶ With such influence, it is puzzling why Gosport Academy was omitted from Irene Parker's classic *Dissenting Academies in England* and other secondary sources like R. Tudur Jones's *Congregationalism in*

¹⁰⁴ Christopher A. Daily, *Robert Morrison and the Protestant Plan for China* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2013), 44.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 46.

¹⁰⁶ Christopher A. Daily, 'David Bogue (1750-1825)', *Dissenting Academies Online: Database and Encyclopedia*, Dr Williams's Centre for Dissenting Studies, March 2012.

England.¹⁰⁷ By way of his students' ministries, Bogue's influence became international.

More so than any other individual, David Bogue may be described as the father of the Hampshire Association, not only for his role in its founding, but also because his influence upon the group was unparalleled, especially in organisational matters. Bogue was instrumental in the founding of the Association for Protestant Dissenting Ministers (1781), just four years after his arrival at Gosport from London. More importantly, however, he was the chief instigator of the restructuring of the group into the Associated Ministers of the Gospel in Hampshire (1797) and thus largely responsible for its design and maintenance.¹⁰⁸

The leadership that Bogue maintained was intimately tied up with his passion to bring the gospel to the 'heathen' and with his belief that others should do the same with equal fervour. This proposal for the reorganisation of the Hampshire Association in April 1797 was entitled, 'A Plan for Promoting the Knowledge of the Gospel in Hampshire'.¹⁰⁹ It was later published in the *Missionary Magazine* (Edinburgh) as an example of 'a recent specimen of the active zeal of our fellow Christians in the southern part of the kingdom' and 'as a means of exciting others to imitation'.¹¹⁰ The plan was unanimously accepted and was to be widely distributed to the Independent churches of the county before final adoption at the scheduled Association meeting the next month (June). Bogue's formal proposal was broken into five sections. The first,

¹⁰⁷ Irene Parker, *Dissenting Academies in England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914); R. Tudur Jones, *Congregationalism in England, 1662-1962* (London: Independent Press, 1962).

¹⁰⁸ The group went by various names throughout its history: Hampshire Association, Hampshire Association for the Propagation of the Gospel, Hampshire Congregational Union, etc.

¹⁰⁹ *Missionary Magazine* (June 1797), 257-260.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 257.

containing four articles, acted as an introduction:

I.

1. The design is to make the Gospel known in those towns and villages which are at present destitute of it, by opening places for worship, and introducing the preaching of the word.
2. All the different congregations which are associated, shall unite for this purpose.
3. It shall be supported by annual subscriptions or collections among the friends of religion.
4. Every subscriber shall be a member of this society.¹¹¹

The remainder of the document proceeded to cover the particulars of how it was to be implemented. At the June gathering, Bogue's proposal was warmly received and adopted with only minor alterations.¹¹² His vision was advancing and shaping the mission and character of the Hampshire Congregational Union.

It is worth noting that the second article of the second section of Bogue's plan indicated that the new mission-focused group was originally intended to be a distinct organisation from the Hampshire Association. As such, the new 'society' was to meet regularly 'at the same time of the association of the ministers'.¹¹³ However, there is no evidence or indication that the two ever operated as separate societies. In fact, when the minutes of that day's proceedings were published, the name had already been changed to 'The Associated Ministers of the Gospel in Hampshire'.¹¹⁴ Although Bogue initially set out to form a different group entirely, what actually occurred was the dramatic transformation of the original Association.

During the same meeting in which Bogue's plan had been adopted, he also

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 258.

¹¹² MS Minutes of the Association of Protestant Dissenting Ministers, 7 June 1797, HRO, 127M94/1. See also HCU, 7 June 1797.

¹¹³ *Missionary Magazine* (June 1797), 258.

¹¹⁴ HCU, 7 June 1797.

presented the regular circular letter. It was a rousing apology for the dissemination of Evangelical religion. He called the Independent churches and their ministers to ‘have pity on those who are in darkness, and to shine as lights in the world’.¹¹⁵ Even more personally, he charged them: ‘Let your children, let your servants, let your relatives, let your acquaintances...all hear from your lips [the gospel]’.¹¹⁶ He closed his message with a timely challenge for Hampshire Congregationalists to ‘unite with those who are endeavouring to send, and to carry the gospel to the heathen’.¹¹⁷ The comment was undoubtedly a reference to the work of the interdenominational London Missionary Society and the necessity for individuals and churches to support its work. His Evangelical zeal was clearly on display that day.

The origins of Bogue’s mission-mindedness were varied, but also characteristic of many moderate Calvinist Evangelical of the age. A review of his lecture notes for the Gosport Academy demonstrates that his theology was firmly grounded in the writings of American Puritan, Jonathan Edwards. Throughout the lecture notes, Bogue frequently makes references to the origins of his ideas, as well as recommendations for further readings. Most common among these are works by and references to Jonathan Edwards. For example, when discussing the nature of free will, Bogue continually uses Edwards’s *Freedom of the Will* as his primary source.¹¹⁸ He also frequently refers to Edwards’s essay *On Justification*, a classic Evangelical Calvinist text. In regards to inspiration, Bogue’s chief example of an ideal missionary was David Brainerd, American missionary to Native Americans in Delaware. Not only did Bogue refer to

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ MS Bogue Lecture Notes, ‘On the Cause of Men Rejecting the Gospel’, Lectures on Theology, volume 2, DWL [L14/3].

Brainerd throughout his Gosport lectures and various other writings,¹¹⁹ he also considered him an ideal missionary and urged his students to study thoroughly *The Life and Diary of David Brainerd* (1749), edited by Edwards. Bogue also made sure that LMS missionaries received a copy upon their deployment.¹²⁰ Bogue's missional thought was influenced by others with like-minded zeal. As with Brainerd, the Moravian missions were to be studied and emulated. The LMS agents were sent overseas with copies of David Cranz's *History of Greenland* (1767),¹²¹ which largely detailed the Moravian mission there, and an English translation of George Loskiel's *History of the Mission of the United Brethren among the Indians in North America* (1788).¹²² Bogue was also in contact with likeminded ministers among the Particular Baptists, in person and through reading, and frequently referred to Andrew Fuller in his lectures, especially *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation* (1785).¹²³ In 1794, while Bogue was guest preaching in Bristol, John Rylands, president of the Bristol Baptist Academy and one of the founders of the Baptist Missionary Society, gathered a small group together to read a collection of letters he had just received from William Carey in India.¹²⁴ As a result, Bogue soon after published an article in the *Evangelical*

¹¹⁹ For example *A Sermon Preached at Salters-Hall, March 30th, 1792* (London: A. Strahan, 1793), 21.

¹²⁰ *Evangelical Magazine* (September 1796), 382-384. See also Terpstra, 'David Bogue, D.D., 1750-1825', 70; Daily, *Robert Morrison and the Protestant Plan for China*, 78-80.

¹²¹ David Cranz, *The History of Greenland: Containing a Description of the Country and its Inhabitants* (London: Brethren's Society for the Furtherance of the Gospel among the Heathen, 1767).

¹²² *Evangelical Magazine* (September 1796), 384. George Loskiel, *History of the Mission of the United Brethren among the Indians in North America* (London: Brethren's Society for the Furtherance of the Gospel among the Heathen, 1767).

¹²³ MS Bogue Lecture Notes, 'On the Obligation and Power of Man in Regard to the Means', Lectures on Theology, volume 3, DWL [L14/4].

¹²⁴ For further discussion see Terpstra, 'David Bogue, D.D., 1750-1825' (University of Edinburgh, PhD, 1959), 152; Raymond Brown, *The English Baptists of the Eighteenth Century*

Magazine he called, ‘To the Evangelical Dissenters who Practise Infant Baptism’’, which was a passionate apology for mission.¹²⁵ All of these Evangelical groups helped shape Bogue’s fervour for international evangelism.

Bogue’s status among the Hampshire churches was bolstered by his influence and involvement with Evangelical Nonconformists on a national level, especially concerning missions. On 30 March 1792, two months before William Carey, pioneer Baptist missionary, published *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens*, Bogue had preached a highly influential sermon at Salters’ Hall to the ‘Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge in the Highlands and Islands’.¹²⁶ Therein he called those in attendance to cease to be satisfied with evangelising only those in the North. Instead, churches and individuals should also co-operate with one another ‘to send missionaries to propagate the gospel among the heathens’ abroad.¹²⁷ A few months later (1793) the sermons was published and widely distributed. The next year, 1794, Bogue published another call for the formation of a mission society in the *Evangelical Magazine*, mentioned above. He argued that ‘every follower of the Lamb’ was still obliged to adopt the biblical mandate ‘Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every Creature’, a view that reflected the moderate Calvinism that emerged from the Evangelical Awakening and found within a number of Nonconformist denominations.¹²⁸ He concluded the article with a clear, pointed request: ‘As it is the duty of pastors of the Church “to be

(London: The Baptist History Society, 1986), 121; Daily, *Robert Morrison and the Protestant Plan for China* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2013), 45.

¹²⁵ *Evangelical Magazine* (September 1794), 378-380.

¹²⁶ David Bogue, *A Sermon Preached at Salters-Hall, March 30th, 1792* (London: A Strahan, 1793).

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 34.

¹²⁸ *Evangelical Magazine* (September 1794), 379.

forward to every good work,” I call upon the ministers of the metropolis to consult together on this important subject, and without loss of time to propose some plan for the accomplishment of this most desirable end’.¹²⁹ Two months later, a small group of ministers from various denominations gathered together to begin work on what would later become known as the London Missionary Society. Bogue’s letter, as described in the *Evangelical Magazine*, ‘seems to have awakened considerable attention’.¹³⁰ Bogue had established his reputation and status as an influential national Congregational leader, further bolstering his authority and leadership.

Authority of the Association. For almost two decades (1781-1799) the Hampshire Association experienced minimal controversy and debated no major decisions that demonstrated an overt exercise of authority. There were only a limited number of occasions during those early years when the Association acted with even a limited degree of authority. However, on 9 September 1795, the Association took the opportunity to choose for itself two representatives to travel to London for what would be a historic meeting. Although the decision may have appeared inconsequential, this was the first time that a small group of individuals authoritatively represented the interests of the whole Union. The minutes of that day recorded the following resolution: ‘That the Revd Messrs Kingsbury & Bogue should represent [us] at the approaching Meeting of the Missionary Society in London – assuring the Society of the hearty concurrence [*sic*] of the several Ministers of this Association to further their designs in sending Missionaries to preach the Gospel in foreign Parts’.¹³¹ By choosing these two men as representatives, the members were granting them the authority to act

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 380.

¹³⁰ *Evangelical Magazine* (January 1795), 11.

¹³¹ MS Minutes of the Association of Protestant Dissenting Ministers, 9 September 1795, HRO, 127M94/1.

on behalf of the co-operating churches. Once the Association was re-organised in 1797, the role of chairman gained importance, especially as a figurehead. In 1799, the ministers in attendance requested that the chairman of that year's meeting should write to all the Congregational churches in the county requesting that they take a collection for the erecting of chapels in Hampshire. He also was to request that the churches should give preference to this offering as opposed those for other counties.¹³² This seemingly insignificant resolution demonstrated to readers and churches that the Association not only viewed the position of chairman as a spokesperson with at least limited authority, but it also demonstrated that the group was beginning to act as a church planting agency.

At the turn of the century, as the Association grew numerically and more complex in structure, it also began making further decisions on behalf of its members and using committees more extensively. The same year that a committee was formed to 'procure supplies for Guernsey' in the Channel Islands in 1800¹³³ another committee was appointed to correspond with Baptists on the Isle of Wight concerning the acquisition of three meetinghouses. Two years later, 1802, it was decided that the LMS, which the Hampshire Association, by way of Bogue and Kingsbury, had played a vital role in founding, was in need of further funding. The Association took it upon itself to request the co-operating churches to take collections for that purpose. Equally important that year was the resolution to form a special fund solely for the purpose of 'supporting the County Itinerants', including salaries and an annual stipend of five

¹³² MS Minutes of the Association of Protestant Dissenting Ministers, 24 April 1799, HRO, 127M94/1.

¹³³ MS Minutes of the Association of Protestant Dissenting Ministers, 23 April 1800, HRO, 127M94/1.

pounds to cover the expenses of a horse.¹³⁴ This decision demonstrated that the itinerants were formally employees of the Association. It was expected that each cooperating church and individual would contribute, and each minister should set aside a Sunday to preach a special sermon and collect an offering specifically to help defray the expenses.¹³⁵ The next year, an additional two itinerants were hired to evangelise in northern Hampshire. The men were placed under the direct 'tuition' of a minister from Basingstoke, who was, himself, 'subject to the direction' of a ten-member committee, three of whom were from Reading, Berkshire, just fifteen miles north.¹³⁶ The HCU had grown more complex and increasing authority was given to committees.

Rarely did the Association exercise its limited authority over individuals, but it did occasionally happen. In April 1804, the gathered ministers determined that limits must be placed upon the freedom of itinerants. As employees of the Association, the travelling ministers were subject to the teachings and instructions of the whole and in particular, the churches in the geographic area where they preached. The resolution made it clear 'That no Itinerant of the County shall on any occasion act from his own views without consulting with the Congregation nearest to the seat of his labours'.¹³⁷ However, this decision actually placed more authority in the hands of the individual churches rather than the Association.

That same year, another resolution was passed that sought to control the distribution of funds only to those churches that were actively involved in contributing

¹³⁴ MS Minutes of the HCU, 14 April 1802, HRO, 127M94/59.

¹³⁵ MS Minutes of the HCU, 2 September 1802, HRO, 127M94/59.

¹³⁶ MS Minutes of the HCU, 5 April 1803, HRO, 127M94/59.

¹³⁷ MS Minutes of the HCU, 25 April 1804, HRO, 127M94/59.

financially to the Association.¹³⁸ If a church did not contribute to the HCU, it was not eligible to receive funding for maintenance or the building of a new chapel building. Once these particular rules were passed it opened up a floodgate of requests for financial support for the building, repairing or renting of chapels. During the following meeting, 10 October 1804, once the previous minutes had been read and adopted, the next twelve resolutions that day concerned financial matters, especially requests to support individual congregations financially. No other issues, apart from the scheduling of the next meeting, were discussed.¹³⁹ A great deal of the meeting time was occupied with money matters.

One of the most common roles the Association held was that of a special representative of its entire membership, generally by the use of committees. In 1808, a committee was chosen to correspond with Samuel Favell, a prominent London Nonconformist and member of the London Court of Common Council, concerning trust deeds.¹⁴⁰ It was understood that the entire membership of the HCU was not needed to participate in the discussion, but a committee would suffice to explore the issue with Favell. Likewise, committees were often appointed to represent, or to make decisions on behalf of, the associated churches. For example, when the HCU began financially supporting a new church at Ryde on the Isle of Wight, a committee was formed of ministers and deacons from the island belonging to the Association to consult with the congregation.¹⁴¹ The presence of deacons on the committee demonstrated increased involvement by the laity. Likewise, in 1805, when the Association approved a measure

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ MS Minutes of the HCU, 10 October 1804, HRO, 127M94/59.

¹⁴⁰ MS Minutes of the HCU, 20 September 1808, HRO, 127M94/1.

¹⁴¹ MS Minutes of the HCU, 16 April 1806, HRO, 127M94/59.

to increase funding for the Gosport Academy, a committee, consisting of individuals residing in close proximity to the school, was selected ‘for the management of its general concerns’ and ‘the management of local temporal affairs’.¹⁴² With so much of the time at Association meetings spent discussing financial assistance for churches, it was decided in 1809 that a committee of prominent ministers from Gosport, Southampton and Portsea, be given the authority to distribute funds at its discretion to help compensate itinerating preachers in their region.¹⁴³ During the April 1810 meeting the minutes indicate that a new committee was formed for the purpose of carrying out business on behalf of the Association between meetings. The decision was particularly important because it illustrated further institutional development and the formation of a permanent executive board. At this time the Executive Committee began recommending ‘cases’ of the congregations that should be addressed during the general meetings, and frequently the committee would bypass the general meeting and adopt cases and resolutions themselves.¹⁴⁴ This was a greater level of authority than had been held by previous committees.

The greatest shift in the organisational structure came as the result of a new plan of Association presented in 1813. While the purpose of the group remained the same, ‘the preaching of the Gospel in the Towns and Villages of the County and its Vicinity’, the structure was dramatically altered.¹⁴⁵ The Association bolstered its authority by officially endowing the annual committee with more power: ‘Management... shall be vested in a Committee to be annually chosen from the members of the Institution’ and

¹⁴² MS Minutes of the HCU, 8 October 1805, HRO, 127M94/59.

¹⁴³ MS Minutes of the HCU, 26 April 1809, HRO, 127M94/59.

¹⁴⁴ MS Minutes of the Hampshire Congregational Union, 18 April 1810, HRO, 127M94/59. Emphasis added.

¹⁴⁵ HCU, 9 September 1813.

‘Every Congregation sending an annual collection of 2 Guineas, shall have one member on the Committee; of 5 Guineas, two members; of 12 Guineas, three members; and one member for every 10 Guineas above that sum’.¹⁴⁶ This system clearly favoured larger congregations and those with more wealthy members. Consequently, the committee formed the year the plan was presented (1813) consisted of forty men representing twenty churches, a quarter of whom came from the Gosport and Southampton churches that provided five members each.¹⁴⁷ The purpose of the committee was plainly presented:

To procure funds by obtaining annual subscriptions, collections, &c.
To deliberate on general plans of usefulness.
To fix on places to be opened.
To provide the best means of supply.
To direct the labours of the Itinerants.
To require of the district Committees an account of the fulfilment of their duties.¹⁴⁸

A great deal of responsibility and authority resided within the committee.

The increased use of more complex organisational practices was a stark contrast to the earliest years of the Association. Whereas the gathered ministers had generally focused the meeting around the delivery of sermons and worship times, increased emphasis came to be placed upon organisational matters. In 1817, the shift in priorities was clearly demonstrated in a resolution to limit the public worship portion of the gathering. That year, members agreed that the ‘Brethren should not occupy time, [except] for prayer – 10 minutes; Intercessory Prayer – 20 minutes; sermon – one hour and 20 minutes; and singing, each time 10 minutes’.¹⁴⁹ The priority had shifted to

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ Quoted in Roy A. Weaver, “‘A Plenitude [*sic.*] of Grace” or “No Priestly Shrine”: The Story of the Hampshire Congregational Union, 1781-1972’ (n.p., n.d.), 4-5.

business matters.

As the Hampshire Association moved into and through the mid-nineteenth century, the members would occasionally alter its rules to meet the current needs of the group. In 1843, a published form of the annual minutes and circular letter contained a copy of the 'Regulations' of the group. The majority of the rules listed were very similar to those proposed in the 1813 plan, though the latter was in a simplified form. The 1843 guidelines reemphasised the general purpose of the Association which had long existed: 'The Hampshire Association was instituted for the propagation of the Gospel in those parts of the County of Hants and its vicinity, not otherwise enlightened by the word of life'.¹⁵⁰ No longer present, however, were the guidelines that provided more representative members for those churches contributing more money, yet contributions were still a requirement for inclusion. Additionally, in 1850, the regulations attached to the annual report required that all churches wishing to join the Association should provide 'satisfactory evidence of the Chapel, in which it worships, being vested in trust, for the use of Congregational Dissenters'.¹⁵¹ The trust deeds protected the building and grounds of a church from being sold outside the Congregational faith if the previous tenants disbanded. Apart from these two alterations and overall simplification, the regulations remained largely the same.

The Hampshire Association entertained no issues of personal discipline. In theory, it might have been acceptable to censure a minister or a congregation that adopted heterodox beliefs, but there is simply no evidence to demonstrate that it was a part of associational life among Hampshire Congregationalists. One of the few cases of moral discipline did not, in fact, involve a current member. In 1850 the Association's

¹⁵⁰ HCU, 1850.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

secretary received a request for a letter of moral reference for Thomas Pullar, former minister in Southampton.¹⁵² Pullar was pursuing a position with the Home Mission Society, initially an interdenominational organisation, similar to the LMS, which sponsored itinerant evangelists in locations with weak or non-existent county unions. The request for the letter was initially denied. In response to the request, the HCU Secretary replied: '[I am] instructed by the brethren of the Hampshire Association to say that as the public opinion respecting the moral character of Rev T. Pullar is divided, they cannot give the answer you desire'.¹⁵³ Thereafter, an investigation into his background was begun. The next year, after a full enquiry was completed, the Hampshire Association voted not to provide the letter because of the charges of public drunkenness.¹⁵⁴ This was the only mention of a case of moral misconduct brought before the Association. Typically, letters were the responsibility of the individual churches. However in this instance the HCU was likely included because it involved the Home Mission Society and not the transfer of membership to another Independent congregation. The HCU typically had very little to do with interfering in the business of local congregations.

Conclusion. The Evangelical character of the Hampshire Association was rooted in the influence and authority of David Bogue. From his earliest years as an educator and minister in Gosport, Bogue's career was defined by his belief that modern Christians were bound to preach the gospel to the 'heathen' just as were Christ's disciples. Bogue made every effort to convey the same urgency to his students. A man of singular conviction, it is no wonder that he was chosen to educate all LMS

¹⁵² MS Assembly Minute Book, 19 September 1850, HRO, 127M94/3.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ MS Assembly Minute Book, 23 April 1851, HRO, 127M94/3.

candidates at his Gosport Academy, or that he gained the confidence of such influential supporters as Robert Haldane. Bogue's popularity carried over into his involvement with the Association, which thrived under his leadership, and formed an Evangelical culture among the HCU churches that would continue beyond his death. Bogue's role should not be underestimated.

The Hampshire Association's understanding and practice of authority was intimately linked to its corporate mission of evangelism. From its inception, the gathered members were single-minded in their Evangelical zeal, and gave insignificant time to issues that did not involve such. Matters of theological heterodoxy had no presence within the annual business, not because it was deliberately ignored but because no issues arose amongst the churches. This absence is largely due to the fact that from the beginning, the Association was driven by a common emphasis on Evangelical principles, especially evangelism at home and abroad, which had no place among rational Dissenters. Since its focus rarely wavered, those maintaining more heterodox beliefs would neither have been welcomed, nor would have wished to be a part of such a group.

CHAPTER THREE

Lancashire Congregational Union

By the end of the eighteenth century Lancashire was becoming an industrial centre. Factories were established, and the power of steam was transforming the financial landscape. This is not to say that the entire county was in the midst of an industrial awakening. Many places were still very much dependent upon agriculture. Fundamental to the developing Lancashire economy, however, were the mounting cotton and textile industries, especially in south-east and central Lancashire. Outside these areas, however, the transformation could also be seen in port towns like Liverpool, which saw exports rise above that of London by 1820.¹⁵⁵ In the early decades of the nineteenth century the canal system was spreading further inland, and towns like Blackburn were developing new trade partnerships.¹⁵⁶ As a result of the economic growth, Lancashire also experienced increased urbanisation, especially in Manchester, which became a city where one could find a diversity of ideas, as well as extreme wealth and utter poverty. This was the context in which the Lancashire Congregational Union grew.

The Congregationalist Churches (Independents) frequently emphasised their belief in the centrality of autonomous congregations which voluntarily co-operated together. For example, the early eighteenth-century Congregational leader Philip Doddridge called for church autonomy balanced by Christian unity and association, and

¹⁵⁵ John K. Walton, *Lancashire: A Social History, 1558-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), 115.

¹⁵⁶ Chris Aspin, *The First Industrial Society: Lancashire, 1750-1850*, rev. (Preston: Carnegie Publishing, 1995), 6.

even went so far as to claim that formal gatherings of ministers were essential for the promotion of spiritual revival in Britain.¹⁵⁷ However, despite Doddridge's assertions on the matter, formal associations among Independents beyond the confines of London were almost non-existent during the first half of the century and travel was difficult and costly between the relatively isolated congregations. In fact, the first county unions did not emerge until 1781, on the heels of the Evangelical Awakening, with the birth of the Hampshire Association.¹⁵⁸ Between that year and 1815, at least twenty-one additional unions were established, including the Lancashire Congregational Union (LCU).¹⁵⁹

The 1786 articles of a proto-union in Lancashire made it clear that the organisation was intended to be an 'ASSOCIATION of different Congregational Churches', and while there was no intention 'to infringe in the least upon the liberties of Christian Churches, or usurp any authority' the union confessed that it was 'bound to give advice'.¹⁶⁰ Additionally, it was the Association's responsibility, so it was claimed, to 'consult with [churches] concerning their Peace and Order, or in any case wherein the interest of their church is concerned'.¹⁶¹ In other words, while the co-operating churches were autonomous in ecclesiastical government, it was likewise assumed that each congregation would heed the guidance of the collective body. This chapter explores the extent to which authority was exercised over congregations by the union

¹⁵⁷ Robert Strivens, 'The Thought of Philip Doddridge in the Context of Early Eighteenth-Century Dissent' (University of Stirling, PhD, 2011), 203, 221; see also, Albert Peel, *These Hundred Years: A History of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, 1831-1931* (London: Congregational Union of England and Wales, 1931), 6.

¹⁵⁸ R. Tudur Jones, *Congregationalism in England, 1662-1962* (London: Independent Press, 1962), 175.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ Rules and Articles of Association, 7 June 1786, Lancashire Records Office, Preston [CUL 1/1]. Emphasis present.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

and, conversely, the freedoms that the Independent churches maintained.

Renewal of Cooperation. Congregationalists, in keeping with the pattern held by many other Nonconformists, embraced the pragmatic organisational principles of the age. Even though the churches were historically known for their emphasis upon autonomy, interest in inter-church connectivity accelerated during the final two decades of the eighteenth century. The churches comprising the Lancashire Congregational Union made several efforts at formal organisation prior to successfully uniting. In fact, attempts at formal co-operation by various individuals and churches of Lancashire occurred in 1786 and 1796 before lasting unity was finally achieved in 1806. Unfortunately, only vague secondary references are made to these meetings and most have gone undocumented in the best surveys.¹⁶² Nonetheless, the seeds of co-operation sown in Lancashire during latter decades of the eighteenth century came to fruition in the first decade of the nineteenth century.

At the time of the Evangelical Awakening, a number of Congregationalists had embraced a variety of forms of rational heterodoxy, especially various anti-trinitarian doctrines. Others, including many among the orthodox, simply lacked religious fervour. In his history of Lancashire Nonconformity, Robert Halley described the situation: ‘A creeping paralysis had come upon the nonconforming societies, whether they professed an orthodox or a heterodox faith, or no faith at all’.¹⁶³ The Awakening, which was partly a response to the prevalent spiritual laxity, spread throughout Lancashire by means of the notable ministries of itinerant preachers such as John Wesley and George Whitefield, as well as other Established Church ministers like William Grimshaw of

¹⁶² Benjamin Nightingale, *The Story of the Lancashire Congregational Union, 1806-1906* (Manchester: John Heywood, 1906); W. Gordon Robinson, *A History of the Lancashire Congregational Union, 1806-1956* (Manchester: Lancashire Congregational Union, 1955).

¹⁶³ Robert Halley, *Lancashire: Its Puritanism and Nonconformity*, vol. 2 (Manchester: Tubbs and Brook, 1869), 388.

Haworth in the West Riding. Their Evangelical messages called not only for a renewal of orthodoxy, but also for evangelistic zeal and social action. As a result, churches formed voluntary associations and unions to help accomplish these missional purposes.

In a May 1806 issue of the *Evangelical Magazine*, an advertisement was published calling for formal co-operation of Congregationalists on a national level. “The want of a General Union among the Congregational or Independent churches of Great Britain”, the publication stated, “has been long felt and lamented”.¹⁶⁴ Although a meeting was later held, it did not immediately produce a national union. Instead, it prompted the participating Lancashire ministers to develop their own county association. After developing a plan of union, the first general meeting was held in Manchester that September.¹⁶⁵

By contrast to earlier attempts at uniting, the 1806 Lancashire ‘Independent Union’, as it was first known, primarily emerged as a means of supporting itinerancy and evangelism throughout Lancashire and the surrounding counties, whereas twenty years earlier, the plan for associating had had little to do with missional zeal and more to do with promoting orthodoxy and church order. The preamble of the 1786 Articles of Association had made it clear that the organisation was built ‘upon the principles of Christian Liberty’. The document then proceeded to lay out twelve propositions to which members were to subscribe, none of which dealt with itinerancy or church planting. Instead, they dealt with the Association’s roles as keeper of Evangelical and Reformed doctrine (Article 2), a church advisory board (Article 4) and protector of

¹⁶⁴ *Evangelical Magazine* (May 1806), 234.

¹⁶⁵ MS Minutes of the Lancashire Congregational Union (LCU), 23 September 1806, Lancashire Records Office, Preston [CUL 2/1].

ministerial orthodoxy (Article 6).¹⁶⁶ Conversely, the Evangelical character and itinerant emphasis of the 1806 plan of union was clearly demonstrated in the third article of the new constitution: '[The Union's] object shall be the introduction and spread of the Gospel, according to the Congregational order, especially in the most populous parts of the county to which the Union extends.'¹⁶⁷ Other articles included details on how the goal might be accomplished, such as special collections for 'increasing the number of itinerants' and financial assistance for the building of new chapels.¹⁶⁸ The Lancashire Congregational Union began with clear Evangelical motivations.

Annual Meetings. From the Lancashire Union's inception, the annual meeting was a central fixture within the operational structure. Delegates gathered at Mosley Street Chapel (Manchester) for the first general meeting on 23 September 1806.¹⁶⁹ That year, the primary matter of business was the adoption of the proposed foundational articles of the Union, which had been drawn up by a committee of nine earlier that June. The adopted rules emphasised both the role and order of the annual gathering, as well as other essential functions and actions of the organisation. Specifics concerning the administration of the meetings and programme schedules were addressed in detail in the ninth article, by far the lengthiest of the thirteen:

9. That the Annual Meeting be held alternately in the most eligible towns in the Union, at which as many of the ministers and delegates from each congregation as can conveniently shall attend, when there shall be a general review of the proceedings of the past year, the adoption of any new laws and regulations that may be required, and the appointment of a new committee. Ministers are to

¹⁶⁶ Rules and Articles of Association, 7 June 1786, Lancashire Records Office, Preston [CUL 1/1].

¹⁶⁷ Quoted in Nightingale, *The Story of the Lancashire Congregational Union*, 24.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁶⁹ MS Minutes of the LCU, 23 September 1806, [CUL 2/1].

assemble on the previous evening, when a sermon shall be preached; the next morning they are to meet again at 6:30 until 8 o'clock for prayer; retire for breakfast and at 9 o'clock meet to audit the Treasurer's accounts and elect [a] new Committee; public worship at 11 o'clock, one sermon; meet again at 3 o'clock, and after prayer by the President for the day, information shall be given, correspondence read, and questions discussed respecting the state of religion in the Union, the meeting closing with singing and prayer; another sermon in the evening to conclude "the whole of business."¹⁷⁰

The meticulous nature of this adopted article helps demonstrate that from its beginning the annual meeting held a central position of importance within the organisational structure of the Union.

As the ninth article reflects, while the agenda of the annual meeting dealt with a number of practical objectives, the spiritual nature of the meeting was of serious importance. The devotional emphasis of the early Association was primarily found within the designated worship times. Pragmatic and operational details were undertaken throughout the second day, but on the preceding evening, as a means of spiritual preparation, the ministers gathered for worship and the delivery of at least one sermon. Initially, three sermons were preached during the annual gathering, one on the first evening and two on the second day, but at the second general meeting a motion was passed that recommended only two should be presented, so as to leave room for further business.¹⁷¹ Within two years, however, the rule was disregarded (1809), and once again three sermons were preached over the course of the two days.¹⁷² In addition to the presentation of sermons, the spiritual nature of the meeting may also be observed in the presence of extended times of prayer, typically on the first morning of the annual meeting. The opening times for these prayer gatherings generally fluctuated between

¹⁷⁰ Quoted in Nightingale, *The Story of the Lancashire Congregational Union*, 25-26.

¹⁷¹ MS Minutes of the LCU, 17-18 March 1807, [CUL 2/1].

¹⁷² MS Minutes of the LCU, 18-19 April 1809, [CUL 2/1].

6:00 a.m. and 6:30 a.m. and they lasted for one and a half hours.¹⁷³ This pattern was reaffirmed in 1815 when a slightly revised set of rules was adopted and it was again determined that members should gather the night before the annual meeting for a worship service and then reconvene the next morning before breakfast from 6:30 to 8:00 for prayer.¹⁷⁴ In 1817, when an entirely new set of bylaws and rules was developed, the ‘Revised General Plan of the Union’, and the LCU committed, once again, to maintain the centrality of preaching during its annual meeting. The bylaws stated: ‘That at each general meeting the ministers of the Union shall preach in alphabetical order, a Senior on the first evening of the meeting and a Junior on the following morning and that the church where the Anniversary is held appoint a Preacher for the second Evening within or out of the Union’.¹⁷⁵ Although the format for the early morning gatherings was simple, largely consisting of prayer and scripture reading, some years the prayer gatherings appeared no different from the corporate worship times. In 1810, for example, the morning service began with prayer and was followed by a sermon and prayer by the minister at Haslingden.¹⁷⁶ While the order and emphases of the annual meetings evolved throughout the nineteenth century, there was never a time when the devotional nature of the event was completely absent.

Business of the Annual Association. Initially, the Association was created as a means of supporting the Congregational itinerant evangelists of Lancashire. The maintenance of this work required the LCU to manage personnel, raise financial assistance and act as monitor over the ministry. The Association also financially

¹⁷³ Quoted in Nightingale, *The Story of the Lancashire Congregational Union*, 25.

¹⁷⁴ MS Minutes of the LCU, 26-27 April 1815, [CUL 2/2].

¹⁷⁵ MS Minutes of the LCU, 9-10 April 1817, [CUL 2/2].

¹⁷⁶ MS Minutes of the LCU, 17-18 April 1810, [CUL 2/2].

assisted local congregations and occasionally took action in doctrinal affairs. A large portion of the authority of the LCU was derived from these types of actions.

Especially in the early years of the LCU, the Association primarily expressed its authority through its involvement with the itinerant ministry. Multiple articles of the Charter of the Union demonstrated the group's perception of the importance of itinerancy:

3. That the object [of the Union] shall be the introduction and spread of the Gospel, according to the Congregational order, especially in the most populous parts of the county to which the Union extends.
5. That an annual collection be made in each congregation, and that the minister be recommended to preach a sermon for the purpose.
6. That the funds be used towards increasing the number of itinerants, meeting the expenses of ministers itinerating away from their stated charges where there is a probability of raising new causes, giving temporary aid to weak interests, and distributing religious tracts by Itinerants or stated ministers.
7. That in every place where the Gospel has been introduced by Itinerants... a small weekly subscription in aid of the funds be made as early as possible among those in attendance.¹⁷⁷

During the 1807 meeting, the second resolution passed by those in attendance determined that each evangelist should 'be allowed a fixed stipend and his reasonable travel expenses', indicating the primary income of the individual was set by the LCU and not donations by the churches that were visited.¹⁷⁸ That same year, the LCU officially employed the evangelistic services of George Greatbatch, a seasoned itinerant of Lancashire, and James Morrow, a student of William Roby of Manchester, the most prominent Congregational minister in county. According to the minutes, Greatbatch was granted a stipend of £80 that year.¹⁷⁹ The evangelists employed by the Association were not merely commissioned, but also were subject to close oversight. They were

¹⁷⁷ Quoted in W. Gordon Robinson, *William Roby and the Revival of Independency in the North* (London: Independent Press, 1954), 28.

¹⁷⁸ MS Minutes of the LCU, 17-18 March 1807, [CUL 2/1].

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

expected to submit monthly reports, including the estimated attendance at their various ministries.¹⁸⁰ Supervision of the itinerants by the LCU was also demonstrated in the requirement for them to attend the annual meeting in order to report upon their progress, and likewise participate by preaching in rotation.¹⁸¹ Further, it was resolved in 1810 that they were to be visited once per quarter by a minister who would be appointed by the Executive Committee. Oversight was taken a step further the following year as the itinerants of the LCU, now numbering six (three part-time and three full-time), stood before the annual gathering and responded to a series of predetermined questions, in what became an annual event. Thereafter, it was resolved that the LCU was ‘well satisfied with the reports given by the itinerants and ministers respecting the progress of their labours’.¹⁸² In 1817, after the evaluation of the itinerants became more than the brief annual meeting could manage and a new ‘Revised General Plan of the Union’ was adopted, supervision was delegated to the Executive Committee. The new Plan of Union gave increased responsibility to the Executive Committee as an employer. Instead of attenders of the annual Union meeting approving of fresh hires, the new rules stated that ‘no person be accepted as an Itinerant under the patronage of the Union until he has been approved by the Committee’.¹⁸³ The introduction of paid itinerants led to a more complex structure for the Union so that it might provide the necessary oversight and financial support.

Throughout the minutes of the Lancashire Congregational Union, matters of finance, especially the distribution of collected funds, dominated much of the landscape.

¹⁸⁰ MS Minutes of the LCU, 26-27 April 1808, [CUL 2/1].

¹⁸¹ MS Minutes of the LCU, 17-18 April 1810, [CUL 2/2].

¹⁸² MS Minutes of the LCU, 24-25 April 1811, [CUL 2/2].

¹⁸³ MS Minutes of the LCU, 9-10 April 1817, [CUL 2/2].

From the earliest meetings, the Association required that participating churches and individuals should contribute financially in order to support the spiritual endeavours it deemed important. In part, therefore, it was through such fiscal control and supervision that the Association maintained a sense of authority over the churches.

Membership in the LCU required a willingness to contribute financially to various causes of the group, especially its evangelistic and relief efforts. Typically participation took the form of gathering an annual collection from each congregation for that purpose. Failure of a church to participate drew the censure of the Union. In 1808, the LCU sent a letter to each of the congregations that had promised to contribute funds but had neglected to do so, whether present or not. The following year, however, ministers who did not bring their ‘collections’ to the annual gathering were formally recorded in the minutes in addition to their excuses.¹⁸⁴ Further, in 1818 a resolution was passed that any church that failed to ‘remit their annual contribution’ should be written a letter of reminder, and if no response was given within a month’s time, it was to be assumed that the congregation wished to withdraw from the Union.¹⁸⁵

Addressing the issue even more directly, the revised constitution of the LCU, adopted 1838, clearly detailed the matter in article five: ‘The Funds of the Society shall be provided by contributions from the Associated Churches, each of which shall be required, as a condition of membership, to make at least one payment in each year to the Treasurer...’.¹⁸⁶ Because the LCU was financially dependent upon donations to carry out its missional objective, failure to give was seen as a failure to co-operate, which could lead to dismissal.

¹⁸⁴ MS Minutes of the LCU, 18-19 April 1809, [CUL 2/1].

¹⁸⁵ MS Minutes of the LCU, 9 April 1813, [CUL 2/2].

¹⁸⁶ MS Minutes of the LCU, 4-5 April 1838, [CUL 2/3].

The LCU went to great measures to sustain its ministries financially, especially in the midst of hardships. Perhaps the methods of collection were ineffective, or, possibly, the demand for assistance grew at a faster rate than the Union's contributions. Regardless, within five years of the founding, the lack of financial resources became such a problem that the treasurer noted the current mode of congregational collection was 'inadequate to the increasing demands of the society' and, in turn, proposed that various 'societies' be formed to encourage penny-a-week subscriptions, similar to those found among the Methodists, while deacons were asked to implement 'collection sermons' each year.¹⁸⁷ The following year (1814) the financial outlook remained bleak. The father of the LCU, William Roby of Manchester, believed things were so dire that it might be necessary to reduce the number of 'exertions' to which the Association was committed.¹⁸⁸ However, in a pragmatic effort to correct the problem, Roby proposed that the Union should be divided into more manageable districts (Liverpool, Preston, Blackburn and Manchester) in hope that the smaller units would make both fundraising and distribution more efficient.¹⁸⁹ Roby also led the way in establishing collection societies among the congregations. His own congregation raised £300, which it managed itself, while the total amount collected by all the churches at the annual meeting combined was only £206.¹⁹⁰ The efforts, though noble, still were not successful enough to maintain the rate of financial aid the LCU wished to provide.

Such underfunding led the Union to be very protective of its contributions and their distribution. In 1818, the annual meeting noticeably reduced the amount of aid it

¹⁸⁷ MS Minutes of the LCU, 20-21 April 1813, [CUL 2/2].

¹⁸⁸ MS Minutes of the LCU, 20-21 April 1814, [CUL 2/2].

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ MS Minutes of the LCU, 26-27 April 1814, [CUL 2/2].

disbursed directly to individual churches.¹⁹¹ When the Congregational Union of England and Wales (CU) was formed in 1831, the national body sought to initiate formal relationships between the various county unions and itself. It was not until 1834 that the LCU joined the national body, and still only did so under a certain qualification. Members agreed ‘to co-operate with [the Congregational Union] in any way not interfering with the Funds or Internal arrangements of this [county] union’.¹⁹² A growing adoption of *laissez-faire* economics had arisen among many in Lancashire due to its growing industrialisation, as was particularly evident in the rising opposition to the Corn Laws. External influences, of any kind, including ecclesiastical, were frowned upon by the non-landed masses, many of whom were already disgruntled by the tariffs on foreign grain and other goods. This desire to prevent external influence upon its financial decisions was also indirectly expressed during the 1843 annual meeting. That year, the Association unanimously agreed to provide funding only for those churches that employed preachers who were recommended by or members of the Lancashire Congregational Union.¹⁹³

Very rarely did the Annual Meeting speak on behalf of the churches, especially in matters of theological, disciplinary or political concern. Such reluctance may be attributed to the Congregational principle of local church autonomy, the belief that each individual congregation was free to govern its own affairs. This core value dissuaded the collective body from overstepping the delicate balance of power between the two self-governing organisations. On rare occasions, though, the LCU conveniently used its platform to speak authoritatively on behalf of its delegates, but the statements were

¹⁹¹ MS Minutes of the LCU, 9 April 1813, [CUL 2/2].

¹⁹² MS Minutes of the LCU, 10 April 1834, [CUL 2/3].

¹⁹³ MS Minutes of the LCU, 6 April 1843, [CUL 2/3].

largely benign, containing little that could be interpreted as controversial among the co-operating churches.

As an independent institution in its own right, the LCU maintained the authority to regulate its membership. During the April 1809 meeting, a case was brought before those in attendance concerning John Ralph, the former minister of Bethesda Chapel in Liverpool, who was accused of unspecified ‘immoral practices’.¹⁹⁴ That day, members voted to impart the ‘highest censure of this society’, which was to ‘exclude’ Ralph from ‘all further contact with the [Union]’.¹⁹⁵ Similarly, during the April 1850 meeting, the Association again demonstrated a willingness to exercise a measure authority in determining its own membership for the sake of maintaining ethical purity. That year, a resolution was presented to dissociate with Ducie Chapel (Manchester) and its minister Dr Edward Nolan. Nolan had been charged with ‘adultery and fornication’. According to the London newspaper, *The Standard*, ‘the doctor seduced a young woman (Elizabeth Townley), who was in the family way by him, and he gave her a prescription to cause abortion, and she has been in a state of intense suffering ever since, both in mind and body. Another woman (Elizabeth Gilchrist) also was in the family way by him.’¹⁹⁶ Although the charges were never proved, there was significant circumstantial evidence, including the testimony of one of the victims, which led many to believe the accusations were likely. When the allegations were presented during the annual LCU meeting, Nolan and the delegate in attendance with him ‘rose and refused to proceed’ and since they declined to ‘defend their right of membership’, they were ‘publicly expelled’ and the two left the meeting. In both instances the organisation was

¹⁹⁴ MS Minutes of the LCU, 18 April 1809, [CUL 2/1].

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ ‘Nolan v. Pettigrew’ in *The Standard* (London), Friday 29 March 1850.

protecting its perceived sense of purity.

More common was the *laissez-faire* approach to personal and individual church conflicts. This attitude was well demonstrated during the annual meeting of 1813, when a discussion arose in regard to an unidentified dispute between two men from the church at Darwen, just south of Blackburn. Immediately after the conflict was publicly presented, the delegates decided that the Union would decline ‘all interference,...but [instead] recommended a friendly reconciliation of their present differences’.¹⁹⁷ This type of nonintrusive approach characterised the society’s reluctance to involve itself in with intra-chapel conflict.

Likewise, the Lancashire Congregational Union rarely involved itself in controversial political affairs, though they were not completely absent. Participation usually took the form of petitions or letters to government representatives. In 1813, for example, the Association addressed a statement to Parliament in support of the London Missionary Society’s request for a new charter by the East India Company should be given; hardly a controversial issue.¹⁹⁸ During the Annual Meeting of 1833 (April), the Manchester District proposed that all co-operating churches, ‘without delay’, petition Parliament, demanding the ‘immediate and total abolition of slavery’.¹⁹⁹ This socially concerned resolution was similar to ones that had been passed in 1828 and 1837, when the LCU wrote to Parliament protesting against the practice of *sati* in India, the burning of widows on their husband’s funeral pyres,²⁰⁰ and the abolition of church rates,

¹⁹⁷ MS Minutes of the LCU, 20 April 1813, [CUL 2/1].

¹⁹⁸ MS Minutes of the LCU, 20 April 1813, [CUL 2/1].

¹⁹⁹ MS Minutes of the LCU, 11 April 1833, [CUL 2/3].

²⁰⁰ MS Minutes of the LCU, 10 April 1828, [CUL 2/2].

respectively.²⁰¹ Each of these declarations was passed without any recorded dispute. Even the statement concerning slavery was adopted unanimously.²⁰² These ethical petitions were not peculiar to the LCU, but were common among nineteenth-century Nonconformists and demonstrated the tradition of Evangelical activism.

The belief in church autonomy among the LCU congregations led the membership to avoid making controversial decisions or statements on behalf of individual chapels. When the organisation did take public stances on particular issues, the views expressed were universally accepted by the membership and typically expressed generally held Nonconformist principles. The majority of exceptions to this approach involved matters of personal morality. With the authority to regulate its own membership, the LCU was willing to exclude those who, by their actions, threatened the perceived purity or reputation of the body.

William Roby. The single most authoritative figure amongst nineteenth-century Lancashire Congregationalists was William Roby (1766-1830). In a system that prided itself on an absence of hierarchy, he held an unofficial place of prominence. Throughout the course of his ministry, from the founding of the LCU until his death, Roby maintained a formidable role.

Roby was a product of the Evangelical Awakening that was equally responsible for the creation and/or revival of many Nonconformist county associations of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Born near Wigan on 23 March 1766, Roby's father worked as schoolmaster. His mother died when he was fourteen. According to a memoir published in the *Evangelical Magazine* upon his death, the members of Roby's

²⁰¹ MS Minutes of the LCU, 6 April 1837, [CUL 2/3].

²⁰² MS Minutes of the LCU, 11 April 1833, [CUL 2/3].

family were not “the subjects of vital Christianity”, nor was he raised as a believer.²⁰³

At the age of nineteen, however, under the Evangelical preaching of John Johnson, a Methodist preacher and former student at the Countess of Huntingdon’s Trevecca College, Roby experienced a memorable conversion. He once recounted the event:

Again I met this Man on the Morning of Shrove Sunday 1785 with another young Man with him who, he informed me, was come from London, to board with my Father. They desired me to take a Walk with them; I little thought what Company I was got into, and unwarily consented; tho I was ashamed to walk through the Street with them because I knew that one of them was stigmatised with the Name of a Methodist; but how was I chagrined when after we had got out of the Town into the Fields they both got their Bibles out. I would have given anything to get clear of them... On their Return they took me with them to a House where eight or ten of them had got to singing Hymns, etc. This being what I had not been accustomed to, and what I could not join in, I sat mute in a Corner meditating on the Difficulty I had brought myself into... The Minister who preached there was one in the Countess of Huntingdon’s Connection.²⁰⁴

Upon returning to hear Johnson once again that evening, Roby commented, ‘this was the time the Lord met me, and powerfully opened mine Eyes, to see what I was and what I deserved. My night was turned into Day’.²⁰⁵

Following his conversion that night, there must have been a significant shift in Roby’s attitudes. He abandoned the plans that his family once held for him, a fine education and respectable service in the Anglican ministry. While the family was only moderately religious, his parents felt ministry in the Church of England was a noble profession and there was, apparently, the possibility that he might receive patronage.²⁰⁶

Post-conversion, Roby felt that the sacred burden and responsibility he believed accompanied the ministry were far too great for him to bear. Blaming their son’s

²⁰³ ‘Memoir of the Late Rev. William Roby, of Manchester’, *Evangelical Magazine*, vol 8 (April 1830), 133.

²⁰⁴ Quoted in W. Gordon Robinson, *William Roby and the Revival of Independency in the North* (London: Independent Press, 1954), 29-30.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 30.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 31.

change upon local religious enthusiasm, his parents insisted that he apply for a mastership at the respected Bretherton Free School, approximately eight miles southwest of Preston.²⁰⁷ There, his family believed, he would be removed from ‘the immediate sphere in which the supposed excitement had been produced’.²⁰⁸ On the contrary, however, his religious convictions only deepened as he privately studied the writings of other Evangelicals, including those of William Romaine, the intellectual Anglican divine, and one time chaplain of Lady Huntingdon. Roby was clearly committed to his newly developing Evangelical convictions.

During his personal studies while employed at Bretherton, as opposed to his earlier hesitations, Roby felt it was now his obligation to preach the gospel message as often as possible. ‘If he had rendered himself vile before [for his enthusiasm]’, his memoir stated, ‘he determined to become yet more vile; nor could he rest contented in merely seeking his own salvation, but set himself, with the utmost earnestness, to promote the spiritual and eternal welfare of [others]...’.²⁰⁹ In 1787, following a dispute over his unauthorised evangelistic preaching to the pupils and their parents, Roby left the school, though it is unclear whether he was dismissed or resigned. That same year, although still committed to the Established Church, under the influence of various participants within Lady Huntingdon’s Connexion, Roby began studies at Trevecca College. After only six weeks, following a series of unwelcomed experiences and perceiving no educational benefit in the programme, he withdrew from the college but

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁸ ‘Memoir of the Late Rev. William Roby, of Manchester’, *Evangelical Magazine*, vol 8 (April 1830), 134.

²⁰⁹ W. Gordon Robinson, *William Roby and the Revival of Independency in the North* (London: Independent Press, 1954), 28.

instead began to preach within Lady Huntingdon's Connexion.²¹⁰ Roby had fully committed himself to ministry.

During his early years with the Connexion, Roby established a pattern of vigorous preaching that would follow him throughout the course of his ministry. Upon his removal from Trevecca College, he was sent to act as chaplain to Lady Huntingdon's friend, Lady Douglas, who was spending the summer at Malvern. While serving there, he not only preached multiple times per week but was also introduced to field preaching. In a letter to his father Roby writes unapologetically of the controversial method: 'If I may judge of you by myself you will not much admire Field-Preaching. I am sure I did not, until I saw the Fruits and Effects of it...The place which [Christ] chuses (*sic*) [us to preach] is best, be it Church or Chapel, House or Stable, Field or Lane. The Reason of my going to preach out of Doors was nobody would come to hear me within'.²¹¹ In January 1788, Lady Huntingdon temporarily transferred Roby to Worcester, where he preached every Sunday evening to a crowd of upwards of eight hundred, not to mention services every night of the week, as well as weekly preaching excursions back to Malvern.²¹² This pace was not an abnormal routine for itinerants of the Connexion. Over the next ten months he was assigned posts in Reading, Leicestershire, Gainsborough, and finally Wigan, where he served as assistant pastor. His time with Lady Huntingdon's Connexion was foundational in preparing him for the tireless years he would spend promoting itinerancy and mission among the Congregationalists of Lancashire.

²¹⁰ "Memoir of the Late Rev. William Roby, of Manchester", *Evangelical Magazine*, vol 8 (April 1830), 134.

²¹¹ MS Letter William Roby to Nehemiah Roby, 7 November 1787, Northern College Archives 16/1, John Rylands Library.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 33.

In 1795, a small Independent congregation, Cannon Street Chapel (Manchester), later relocated to Grosvenor Street, called the young Roby as its pastor and he remained until his death. While there, he witnessed his congregation grow from 60 to 485 members and approximately 1200 regular attenders.²¹³ Although a dedicated minister to his own local congregation, Roby also spent a great deal of his energy participating and providing leadership for various endeavours he felt were his evangelistic obligation: preaching itinerantly, planting churches, training young ministers and advocating foreign missions. It was out of this evangelistic zeal that Roby gained a great deal of his authority. While still ministering in Wigan, his developing interest in foreign missions and his mounting influence were demonstrated on a national level when he became one of the thirty-four original founders of the London Missionary Society, signing the organisation's original 'Terms of Association'. So involved was he with the Society that he rarely missed an annual meeting of the group.²¹⁴ Upon receiving word of Roby's death, the directors of the London Missionary Society passed the following resolution, which was published in the *Evangelical Magazine*:

Resolved – That it is with deep and unfeigned regret the Directors of the London Missionary Society, have received the intelligence of the death of the Reverend William Roby, of Manchester, who has been connected with operations of the Society from the first, as one of its founders, and most zealous supporters, whose personal and ministerial services, both at Manchester and elsewhere, have often conferred the most important benefits on the Society; and from whose church, some of its most valued Missionaries have gone forth to labour amongst the heathen. The Directors most sincerely sympathize with the widow of their departed friend, with the bereaved church and congregation, , and also with the various religious institutions in the county of Lancaster, which have been deprived of his efficient and influential labours.²¹⁵

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 137. See also, 'William Roby' in Donald M. Lewis, ed., *Dictionary of Evangelical Biography, 1730-1860* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004).

²¹⁴ 'Memoir of the Late Rev. William Roby, of Manchester', *Evangelical Magazine*, vol 8 (April 1830), 137.

²¹⁵ *Evangelical Magazine*, vol 8 (February 1830), 84.

His leadership in advocating organised evangelism also carried over to strategic home mission. In addition to his own itinerant preaching, Roby was instrumental in establishing organisations that promoted evangelistic preaching in Britain. In 1801, in co-operation with ministers from Lancashire, Cheshire, Derbyshire and Yorkshire, he was pivotal in establishing an Itinerant Society serving the Midlands and the North of England, which he served as its first secretary.²¹⁶

Executive Committee. The Executive Committee, sometimes called the General Committee, played a crucial role in the structure of the LCU and maintained a significant amount of authority within the group. The Committee met between annual meetings and carried out the business of the LCU throughout the year. Sources are limited but there are enough available to demonstrate the extent of the Committee's authority.

Before adjourning the first annual meeting of the Lancashire Congregational Union in 1806, delegates selected thirteen of their own to act as an Executive Committee, responsible for carrying out the work of the union until the next year's gathering.²¹⁷ This decision was in keeping with the adopted rules of the constitution, in which article four required:

That a Committee of thirteen, the majority to be laymen, including Treasurer and Secretary, be appointed annually, who shall "receive intelligence, take into consideration general advice, form plans, authorise and direct all issues of money from the Treasurer," seven of the Committee being a quorum, and six to go out annually.²¹⁸

The insistence on such a centralised committee was a departure from the rules passed by the proto-union of 1786. At that time, no Executive Committee had been

²¹⁶ Nightingale, *The Story of the Lancashire Congregational Union, 1806-1906* (Manchester: John Heywood, 1906), 18-19.

²¹⁷ MS Minutes of the LCU, 23 September 1806, [CUL 2/1].

²¹⁸ Quoted in Nightingale, *The Story of the Lancashire Congregational Union*, 24-25.

recommended or used. Instead, smaller, temporary committees had been formed for the further investigation of enquiries (article five) and to review the secretary's minutes.²¹⁹ Also, the insistence that a majority of the members be comprised of laymen demonstrates an increased involvement of the laity in the Association, especially when compared to the Hampshire Congregational Union that initially admitted clergy only.

During the 1838 annual meeting a new set of Laws and Regulations was unanimously adopted that elevated the power of the Committee, which at that time was called the General Committee. The rules no longer required a majority of laymen, but allowed for two delegates and one minister from each church, plus an additional delegate for every fifty members beyond the first fifty. Also included on the committee were the tutors of the Blackburn Academy and the itinerants.²²⁰ That same year, the strongest statement on the authority of the Committee in the history of the LCU, Article VII of the Laws and Regulation stated that the members of the select group were to maintain 'supreme and exclusive authority in all [the LCU's] affairs'.²²¹ Nightingale asserted that the Committee did not come into existence until 1844.²²² His misunderstanding comes from the different names used to describe the group. At the Annual Association in 1844, a group was selected to oversee the itinerant stations and those churches that were receiving financial assistance.²²³ The next year, the same group was renamed 'Executive Committee' and given almost identical responsibilities

²¹⁹ Rules and Articles of Association, 7 June 1786, Lancashire Records Office, Preston [CUL 1/1].

²²⁰ MS Minutes of the LCU, 4-5 April 1838, [CUL 2/3].

²²¹ *Ibid.*

²²² Nightingale, *The Story of the Lancashire Congregational Union*, 109.

²²³ MS Minutes of the LCU, 11 April 1844, [CUL 2/3].

to the General Committee of 1838.²²⁴ During the Annual Association in 1846 (Nightingale mistakenly says 1847),²²⁵ a resolution was passed that designated £200 to the Executive Committee for the purpose of hiring a fulltime General Secretary to ‘superintend the operations of the Union’.²²⁶ The Secretary’s job was not only to supervise the regular operations of the LCU and the Executive Committee but also to travel to the various congregations, raise financial support for the Union and assess the progress of the churches, especially those who were receiving pecuniary aid. David Thompson Carson, a respected minister from Preston, was hired for the position. Carson worked as Secretary for seven years, visiting churches and carrying out the administrative duties of the LCU, but after a conflict with the Executive Committee he resigned his post. He and the Committee had clashed concerning the nature of his job, which led to his resignation. The Executive Committee argued that he was not doing enough to raise funds and encourage financial support from the churches, but Carson felt justified in his assertion that he was providing pastoral support to congregations in crisis.²²⁷

As the century progressed, the Executive Committee became more involved in the regular affairs of the Union. Beginning in 1860 all applications for financial grants were to be submitted directly to the Committee instead of through the local churches or being presented at the annual Association.²²⁸ In 1863, one of the Blackburn District churches ‘declared itself independent of the Union’, not because it had withdrawn but

²²⁴ MS Minutes of the LCU, 10 April 1845, [CUL 2/3].

²²⁵ Nightingale, *The Story of the Lancashire Congregational Union*, 109.

²²⁶ MS Minutes of the LCU, 9 April 1846, [CUL 2/3].

²²⁷ For further details on Carson and his relationship with the LCU see John Lea, ‘The Journal of Rev. D.T. Carson, Secretary to the Executive Committee of the Lancashire Congregational Union, 1847-1854’ *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 125 (1974), 119-148.

²²⁸ MS Minutes of the LCU, 11 April 1850, [CUL 2/4].

because it had disqualified itself from participation.²²⁹ Apparently, since the church was receiving additional funding from the LCU, the Executive Committee maintained the right to control certain decisions the church made. The issue dealt with the authority of a local church to hire whomever it wanted as pastor. More specifically, the congregation had hired a minister without ‘consulting the Executive Committee’. While this event was one of one of the more extreme examples, the Association, frequently through the Executive Committee, maintained conditions when distributing money. That same year, 1863, the Executive Committee committed £45 to the Hollinwood Church, near Oldham, under the condition that it pay the minister there no less than £100.²³⁰

In 1864, the Executive Committee presented ‘The Revised Laws of the Lancashire Congregational Union’ for approval at the Annual Association.²³¹ The new rules present a few noteworthy issues of authority. The purpose of the LCU remained the same: ‘the diffusion of Christianity in connexion with Congregation principles of Church Government’. The included six means of accomplishing this goal are telling: 1. pecuniary aid; 2. the employment of evangelists; 3. grants for preaching stations; 4. the creation of trust deeds; 5. the circulation of religious literature; 6. the promotion of chapel building. From this list, it appears that the LCU sought to fulfil its Evangelical purposes through financial assistance. Also, in the discussion on membership, the constitution explained that any member of a Congregational Church who paid £10 annually directly to the treasurer would automatically become a member. Moreover, in addition to ‘general superintendence over the affairs of the Union’, the Committee was

²²⁹ MS Minutes of the LCU, 5-6 April 1863, [CUL 2/4].

²³⁰ *Ibid.*

²³¹ *The Revised Laws of the Lancashire Congregational Union* (Manchester: J. Andrew, 1864).

to oversee all of the agents, including evangelists. Finally, the Union's bylaws included a list of seven conditions that were to be met in order for a church become eligible to receive one of the financial grants controlled by the Executive Committee. In an overt exercise of the Association's authority over those who received a grant, the rules declared that 'Every church assisted by the Union shall secure the concurrence of the Executive Committee before proceeding to the election of a pastor: failure to comply with this regulation shall involve the forfeiture of the grant.' The new rules demonstrate an increased level of authority maintained by the Union and especially the Executive Committee, particularly in matters related to money.

Conclusion. The early character of the LCU was grounded in the ministry of William Roby. He established a pattern of itinerancy and evangelism similar to what he had experienced with the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion and at Trevecca College. The Lancashire Congregational Union, like the Hampshire Union, was motivated by its Evangelical zeal for spreading the gospel, though there was less discussion of global mission. Emphasis on domestic mission in Lancashire was in large part due to its higher population and urbanisation. More energy was spent planting churches and engaging social needs in the cities, which were frequently poverty stricken. Whereas rural Hampshire lacked an need for advanced organisational structure, the industrial atmosphere of Lancashire allowed the LCU churches to be more open to such changes, which members would have frequently observed around their county. Although some instances occurred when the LCU or the Executive Committee exercised authority over the churches, such occurrences were rare. The only occasions when the Association made decisions that may have been considered as impeding on the authority of a local congregation was when a church was excluded for not consulting the Executive Committee when it hired a minister. Cases like this,

though, were rare. However, the fact that specific rules were in place to dissuade similar decisions by the churches is equally as important as the frequency of such events. Authority was not exercised in matters of theology, which was never an issue to begin with. Instead, authority was exercised in pragmatic matters that might have affected the mission of the LCU.

CHAPTER FOUR

Associations of the Lancashire Baptists

Early Attempts at Association. When evangelist William Mitchell of Rossendale penned *Jachin and Boaz* (1707), a pamphlet outlining his views of church order and emphasising the importance of formal associations, he was not presenting a new idea to the Baptist congregations of Lancashire and the West Riding. In fact, on 21-23 September 1695 at Barnoldswick, Mitchell had gathered together a group of messengers from a small number of churches for an ‘Associated [sic] meeting’.²³² Although the meeting of 1695, as the Baptist historian W.T. Whitley noted, was similar in pattern to other Particular Baptist association meetings of the seventeenth century, to assert, as he does,²³³ that this was the inception of the Yorkshire and Lancashire Baptist Association is an exaggeration. There is no evidence of Mitchell’s group meeting prior to or following this single meeting. The meeting does suggest, however, that Baptists in the area were familiar with, and receptive to, participation in ecclesiastical co-operation beyond the local church level.

Such acceptance followed a common pattern of teaching found among English Particular Baptists, so named because of their Calvinistic belief in particular atonement. When a gathering of Particular Baptists from across England and Wales was proposed in 1677, one of the primary issues on the agenda was the adoption of a new confession. The resulting document, commonly referred to as the ‘Second London Confession’, was largely an adaptation of the Westminster Confession and the Savoy Declaration,

²³² W.T. Whitley, *Baptists of North-West England, 1649-1913* (London: Kingsgate Press, 1913), 77-80.

²³³ W.T. Whitley, ‘Yorkshire and Lancashire Association Minutes, June, 1764’, *Baptist Quarterly*, vol. 8 (1936-1937), 52; Whitley, *Baptists of North-West England*, 77.

but amongst other changes, it contained a greatly expanded chapter on the doctrine of the church, consisting of fifteen sub-chapters. Therein, the confession alluded to the need for likeminded Baptist churches to co-operate (the term ‘association’ is not used) for two primary reasons. First, the churches should come together to ‘hold communion . . . for their peace, increase of love, and mutual edification’.

‘Communion’, in this sense, refers not to the sacrament, but to fellowship. The second reason, addressed in the fifteenth and final portion of the chapter, explained the practical aspects of meeting in association:

In cases of difficulties or differences, either in point of Doctrine, or Administration; wherein either the Churches in general are concerned, or any one Church in their peace, union, and edification; or any member, or members, of any Church are injured, in or by any proceedings in censures not agreeable to truth, and order: it is according to the mind of Christ, that many Churches holding communion together, do by their messengers meet to consider, and give their advice in, or about that matter in difference, to be reported to all the Churches concerned; howbeit these messengers assembled, are not entrusted with any Church-power properly so called; or with any jurisdiction over the Churches themselves, to exercise any censures either over any Churches, or Persons: or to impose their determination on the Churches, or Officers.²³⁴

In short, an association should act as a mediator in disputes or as an advisory council, but the confession was quick to repudiate any authority in an association to enforce its decisions on the local congregations. Four months following the Act of Toleration (May 1689), Particular Baptists gathered in London again for their first ‘General Assembly’. The Second London Confession, which had undergone a second edition the year before,²³⁵ was reaffirmed and published as the doctrinal statement of the Assembly. Over the next hundred and twenty years, new editions were published at

²³⁴ *Confession of Faith Put forth by the Elders and Brethren of many Congregations of Christians (Baptized upon Profession their Faith) in London and the Country* (London: Printed for Benjamin Harris, 1677), XXVI:15.

²³⁵ *Confession of Faith Put forth by the Elders and Brethren of many Congregations of Christians (Baptized upon Profession their Faith) in London and the Country*, 2nd ed. (London: Printed for John Harris, 1688).

least six more times in Britain in 1693, 1699, 1719, 1720, 1791 and 1809.²³⁶ The importance and popularity of the Second London Confession meant the spread of the association principle, at least in theory, continued throughout the British Particular Baptists.

The eighteenth century lacked any substantial associational continuity. While Whitley viewed the 1695 meeting at Barnoldswick as the birth of the Yorkshire and Lancashire Association, which he insisted maintained ‘continuity’²³⁷ and ‘continuous life’²³⁸ to the present, other historians, including Ian Sellers and F.J. Baldwin, have disagreed, advancing an alternative notion that 1719 should be viewed as the founding year.²³⁹ They find this year significant because it was at this time that messengers from a small group of churches met at Rawdon and gathered into an association with formal rules and order. Although it is worth noting that this was the first association in the region for which there is evidence of consecutive annual meetings,²⁴⁰ the gatherings were short-lived and there is little evidence that consistent meetings continued after 1725. Sellers, however, citing no source, claimed a meeting of four ministers occurred in 1732,²⁴¹ and Whitley, using letters in his personal care, noted meetings in 1727 and 1738.²⁴² While the association of 1719 demonstrates a continuing interest in inter-

²³⁶ William L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1959), 239.

²³⁷ Whitley, *Baptists of North-West England*, 139.

²³⁸ Whitley, ‘Yorkshire and Lancashire Association Minutes, June, 1764’, 52.

²³⁹ Ian Sellers, ed., *Our Heritage: The Baptists of Yorkshire, Lancashire and Cheshire, 1647-1987* (Headingley: Yorkshire Baptist Association and the Lancashire and Cheshire Baptist Association, 1987), 12; S.L. Copson, *Association Life of the Particular Baptists of Northern England, 1699-1732* (n.pl: Baptist Historical Society, 1991), 10n; F.J. Baldwin, ‘The Beginning of Association Life in Yorkshire and Lancashire’, *Baptist Quarterly*, 23:5 (January 1970), 208.

²⁴⁰ Baldwin, ‘The Beginning of Association Life in Yorkshire and Lancashire’, 211.

²⁴¹ Sellers, ed., *Our Heritage*, 13.

²⁴² Whitley, *Baptists of North-West England*, 101, 317.

church co-operation and the development of the association principle in Lancashire and Yorkshire, there was no obvious continuity with the organisation of the later eighteenth century.

After decades of silence, Particular Baptist associationalism in the Northwest was renewed, when in June 1757, two associations met for the first time, one at Bradford and the other at Liverpool.²⁴³ The meeting at Bradford, consisting of churches from Bacup, Bradford, Liverpool, Haworth, Rawdon, Whitehaven, Wainsgate and Sunderland,²⁴⁴ has frequently been described as ‘high’ or ‘hyper’ Calvinist,²⁴⁵ while the churches forming the latter meeting, from Liverpool, Bacup, Rawdon and Nantwich, have been characterised as more moderate Calvinists.²⁴⁶ These distinctions may better apply to certain individuals or churches rather than the entire association, as it was common for some ministers to attend both meetings. By 1762, for example, three founding members of the Bradford Association, William Crabtree, Richard Smith and James Hartley, were highly involved in the Liverpool Association, as evidenced by the minutes.²⁴⁷ While the Bradford Association seems to have dissolved within three to four years due to theological and personality conflicts relating to a Liverpool minister,

²⁴³ For clarity, the associations will be referred to as the Bradford Association and the Liverpool Association.

²⁴⁴ Henry Dowson, *The Centenary: A History of the First Baptist Church, Bradford, from its Commencement in 1753; with Memorials of the Church at Rossendale, Clough-fold, Bacup, Rawden, Heaton, from which it had its Origin* (London: Ward & Co., 1853), 34.

²⁴⁵ Whitley, *Baptists of North-West England*, 117, 134; James Hargreaves, *A Short Sketch of the Rise and History of the Baptist Church, Bacup: Containing Some Account of the Churches at Clough-fold, Rodhillend, Rawden, Salendine Nook, Accrington, Blackburn, Cowling-Hill, Goodshaw, &c. &c.* (Rochdale: Joseph Littlewood, 1816), 59; Baldwin, ‘The Beginning of Association Life in Yorkshire and Lancashire’, 211.

²⁴⁶ Hargreaves, *A Short Sketch of the Rise and History of the Baptist Church, Bacup*, 59-60.

²⁴⁷ MS Minutes of an Association held at Rawdon, 4-5 August 1762, Archives, Angus Library, Regent’s Park College, Oxford [36.g.A.e.11].

John Johnson,²⁴⁸ the Liverpool group, which is largely ignored in the historiography, continued. John Haslam, in his chapter on the history of associations for the *The Baptists of Yorkshire*,²⁴⁹ fails to mention the Liverpool Association, while Sellers and Baldwin give the Bradford meeting only a few brief, dismissive sentences.²⁵⁰ Although neither group has received much attention, their activities mean that the principle of voluntary association was still alive among Lancashire and Yorkshire Baptists.

The Liverpool Association, in contrast to that of Bradford, had a much longer and more significant existence. In a letter to John Rippon, November 1790, John Fawcett, a member of the association since 1764,²⁵¹ described its history:

About thirty four [sic] years ago, as near as I can recollect, eight churches united in an association. Sermons were preached, letters were read from the churches, and questions were proposed and answered. Minutes of the transactions at these meetings were transmitted in writing to all the churches in that connection. I have by me, answers to questions &c which would furnish materials for a volume. There was no printed letter. The expense attending the transcribing of minutes of such a length was found too heavy and about eighteen years ago this association was dissolved.²⁵²

Fawcett's analysis of the breakup of the association was a bit sympathetic and simplistic. Although the transcription of the letters was surely a key factor in the collapse, theological debate, as will be seen below, was also to blame. In comparison to the previous attempts, this letter, found within a volume of manuscript minutes dated

²⁴⁸ Whitley, *Baptists of North-West England*, 134; Hargreaves, *A Short Sketch of the Rise and History of the Baptist Church, Bacup*, 60.

²⁴⁹ C.E. Shipley, ed., *The Baptists of Yorkshire: Being the Centenary Memorial Volume of the Yorkshire Baptist Association* (Bradford and London: Wm. Byles & Sons, 1912).

²⁵⁰ Baldwin, 'The Beginning of Association Life in Yorkshire and Lancashire', 211; Sellers, ed., *Our Heritage*, 13

²⁵¹ Whitley, *Baptists of North-West England*, 135.

²⁵² MS Letter from John Fawcett, Brearley Hall, to John Rippon, London, 23 November 1790 [Angus Lib. 36.g.A.e.11]. There were actually four churches in attendance, not eight as Fawcett suggests.

from 1762 to 1770,²⁵³ confirms that the life of the association was far from brief, lasting until at least 1772, though Fawcett also mentions a meeting in 1773.²⁵⁴ It seems that the association of 1757 was much more significant than any prior to it.

Lasting Co-operation. After the disbandment of the Liverpool Association around 1772, Baptist churches in the Lancashire and Yorkshire area did not go into isolation but continued to find ways to co-operate in a less formal manner. According to Fawcett, several churches that did not unite with the associations already met yearly in an informal gathering labelled the ‘Annual Lecture’.²⁵⁵ Very little is known of these meetings except that ‘several sermons were preached, the ministers took sweet counsel together, & the churches were edified’.²⁵⁶ Ministers of the dissolved Liverpool Association not only attended these meeting but were commonly invited to preach there, as well.²⁵⁷ Fawcett briefly records that at the Lecture in Preston, 1786, the decision was made to form themselves into a ‘Christian association, for the promotion of the communion of churches’.²⁵⁸ However, the traditional date given for the birth or reorganisation of the Association, depending on the historian’s perspective, is the 1787 meeting at Colne, which was also the year used to celebrate its centenary.²⁵⁹ This

²⁵³ MS Minutes of the Northern Associations [Angus Lib. 36.g.A.e.11].

²⁵⁴ Fawcett, *An Account of the Life, Ministry and Writings of the Late Rev. John Fawcett, D.D.* (London: Baldwin, Cradock and Joy, 1818), 190.

²⁵⁵ MS Letter from John Fawcett, Brearley Hall, to John Rippon, London, 23 November 1790 [Angus Lib. 36.g.A.e.11].

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ 1787 Circular Letter, Yorkshire and Lancashire Baptist Association (YLBA), 3.

²⁵⁹ *A Centenary Memorial of the Lancashire & Yorkshire Association of Baptist Churches* (Burnley: Burghope & Strange, 1887), 3. See also, *The History of the Yorkshire and Lancashire Association: The Circular Letter of the West Riding of Yorkshire Association of Baptist Churches Assembled in Halifax, on Wednesday and Thursday, the 22nd and 23rd of May, 1839* (Bradford: John Dale, 1839), 20.

assumption is understandable, as this was the first year that an annual circular letter was printed. The chronology is further confused by Fawcett's letter to Rippon, wherein he claims it was at the Lecture in Blackburn, 1784, that the attenders decided to unite formally into the Yorkshire and Lancashire Baptist Association.²⁶⁰ When he listed the subsequent meetings of the association (Rochdale, 1785; Preston, 1786; Colne, 1787; Sutton, 1788; Cloughfold, 1789; Manchester, 1790), he gave no special mention of the Colne meeting except that he was chosen to write the circular letter.²⁶¹ It is likely that the subject of transforming the Lecture occurred at multiple meetings, leading to Fawcett's later confusion. If one assumes that his comment was a brief lapse in memory, it appears that the decision to form the Yorkshire and Lancashire Baptist Association occurred at the 1786 Lecture, and that following the first annual meeting at Colne (1787), it met without interruption until the churches amicably divided in 1837 into two associations, with most Lancashire churches forming the new Lancashire and Cheshire Baptist Association.

John Fawcett. John Fawcett (1740-1817) was the most influential leader of the Yorkshire and Lancashire Baptist Association. He not only founded the Association, but he also was the primary individual responsible for shaping the Evangelical character of the group. Fawcett was a product of the Evangelical Awakening. He was converted as a teenager under the ministry of the influential Anglican minister and evangelist, William Grimshaw of Haworth, but he was also greatly influenced by the preaching of George Whitefield as well.²⁶² The years immediately following his conversion provided Fawcett with a religiously diverse foundation. In addition to

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ MS Letter from John Fawcett, Brearley Hall, to John Rippon, London, 23 November 1790 [Angus Lib. 36.g.A.e.11].

²⁶² Ian Sellers, ed., *Our Heritage*, 14.

Grimshaw's Anglicanism, Fawcett also spent time as a Methodist before joining a local Baptist church in his hometown.²⁶³ The Evangelicalism that was such an important part of his post-conversion life, would come to characterise the Association that he formed.

Although he was self-educated, academic training for ministers was of the utmost priority to Fawcett. His affinity for education was peculiar given the aversion to ministerial education in the North. Before any formal academy was proposed to the Association, he ran his own academy out of his home beginning in 1773.²⁶⁴ The reputations of his students spoke highly of his labours. Included among the prestigious alumni of his Academy were essayist John Foster, William Ward, who accompanied William Carey to India, and John Suttcliffe, one of the founders of the Baptist Missionary Society.²⁶⁵ He personally collected £200 for the Indian Mission.²⁶⁶ Aware of the limitations of his own academy, based on size and finances, Fawcett was quick to use the relationships he had developed to secure a relationship with Bristol Baptist College, where a number of his students matriculated after leaving his Academy.²⁶⁷ In 1804, after realising that his own academy was insufficient to train the number of preachers necessary to effectively minister to Yorkshire and Lancashire, Fawcett helped persuade the Association to develop the Northern Education Society.²⁶⁸ The

²⁶³ E.F. Clipsham, 'John Fawcett' in Donald M. Lewis, ed., *Dictionary of Evangelical Biography, 1730-1860*, vol. 2 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004). 381.

²⁶⁴ Ian Sellers, ed., *Our Heritage*, 18.

²⁶⁵ Ian Sellers, 'Other Times, Other Ministries: John Fawcett and Alexander McLaren', *Baptist Quarterly*, 34 (October 1987), 184.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁷ Ian Sellers, ed., *Our Heritage*, 18.

²⁶⁸ Peter Shepherd, 'John Fawcett's Academy (c.1773-1805), continued by John Fawcett Jr (1805-c.1832)', *Dissenting Academies Online: Database and Encyclopedia*, Dr Williams's Centre for Dissenting Studies, August 2011.

formation of the Society eventually led to the creation of the Horton Academy in 1806, for which Fawcett was largely responsible.²⁶⁹

Also important to the legacy of Fawcett influence over the YLBA was his role as an author. He produced five of the annual circular letters, including the inaugural letter, *Privileges and Duties of Gospel Churches Considered* (1787). Others included *The Cross of Christ* (1793), *Wisdom, the Equity, and the Bounty of Divine Providence* (1797), *Thoughts on the Revival of Religion* (1802) and *The Nature and Extent of Christian Liberty* (1808). The first was a defence of associationalism. Of the five, *Thoughts on the Revival of Religion* may be his clearest expression of Evangelical zeal. Throughout the chapter, further evidence of Fawcett's authority may be observed. The examples, however, are better suited dispersed widely through the themes of the text rather than in a single biographical section. The influence of Fawcett helped shape character and the priorities of the Yorkshire and Lancashire Baptist Association.

Distinctive Characteristics. The formation of a new association allowed the early participants to shape the organisation according to their desires. They sought to co-operate in a way that was more formal than the Lectures, but, as will be discussed, without the complications that had led them to dissolve the association of the mid-eighteenth century. The new purposes were pragmatic; co-operating for the sake of organised endeavours in evangelism and education, as well as spiritual health. Yet, even though theological debate on minor issues was suppressed in exchange for unity and evangelistic zeal, certain measures were taken to ensure spiritual fervour and orthodoxy in all the participating churches. This Evangelical influence upon Baptist polity was most clearly demonstrated in their yearly meetings, the individual church letters and the Association's annual circular letters.

²⁶⁹ Ian Sellers, 'Other Times, Other Ministries: John Fawcett and Alexander McLaren', 184.

The annual meetings of the Yorkshire and Lancashire Baptist Association gave the utmost priority to corporate worship, even more so than the previous Lancashire Baptist associations. Such a heavy emphasis was placed upon preaching, praying and singing that many of the recorded minutes indicate that the yearly meetings were little more than a series of worship services. Beginning in 1806 and continuing throughout the period in focus, a service devoted entirely to prayer was added to the yearly schedule and met at 6:00 or 6:30 a.m. on the second day, and though no sermons were delivered, an occasional ‘word of exhortation’ was given.²⁷⁰ Over the course of the two-day gatherings, it was common for four or more sermons to be preached, not including the reading of the circular letter, with at least one time of worship explicitly designated as a ‘public service’.²⁷¹ As the Association grew, so did attendance during the times of public worship, and alternative venues were frequently required. The minutes from the 1807 meeting in Rochdale recorded that the Thursday evening service was held in the local Methodist chapel since the Baptist church was ‘too small to contain the Congregation’.²⁷² Likewise, in 1819 the Association was forced to improvise when a large crowd convened for the service, so Brother Trickett, from Bramley, preached out of doors to approximately four hundred people who could not find room in the chapel.²⁷³ The amount of time designated for corporate worship and prayer demonstrates the priority the Association placed on the spiritual nature of their annual meetings.

²⁷⁰ 1809 Circular Letter, YLBA, 28.

²⁷¹ 1791 Circular Letter, YLBA, 13.

²⁷² 1807 Circular Letter, YLBA, 19.

²⁷³ 1819 Circular Letter, YLBA, 17.

Although the previous associations had also held worship services, much of their annual meeting time had been spent in theological debate and discussion. Summarising the 1768 meeting, John Oulton recorded that, ‘in the morning of each day questions were proposed and answered, and...[in] the afternoons Sermons were preached’.²⁷⁴ Since the 1695 meeting at Barnoldswick, each of the associations, following a common Baptist practice, had held an extended time for queries and answers concerning a wide variety of doctrinal and practical issues, which were recorded for the churches. In 1764 it was asked whether the ‘dressing of Meat by roasting, baking, boiling or otherwise, on ye Lord’s Day’ was a sin.²⁷⁵ The next year, of the twenty-six queries presented for discussion, there was time to discuss only six, and of those, four dealt with ‘secret prayer’. The recorded answers to the six questions consisted of a combined thirty-four pages.²⁷⁶ Occasionally the questions dealt with authority within a local church, as in 1768 when one of the eight questions tabled for discussion the following year asked, ‘As ministers of Christ are said to bear rule in the Churches...How far doth the power of one who is invested with the office of Bishop or Pastor extend in respect to that particular flock over which the holy Ghost has made him Overseer’.²⁷⁷ Unfortunately, the answer was not recorded. The prominence of the questions and answers demonstrates the role of the earlier associations as an advisory council in theological, as well as practical, matters.

²⁷⁴ MS Minutes of an Association held at Buckstone Chapel near Rawden, 25-26 May 1768, Archives, Angus Library, Regent’s Park College, Oxford [36.g.A.e.11].

²⁷⁵ Quoted in Whitley, ‘Yorkshire and Lancashire Association Minutes, June, 1764’, 68.

²⁷⁶ MS Minutes of an Association held at Goodshaw Chappel [sic] in Rossendale, 12-13 June 1765, Archives, Angus Library, Regent’s Park College, Oxford [36.g.A.e.11].

²⁷⁷ MS Minutes of an Association held at Buckstone Chapel near Rawden, 25-26 May 1768, Archives, Angus Library, Regent’s Park College, Oxford [36.g.A.e.11].

The use of annual meetings as a platform for theological debate was not always appreciated. According to his son and biographer, Fawcett believed queries such as these, and the arguments they provoked at annual meetings, ‘greatly contributed to keep up the spirit of religious controversy, and could scarcely be considered as consistent with freedom of inquiry on religious subjects’.²⁷⁸ The ‘diversity of opinions’ given to a single question, he continued, frequently made it ‘difficult to preserve peace and harmony, and to come to decisions which would not violate the independence of Christian societies’.²⁷⁹ According to Fawcett, the discord created by the question-and-answer time had ultimately led to the demise of the previous associations.²⁸⁰ By 1767, the answers to the questions had grown so long that the process of copying them for distribution was identified as ‘tedious’ and ‘burdensome’ and the association voted to stop including them in the minutes.²⁸¹ Three years later, the time of questions and answers during the meeting itself was also being abandoned.²⁸² When the new Yorkshire and Lancashire Baptist Association convened in 1787, the practice was fully abandoned and the role of debate was significantly minimised with a greater emphasis being placed upon the devotional nature of the annual meeting. In place of ‘answers’, attached to the circular letters were only brief minutes, which primarily recorded the order of events, the sermons delivered and the details of the next annual meeting. The

²⁷⁸ John Fawcett, Jr, *An Account of the Life, Ministry, and Writings of the Late Rev. John Fawcett, D.D.*, 98.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 98-99.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 99.

²⁸¹ MS Minutes of an Association held at Haworth, 10-11 June 1767, Archives, Angus Library, Regent’s Park College, Oxford [36.g.A.e.11].

²⁸² MS Minutes of an Association held at Bradford, 15-16 August 1770, Archives, Angus Library, Regent’s Park College, Oxford [36.g.A.e.11].

de-emphasis of debate marks a break with tradition and a noticeable contrast to the earlier associations.

The spiritual and devotional nature of the annual meetings of the Association did not mean that there was no room for business, but their decisions were largely dictated by their Evangelical activism. Practical and business matters were usually carried out during a designated time on the programme each year. During these times, resolutions were passed and corporate decisions were made by the ministers and messengers in attendance. Generally the business was mundane, dealing with the practicalities of the next annual meeting: location, preachers and the subject and author of the circular letter. On other occasions, however, more significant matters were addressed. In 1831, a resolution was passed to begin work establishing a fund ‘for the relief of poor Ministers of this Association’, which would be supported by an annual collection by the churches and passed into the care of the Association.²⁸³ It was also agreed that the ministers and messengers of the Association, provided their congregations contributed, would be given the authority to distribute the money on behalf of the churches.²⁸⁴ Given the perceived ‘destitute state’ and ‘depressed condition’ of Lancashire and Yorkshire, participants in the 1807 meeting were asked to consider employing an itinerant evangelist,²⁸⁵ a goal realised at the 1810 gathering.²⁸⁶ The business meetings of the Association allowed participants to give some practical expression to their faith.

²⁸³ 1831 Circular Letter, YLBA, 15.

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁸⁵ 1807 Circular Letter, YLBA, 20.

²⁸⁶ 1810 Circular Letter, YLBA, 16.

The exchanging of church letters at the annual meetings of the Yorkshire and Lancashire Baptist Association was an important characteristic that distinguished the organisation from the Annual Lectures. The practice was also a key motivation in the attenders at the Lecture adopting the more official structure of the Association. Each of the previous eighteenth-century attempts at organisation had included the practice of exchanging letters, though never as seriously as at the Yorkshire and Lancashire Association. Congregations sent with their minister or messenger an official account of their spiritual and numerical health for the previous year to be read publicly and, until the practice became too labour-intensive, distributed to the other churches. At times, however, the nature of a letter might be so sensitive that it was read only to a limited group or in a more private setting since visitors and other laity were often present. Such was the case in 1766 when the letter from the Church at Goodshaw was read privately at the end of the meeting after the public dispersed because it contained ‘heavy Complaints & Lamentations’ concerning a growing division and general ‘Worldly-mindedness’ within the congregation.²⁸⁷ It was the congregation’s desire that the churches of the association would ‘sympathize with and pray for them’.²⁸⁸ Since the Lectures were less formal and participants did not exchange letters, many felt the ‘advantages of Christian communion were not experienced in such a degree as many wished’, thus leading to the adoption of the association model.²⁸⁹ This motivation is ironical since it was the tedious job of transcribing these letters that had contributed to

²⁸⁷ MS Minutes of an Association held at Wainsgate, 10-11 June 1766, Archives, Angus Library, Regent’s Park College, Oxford [36.g.A.e.11].

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ John Fawcett, Jr, *An Account of the Life, Ministry, and Writings of the Late Rev. John Fawcett, D.D. who was Minister of the Gospel Fifty-Four Years, first at Wainsgate, and afterwards at Hebdenbridge, in the Parish of Halifax; Comprehending many Particulars Relative to the Revival and Progress of Religion in Yorkshire and Lancashire; and Illustrated by Copious Extracts from the Diary of the Deceased, from His Extensive Correspondence, and other Documents* (London: Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy, 1818), 258.

the demise of the Liverpool Association a few years before,²⁹⁰ but this mistake was not repeated and the letters were not transcribed or printed for the other churches, only read at the meeting. They remained, though, an important part of the annual Association.

Annual letters should not be misunderstood as mere requests for prayer or general updates. They were also the primary means for the Association to evaluate its congregations and keep them accountable. Although letters were already the normal practice, expectations concerning them were formalised at the 1789 meeting, where it was agreed: ‘That each of the associated Churches be requested to send a letter to the Association, mentioning the number of members, and the state of the Church; [and] whether the Minister can attend or not’.²⁹¹ This statement was repeated the following year, but in addition, churches were also to supply their annual increase and decrease in membership at the bottom of the page.²⁹² When some churches failed to send letters in 1805, the Association was ‘painfully surprised’ and dramatically voiced its displeasure, identifying the neglect as a source of ‘grief’.²⁹³ When the issue persisted, the 1816 participants attempted to solve the problem by passing a resolution declaring that any church failing to send a letter would be approached directly by the secretary, and upon a second offence, ‘that Church shall be considered as excluded from the Association’.²⁹⁴ Such was the case with the Cowling Hill congregation four years later when it was excluded for ‘having neglected two successive years to send a letter to the

²⁹⁰ MS Letter from John Fawcett, Brearley Hall, to John Rippon, London, 23 November 1790 [Angus Lib. 36.g.A.e.11].

²⁹¹ 1789 Circular Letter, YLBA, 8.

²⁹² 1790 Circular Letter, YLBA, 15.

²⁹³ 1805 Circular Letter, YLBA, 24.

²⁹⁴ 1816 Circular Letter, YLBA, 17.

annual meeting'.²⁹⁵ Such accountability could not have been enforced by the informal annual Lecture.

The earliest known corporate decision passed by the Yorkshire and Lancashire Baptist Association was the commissioning of a printed circular letter. The chosen author was John Fawcett, who 'being absent, was appointed to draw one up' and 'choose his subject'.²⁹⁶ Common among Baptist associations of the later eighteenth century, the use of published letters was first introduced by Joseph Stennett II and the Western Association in 1753.²⁹⁷ Although short manuscript letters were commonly distributed to co-operating churches, typically accompanying the transcribed church letters, the new use of the printing press led to lengthier letters and more widespread distribution. Mass publication also meant that churches would now receive numerous copies instead of just one. The young Association was well aware that printing provided the greatest means for maximum exposure and influence.

Driven by its Evangelical fervour, the Association used circular letters in an attempt to spread its faith and revive religious zeal among the Baptists of Lancashire and Yorkshire. The first letter, *Privileges and Duties of Gospel Churches Considered* (1787),²⁹⁸ was clearly intended as a recruitment tool, but not by stressing the necessity for association. Instead, by assuring churches of their rights and freedoms as

²⁹⁵ 1820 Circular Letter, YLBA, 20.

²⁹⁶ MS Letter from John Fawcett, Brearley Hall, to John Rippon, London, 23 November 1790 [Angus Lib. 36.g.A.e.11].

²⁹⁷ Joseph Stennett II, *Complaints of an Unsuccessful Ministry: A Sermon Preached to the Ministers and Messengers of Several Churches in the West of England, met Together in Association at Bratton, in the County of Wilts, June 9, 1752* (London: J. Ward, 1753). See Raymond Brown, *The English Baptists of the Eighteenth Century* (London: The Baptist Historical Society, 1986), 85 and Whitley, *Baptists of North-West England*, 139.

²⁹⁸ 1787 Circular Letter, YLBA.

‘voluntary societies’,²⁹⁹ it tried to ease the concerns of those fearful of external control. The letter explained, ‘We can assure you, brethren, that we do not mean, by associating ourselves together, to attempt any infringement on your liberties, as voluntary societies, possessed of full power to manage all your affairs within yourselves.’ The Association further explained that there would be no attempts to ‘exercise dominion over [a congregation’s] faith, or consciences’.³⁰⁰ On the contrary, Fawcett promised readers that the new organisation’s only desire was to ‘improve all the opportunities of doing good’ and ‘to promote the glory of God, the welfare of immortal souls, and the edification of the churches’.³⁰¹ The Association’s goal was not to control, but rather to encourage the local churches and partner with them in spreading their commonly held Evangelical faith.

Such an emphasis on liberty was not intended to suggest that the Association had no interest in influencing local church practices, but the issues addressed were noticeably general and letters explicitly concerned with local church polity were few. God, they believed, was a ‘God of Order’, and good polity would ‘effectually promote their own peace and comfort’, while their churches would be ‘edified and *multiplied* abundantly’.³⁰² Although the previous letter had made it clear that churches possessed the freedom to elect their own officers, exercise discipline and interpret scripture,³⁰³ the Association felt it ‘would greatly promote [the congregations’] prosperity and happiness’ to place in writing the, so called, ‘rules’ Christ established for a properly

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 3.

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² 1789 Circular Letter, YLBA, 6. Emphasis present.

³⁰³ 1787 Circular Letter, YLBA, 4.

ordered church.³⁰⁴ Consequently, for their second circular letter, the Association commissioned James Ashworth, minister at Gildersome, to write *The Order of a Gospel Church* (1789).³⁰⁵ In many ways the document was a typical example of Particular Baptist polity at the time, briefly dealing with the officers and ordinances of a church. But one may observe the Evangelical character of the Association in the considerable emphasis placed on purity and holiness, evidenced by the fact that more than half of the letter is concerned with ‘church discipline’, including the ‘exclusion of disorderly members’.³⁰⁶ These emphases were common among Evangelical Particular Baptists since the piety of individuals, and therefore their churches, demonstrated the effects of one’s conversion and was fuelled by the reading of scripture and meditation upon the cross of Christ.³⁰⁷ On all other subjects, however, very few specifics were given and the ‘laws of Jesus Christ’ were noticeably vague.³⁰⁸ The topic of the ‘indispensable duty’ of exclusion was taken up again in 1824, specifically in relation to how church members should behave towards those having undergone such discipline.³⁰⁹ After outlining the biblical basis for the ‘always painful, and often difficult’ practice,³¹⁰ the author, James Lister, quickly proceeded to the crux of his argument. He reminded the churches, ‘The separation is not for the ruin of the offender,

³⁰⁴ 1789 Circular Letter, YLBA, 2.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ Ibid., 3-6.

³⁰⁷ For further discussion on holiness see David W. Bebbington, *Holiness in Nineteenth-Century England* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2000). Particularly relevant is the chapter on ‘The Calvinist Tradition’.

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 3.

³⁰⁹ 1824 Circular Letter, YLBA, 3.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

but for his recovery' and should only be used as a 'last act'.³¹¹ The goal was not to provide a detailed manual for the practice, but to caution churches on their motivation. Likewise, the circular letter of 1835 on the role of deacons was not intended to be a definitive discourse on the office. The author was quick to acknowledge that while the subject had 'practical bearing, intimately connected...with the peace, the order, and the prosperity of our churches', the matter was not one of 'the great central truths of the gospel'.³¹² As long as the basics of Particular Baptist polity were followed, church order, though important, was not a subject upon which the Association wanted to divide.

Desiring to promote Evangelical faith and the revival of religion, the circular letters were above all other purposes devotional and pastoral in nature. There was an urgency felt among the leaders of the Association at the time because, as they saw it, Christians in general and Baptists in particular, were in a 'divided state', with 'energy and life' quickly diminishing.³¹³ In hopes of seeing revival spread throughout the churches of Yorkshire and Lancashire, the Association commissioned and published circular letters like *The Means of Reviving and Promoting Religion* (1795),³¹⁴ *Thoughts on the Revival of Religion* (1802)³¹⁵ and *The Means of Revival* (1834).³¹⁶ Personal spirituality was also a common topic, as seen in the publications of *Christian Experience* (1790), *Christian Zeal* (1792) and *Communion with God* (1819), among

³¹¹ Ibid., 6.

³¹² 1835 Circular Letter, YLBA, 3.

³¹³ 1795 Circular Letter, YLBA, 6.

³¹⁴ 1795 Circular Letter, YLBA.

³¹⁵ 1802 Circular Letter, YLBA.

³¹⁶ 1834 Circular Letter, YLBA.

numerous others.³¹⁷ Well aware of the power of the press, the Yorkshire and Lancashire Baptist Association used circular letters as instruments of spiritual renewal, growth and correct polity.

Freedoms and Limitations. In keeping with the traditions of Particular Baptists and Free Churches, the congregations comprising the Yorkshire and Lancashire Association, as well as the later Lancashire and Cheshire, maintained individual autonomy. Membership with, or separation from, an association did not affect a congregation's characterisation as Baptist. In fact, as John Briggs has demonstrated, in 1833 as few as half of Baptist churches in England were involved with associations.³¹⁸ Each chapel was free to act on its own account.

The writings of the subsequent associations were particularly clear concerning the liberty of the local congregations. In the early, formational years of the organisation, three circular letters emphasised this autonomy principle: *Privileges and Duties of Gospel Churches Considered* (1787), *The Order of a Gospel Church* (1789) and *The Utility of Associations* (1807). The first two were written by John Fawcett and James Ashworth, respectively. The latter was written by Bristol Academy-educated³¹⁹ William Steadman, the unofficial successor to John Fawcett as spiritual leader of the Yorkshire and Lancashire Association who had relocated from south-west England to become the first president of the Horton Academy. According to these essays, there were certain rights that belonged to the congregations alone. Each church, which Ashworth defined as 'a particular society of Christians, voluntarily united together in

³¹⁷ 1790 Circular Letter, YLBA; 1792 Circular Letter, YLBA; 1819 Circular Letter, YLBA.

³¹⁸ J.H.Y. Briggs, *The English Baptists of the Nineteenth Century* (Didcot: The Baptist Historical Society, 1994), 206.

³¹⁹ Sharon James, 'Revival and Renewal in Baptist Life: The Contribution of William Steadman, 1764-1837', *Baptist Quarterly*, 36:6 (April 1998), 263.

the faith and order of the gospel, and usually assembling, for divine worship, in one place',³²⁰ was free to choose its own officers, ministers, and by implication, messengers.³²¹ Likewise, having the 'right of private judgment',³²² each congregation was cautiously said to have the freedom to exercise ecclesiastical discipline, which might be as simple as a verbal censure or as severe as exclusion from church membership.³²³ Steadman also emphasised the independent nature of churches and their subjection to '[Christ] alone for what they believe and practice'.³²⁴ He continued,

We therefore applaud the care and vigilance [sic] with which our churches guard their independence, and would be particularly cautious, lest in our associate capacity, we infringe upon it: we are not, we dont [sic] wish to be, Lords over God's heritage, nor have dominion over their faith, but only helpers of their joy!³²⁵

As these circular letters demonstrate, the freedom of churches to govern themselves was of paramount importance to the Association.

In addition to his circular letter, Fawcett once again explored issues of congregational polity in *The Constitution and Order of a Gospel Church Considered* (1797).³²⁶ The essay contained his strongest sentiments on the importance of individual church freedom. Each church, he explained, had 'full power and authority within itself'.³²⁷ More specifically, this authority was particularly concerned with matters of discipline, ecclesiastical 'rule and government' and other unspecified matters of purity

³²⁰ 1789 Circular Letter, YLBA, 2.

³²¹ 1787 Circular Letter, YLBA, 4; 1789 Circular Letter, YLBA, 3.

³²² 1787 Circular Letter, YLBA, 4.

³²³ 1787 Circular Letter, YLBA, 4; 1789 Circular Letter, YLBA, 4.

³²⁴ 1807 Circular Letter, YLBA, 6.

³²⁵ Ibid.

³²⁶ John Fawcett, *The Constitution and Order of a Gospel Church Considered* (Ewood Hall, Halifax: n.p., 1797).

³²⁷ Ibid., 25.

and edification. He insisted that such liberty was ‘power’ and was ‘derived from the Lord’. In one of Fawcett’s most adamant statements on the subject he insisted, ‘No other church, however powerful, numerous, respectable or wealthy; no minister of any other church, however eminent he may be for his abilities or influence, has any right to assume arbitrary jurisdiction, or decisive authority over any particular church.’³²⁸ His sentiments equally extended to protect individual churches from external ecclesiastical bodies like associations. Fawcett particularly emphasised this point in relation to discipline and insisted that if matters of local church correction failed, ‘redress is not to be sought from other ministers, other churches, or synodical assemblies’.³²⁹ The issues were to be handled within the church and external bodies did not have the authority to pronounce judgement. Alternatively, advice from an association was only to be sought when the pronouncements did not infringe on the ‘just rights and privileges of particular societies’.³³⁰ Fawcett’s sentiments fitted well within the ethos of the age, but he did not identify his emphases of autonomy and freedom as by-products of Enlightenment individualism. Instead, ‘This power is derived from the Lord... and is absolutely necessary to every particular church, for its preservation and its purity’.³³¹ Considering Fawcett was the most popular and influential minister of the Yorkshire and Lancashire Association, and that *The Constitution and Order of a Gospel Church* underwent two editions, the publication would have been well known and respected throughout the local congregations. It serves as a clear example of the stress the Association placed on the freedom of local congregations.

³²⁸ Ibid., 26.

³²⁹ Ibid., 27.

³³⁰ Ibid., 28.

³³¹ Ibid., 26.

The importance placed on autonomy and freedom should not, however, be misinterpreted as support for hyper-individualism, nor iconoclasm. There were limitations, especially when congregations joined one of the respective associations. Walter B. Shurden, in his study of Baptists in America, convincingly argued that associations were, themselves, autonomous organisations with the authority to conduct their own affairs.³³² The same was true with the Yorkshire and Lancashire Association, as well as the Lancashire and Cheshire. Although each was a voluntary society, churches that wished to unite with the association were expected to conform in certain ways.

The associations, gathering for democratic business, maintained the authority to determine their own membership. Initially, growth was minimal. After having expressed, in 1804, a desire for all area churches ‘of the same faith and order’³³³ to unite with them, the following year the Association included a dreary follow-up comment in their minutes: ‘We are painfully surprised that the SISTER CHURCHES, which are conveniently situated, should refuse to joint the association’.³³⁴ In 1811, Association members went so far as to request the moderator send a personal letter to each Particular Baptist church, expressing a desire for its membership. In the earliest years of the association, a representative of a church attended the annual meeting and made known a desire to be united.³³⁵ The ministers and messengers that were present then voted to accept or deny the request. The process for membership changed in 1814, when the ministers and messengers of the Association required application to be made

³³² Walter B. Shurden, *Associationalism Among Baptists in America: 1707-1814* (New York: Arno Press, 1980), 126.

³³³ 1804 Circular Letter, YLBA, 20.

³³⁴ 1805 Circular Letter, YLBA, 24. Emphasis present.

³³⁵ 1811 Circular Letter, YLBA, 18.

in the form of a letter. In addition, a short doctrinal summary was to be included, an obvious test for orthodoxy. The process remained unaltered until 1846, nine years after the split between Lancashire and Yorkshire. At that time, members of the Lancashire and Cheshire Association, which had now grown to thirty-nine churches with a combined active membership of 4,272 and over 10,000 Sunday scholars, decided that applications should be voted upon the year following the submission.³³⁶ This would leave time for the associating churches to investigate the applicant. In 1863 the process was altered once again when it was determined that applications should initially pass through a committee before being presented to the Association.³³⁷

Although voting was typically a routine formality, on other occasions the Association visibly exercised its authority. The Yorkshire and Lancashire Association had been so eager for churches to join that there is no record of it ever rejecting a request for membership before its division in 1837. Twice subsequently, however, in 1849 and 1853,³³⁸ churches were refused admittance because of ongoing disputes with other churches. Neither was it uncommon for an application to be deferred until the following year for further study and deliberation, which was the case in 1864 with a church in Oldham.³³⁹ In 1855, a peculiar situation developed when a church split into two, resulting in both churches claiming membership with the Association. At the annual meeting, the ministers and messengers created a committee to investigate the

³³⁶ 1846 Circular Letter, YLBA, 38-39.

³³⁷ 1863 Circular Letter, YLBA, 18.

³³⁸ 1849 Circular Letter, YLBA, 17; 1853 Circular Letter, YLBA, 22.

³³⁹ 1864 Circular Letter, LCBA, 15.

matter and gave them the authority that ‘their decision be final’.³⁴⁰ The Association had the right to accept, reject or defer any application for membership it received.

Just as local churches maintained the right to exclude members from their fellowship, so did the Association. However, while this level of censure was firmly within the organisation’s authority, the action was rare and used very sparingly. The most common reason for dismissal, as previously mentioned, was lack of participation. Perpetual failure to send letters or representation to the annual meetings was considered sufficient justification. This precedent had been established by the rule adopted in 1816 and first exercised in 1820.³⁴¹ Three churches were excluded in 1828 for lack of participation, but one, it was noted, had been involved with the Shropshire Association for several years.³⁴² The other two, it was feared, had been absent because they both hired ministers who held beliefs ‘at variance with those which distinguish the Denomination’.³⁴³ The regulation was reasonably effective as evidenced by the church at Stalybridge, which was reprimanded in 1833 for failing to send a letter for two consecutive meetings, but reconnected the following year.³⁴⁴ The Association, though reluctant, was willing to withdraw membership from a church, especially for nonparticipation.

Other requirements for membership were also mentioned on rare occasions. In 1864, an alteration to the ‘Rules and Regulations’ of the Association was passed, requiring churches to submit at least £1 to the annual mission fund. This was an overt exercise of authority by the Association, especially since only twenty-two of the forty-

³⁴⁰ 1855 Circular Letter, LCBA, 20.

³⁴¹ 1816 Circular Letter, YLBA, 17; 1820 Circular Letter, YLBA, 20.

³⁴² 1828 Circular Letter, YLBA, 15.

³⁴³ Ibid.

³⁴⁴ 1833 Circular Letter, YLBA, 19; 1834 Circular Letter, YLBA, 3.

eight churches had met the requirement that year.³⁴⁵ In another rare act of dictated conformity, the ministers and messengers responded to the issue of slavery. The American slave trade had been a perennial topic of discussion, and when the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 was passed, requiring all runaway slaves be returned to their masters, the 1851 Association resolved to sever all fellowship with any individual, minister or layperson who favoured or participated in the law. This was a peculiar decision by the Association, which scarcely ever made pronouncements concerning individuals. It was clearly unafraid of occasionally expecting high moral standards from its membership.

Neither of the consecutive associations was involved in a great deal of doctrinal controversy, but certain theological standards were expected to be maintained. From its origins, the Association had embraced identification as Particular Baptists and used the term in the heading of its first printed circular letter, a practice that continued until 'Particular' was quietly dropped in 1802. By 1813, the group had added a brief confession of faith to the heading of the circular letter, which also represented a broadly Calvinistic Baptist theology:

Maintaining inviolably, the important doctrines of three equal persons in the Godhead; eternal and personal election; original sin; particular redemption; free justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ; efficacious grace in regeneration; the final perseverance of real believers; the resurrection of the dead; the future judgement; the eternal happiness of the righteous, and everlasting misery of such as die impenitent; with the congregational order of the churches.³⁴⁶

The origins of the statement are uncertain, but it had already been in use by the Midlands Association, in a slightly modified form, by 1761.³⁴⁷ Another very similar confession was used by the Northamptonshire Association in 1768, and may have been

³⁴⁵ 1864 Circular Letter, LCBA, 29, 31.

³⁴⁶ 1813 Circular Letter, YLBA, 1.

³⁴⁷ 1761 Circular Letter, Midlands Baptist Association, 1.

used as early as 1766.³⁴⁸ Most likely, however, the statement had been inadvertently received from the Western Association, which had begun using an almost identical confession beginning in 1798.³⁴⁹ The Western Association, and the Bristol Academy in particular, had a great deal of interaction with some of the influential members of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Association. Fawcett had sent multiple students from his own academy to study at the Bristol Academy, most notably his life-long friend John Sutcliff (minister at Olney and founding member of the Baptist Missionary Society), as well as John Foster (the essayist) and Samuel Stennett (Scotch Baptist Minister and original Secretary of the Continental Society).³⁵⁰ The most likely scenario was that Bristol educated William Steadman (educator and evangelist) brought knowledge of the confession with him when he moved to the West Riding and founded Horton Academy in 1805. By using the short confession, the Association was acting well within the tradition of other evangelism-minded Particular Baptists of the age.

The use of an association-wide statement of faith was not without controversy, though, and some believed any such statement to be too exclusive. Just before the division of the association, discussions began to arise regarding the legitimacy of the practice. In 1836, a motion was placed before the ministers and messengers calling for the removal of the ‘imperfect summary of the principles of the Denomination’.³⁵¹ It was argued that the heading was not only an ‘innovation...unauthorized by the Epistles’, but it should be removed primarily because it was ‘sectarian’ in appearance

³⁴⁸ 1768 Circular Letter, Northampton Baptist Association, 1; David Griffiths, *Baptist Associations and Articles of Belief* (London: Wightman, 1840), 6.

³⁴⁹ 1798 Circular Letter, Western Baptist Association, 1.

³⁵⁰ Peter Shepherd, 'John Fawcett's Academy (c.1773-1805), continued by John Fawcett Jr (1805-c.1832)', *Dissenting Academies Online: Database and Encyclopedia*, Dr Williams's Centre for Dissenting Studies, Accessed May 2015.

³⁵¹ 1836 Circular Letter, YLBA, 18.

and dissuaded non-Baptists from reading the circular letters.³⁵² A more subtle reason also existed. The old statement was overtly Calvinistic in nature, and in such a co-operative age it was going out of fashion. Although the motion was postponed until the following year, it must have received considerable attention, because such motions rarely were entered into the minutes. The following year, the Association divided and the issue was not discussed, but at the same meeting, when the Lancashire and Cheshire Association was organised, its first motion was to adopt the confession as it already existed ‘at the head of this circular letter’.³⁵³ Two years later, however, in 1839, a non-unanimous majority of the ministers and messengers decided to remove the doctrinal heading completely.³⁵⁴ A growing discontent between moderates and conservatives had emerged. David Griffiths, tutor of the Accrington Academy, was a respected minister, educator and author of two circular letters (1843 and 1854).³⁵⁵ He responded to the controversy on behalf of the dissenting minority by writing *Baptist Associations and Articles of Belief* (1840).³⁵⁶ Therein, he argued that the ‘heading’ was not a ‘human creed’ as had been argued, but a biblical summary of divine doctrine,³⁵⁷ and a ‘necessary basis for their union’.³⁵⁸ Those who rejected the use of the doctrinal heading had offered to replace it with a statement of affirmation in the authority of the Bible, but this too was unacceptable to Griffiths, because heretics, he insisted, could make the

³⁵² Ibid.

³⁵³ 1837 Circular Letter, YLBA, 13.

³⁵⁴ 1839 Circular Letter, LCBA, 16.

³⁵⁵ The 1854 letter, ‘On the Faith and Order of the New testament Church’, was read but not published because of its divisive nature. 1854 Circular Letter, LCBA, 19-20.

³⁵⁶ Griffiths, *Baptist Associations and Articles of Belief*, 3.

³⁵⁷ Ibid., 12.

³⁵⁸ Ibid., 13.

same claim.³⁵⁹ Griffiths was partially successful. The next year, 1841, a compromise was made and a brief list of doctrines with coinciding scripture references was attached to the second page of the circular letter.³⁶⁰ The Association maintained this ‘symbol of faith’,³⁶¹ with little alteration, through 1865 and beyond. For only a brief portion of their existence had the Association been without a published statement of faith.

While the gathered Association possessed the authority to exclude churches and insist on theological uniformity, it avoided such actions and typically sought to circumvent controversy and division by advocating for widespread co-operation. In doing so, members maintained the authority to edit the circular letters that might have been seen as problematic. In 1844, when Charles Thompson of York Street Chapel, Manchester, presented his assigned circular letter on ‘The Probable Influence of our Principles, as Baptists...’, the essay evoked significant criticism. Some felt the content could be interpreted as overly offensive to paedobaptists.³⁶² The desire to maintain peace, however, led to the appointment by the Association of a four-person committee to revise the work for publication.³⁶³ Thompson, insulted by the proposal, rejected the corrections and withdrew his letter completely.³⁶⁴ Ten years later (1854), following the delivery of a controversial circular letter by David Griffiths, who had grown increasingly moderate in his theology, the members of the Association offered their ‘respectful thanks’, then fully rejected the work for publication without offering that it

³⁵⁹ Ibid., 18.

³⁶⁰ 1841 Circular Letter, LCBA, 2-3.

³⁶¹ 1841 Circular Letter, LCBA, 4.

³⁶² *General Baptist Repository*, 71 (November 1844), 380.

³⁶³ 1844 Circular Letter, LCBA, 4.

³⁶⁴ Ibid., 6.

should be revised.³⁶⁵ Griffiths had apparently espoused some unsatisfactory teachings concerning the atonement, more liberal than many were comfortable with.³⁶⁶ The majority members of the Association desired, instead, to include a piece that would express ‘the undivided opinions of the Churches’.³⁶⁷ The sentiments Griffiths had expressed, however, were not isolated. In 1857, Charles Williams, also of Accrington, presented a sermon describing the nature of the atonement from a more liberal perspective. A number of the conservatives in attendance felt the sermon had gone too far. The following year, when they asked the Association to take action against Williams, who was also that year’s moderator, it was decided: ‘That this Association does not consider itself called upon to pronounce on the doctrinal expressions of the sermon preached by Rev. C. Williams last Association.’³⁶⁸ In other words, the Association did not feel Williams’s sermon necessitated a response. Despite the Association’s efforts to avoid controversy, eight of the most conservative churches, all Strict Baptists, withdrew in 1860 to form the North Western Association, based on closed-communion principles.³⁶⁹ Even in the midst of theological controversy, the Association generally declined to exercise its authority.

Increased Organisation. When the co-operating churches permitted the Association to speak or act upon their behalf, they were placing authority in the figurative hands of the organisation. In return, congregations expected the Association to perform tasks that they as individual churches could not do as well on their own.

³⁶⁵ 1854 Circular Letter, LCBA, 20

³⁶⁶ Peter Shepherd, *The Making of a Northern Baptist College* (n.p.: Northern Baptist College, 2004), 67.

³⁶⁷ 1854 Circular Letter, LCBA, 20.

³⁶⁸ 1858 Circular Letter, LCBA, 23.

³⁶⁹ 1860 Circular Letter, LCBA, 15; Briggs, *The English Baptists of the Nineteenth Century*, 80; Whitley, *The Baptists of North West England*, 201-203.

The earliest years of the Yorkshire and Lancashire Association had seen very little of this kind of action. During the first two decades, the spiritual vitality of the churches was given the highest priority, but apart from circular letters, fast days and the occasional publication of missionary correspondence and reports of revival,³⁷⁰ few additional measures, or further organisation, were initiated by the Association. The annual meetings, themselves, were the primary activity. The age of corporate inactivity ended, however, with the establishment of the Northern Education Society (NES) in 1804, an auxiliary whose goal was the education of local prospective ministers through the opening of Horton Academy.³⁷¹ Three years later the formation of an Itinerant Society and Fund was proposed to the churches, a task which came to fruition in 1809 under the leadership of William Steadman.³⁷² A new era of associational organisation and activity had emerged.

The Association, which had seen such little organisation beyond the annual meetings, began forming additional relief funds and auxiliaries as various concerns and needs presented themselves. An auxiliary was formed in 1815 to aid the work of the Baptist Missionary Society and help promote financial support.³⁷³ In 1828, ministers and messengers were presented with the idea of developing an Association Fund ‘for the assisting in the erection of suitable Places of Worship, and in the maintenance of infant causes in promising situations’, but when the details were adopted three years later, the objective had drastically changed to reflect those of the London Fund, which

³⁷⁰ 1794 Circular Letter, YLBA, 12-16; 1800 Circular Letter, YLBA, 13-16.

³⁷¹ 1804 Circular Letter, YLBA, 22-23.

³⁷² 1807 Circular Letter, YLBA, 20; 1809 Circular Letter, YLBA, 20-22.

³⁷³ 1815 Circular Letter, YLBA, 15.

assisted poor ministers.³⁷⁴ The original plan was eventually adopted by the Lancashire and Cheshire Association as the basis for the Building Committee. Following in the tradition of the Association Fund, a temporary committee was appointed in 1857, and again in 1858, to explore relief options for elderly ministers. As a result, the following year the Association voted to join the National Society for Aged and Infirm Baptist Ministers and recommended that the churches contribute generously.³⁷⁵ The Association, which once had minimal organisational structure, had developed into a series of organisations.

As the Association grew, the ministers and messengers felt the need to reorganise. In 1839, with more than 3000 members in thirty-three churches, a subcommittee was formed to develop a scheme for the ‘better transaction of its business, without weakening the interest of its religious exercises’.³⁷⁶ The next year, a new, more extensive plan for conducting business was adopted. The strategy called for the further development of a series of committees to conduct a majority of the business that typically took place during the annual meeting.³⁷⁷ In addition, the Association formally joined the Baptist Union,³⁷⁸ even though the decision had been left to each individual church the previous year.³⁷⁹ By 1849, the Association had grown to include thirty-nine churches with a combined 4,510 members and 11,276 Sunday scholars, and the necessary business was not being completed during the annual meetings. With this in mind, those present appointed a new Interim Committee to conduct the unfinished

³⁷⁴ 1828 Circular Letter, YLBA, 15; 1831 Circular Letter, YLBA, 15.

³⁷⁵ 1859 Circular Letter, LCBA, 20.

³⁷⁶ 1839 Circular Letter, LCBA, 17, 24.

³⁷⁷ 1840 Circular Letter, LCBA, 17-18.

³⁷⁸ 1840 Circular Letter, LCBA, 18.

³⁷⁹ 1839 Circular Letter, LCBA, 16.

work throughout the year, ‘all its decisions being subject to the approval of the general body’.³⁸⁰ In 1864, when the rules of the Association were altered once again, the Interim Committee was given further responsibilities. Its job, as it was described, was to ‘...complete any business lying over from the Annual Meeting, to act as advisers and referees to the Ministers and Churches seeking their aid; to arrange the public proceedings of the Associational meetings; and to promote the general interests of the Denominational Institutions’.³⁸¹ Reorganisation had made operations more centralised, thus entrusting the Association with more authority.

The Association as Spokesperson. As the Association evolved, it was regularly used by the churches to express their collective voice. As a result, each year a large number of the proposed resolutions and motions involved the Association addressing significant issues related not only to faith but to politics and ethics, as well. Generally, these were addressed to Members of Parliament, expressing grievances or enlightening them on issues of concern. The use of the Association as a spokesperson became increasingly common as the nineteenth century progressed. Whereas in 1828 and 1829, the churches, themselves, were asked to petition Parliament for the suppression of the ‘horrid practice’ of *sati*, the Hindu custom of burning widows with their deceased husbands,³⁸² by 1841, the Association petitioned for the ‘protection of Young Females in the Metropolis and other large towns’.³⁸³ In growing frequency, the Association acted as a communal advocate on behalf of the churches, and the word of the organisation was considered that of the congregations as well.

³⁸⁰ 1849 Circular Letter, LCBA, 17, 27.

³⁸¹ 1864 Circular Letter, LCBA, 15.

³⁸² 1828 Circular Letter, YLBA, 15; 1829 Circular Letter, YLBA, 11.

³⁸³ 1841 Circular Letter, LCBA, 3.

A recurrent recipient of the Association's Evangelical activism was the cause of antislavery. The first mention of slavery within the minutes occurred in 1832 and was rather mild, simply asking churches to pray for the emancipation of slaves in Jamaica and 'all our Colonies'.³⁸⁴ The next year, however, further action was taken by the Association when its members participated in a petition led by London Baptists and sent their own letter of grievances to Earl Grey. Therein, the government was partially praised for the proposed 'Slavery Abolition Act 1833', but ultimately asked for its dismissal in favour of a 'full measure of justice to the long-oppressed Negro'.³⁸⁵ Thereafter, the attention of the Association was directed towards North America. Six additional times the issue of slavery was addressed in the minutes (1836, 1842, 1851, 1853, 1856, and 1865), the last being a resolution of triumph to celebrate emancipation and to call for 'prompt and liberal donations' for the freedmen and the societies that supported them.³⁸⁶ The source of numerous petitions and resolutions had been alleviated.

In keeping with its passionate interest in freedom, the Association used its collective voice to advance the cause of religious liberty at home and abroad. 'Increasing zeal' had been noted among the churches in 1828, the same year they formally supported the Nonconformist cause of repealing the Test and Corporation Acts.³⁸⁷ In response to proposed legislation, letters of 'admiration and gratitude' were sent to the 'Movers and Seconders' of the bill.³⁸⁸ Lord John Russell, the following year,

³⁸⁴ 1832 Circular Letter, YLBA, 2.

³⁸⁵ 1833 Circular Letter, YLBA, 20. A copy of the letter is included in the minutes.

³⁸⁶ 1854 Circular Letter, LCBA, 17.

³⁸⁷ 1828 Circular Letter, YLBA, 15.

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

gratefully responded to the support in a letter read publicly before the Association.³⁸⁹ In 1833 a circular letter was presented and adopted on ‘The Principles of Dissent’, the first of its kind within the organisation. A similar circular letter was later produced by the Lancashire and Cheshire Association, entitled ‘The Duties of Nonconformists as Citizens’(1848). Previously, all other circular letters had been concerned with Evangelical faith and the means of spreading it. Following the passage of additional grievances in 1835 and 1836, as well as the endorsement of the ‘Religious Freedom Society’ by the Lancashire and Cheshire Association in 1839, a subcommittee was formed in 1841 to ‘superintend and direct the movements of the churches in reference to Congregational Petitions to Parliament’.³⁹⁰ In short, their role was to educate the churches, and make appeals to the government concerning matters of religious liberty on their behalf. Issues repeatedly discussed were oath taking (1841, 1842), church rates (1842, 1854), voluntary education (1843, 1844, 1845, 1847, 1852, 1853), and infractions of religious liberty in Europe (1842, 1843, 1850, 1852, 1854, 1856, 1857). In addition, a lengthy resolution was passed in 1843 in support of those who seceded from the Established Church of Scotland during the Disruption, a copy of which was included in a letter to the moderator of the Free Church Assembly and advertised in various Nonconformist newspapers.³⁹¹ The Nonconformist and Free Church character of the Association was unmistakeable in its zeal for religious liberty.

Conclusion. When the Yorkshire and Lancashire Association organised in 1786, the spirit of the Evangelical Revival undergirded its actions and intentions. This change had been felt among many Particular Baptists of the age as they emerged from

³⁸⁹ 1829 Circular Letter, YLBA, 11.

³⁹⁰ 1841 Circular Letter, LCBA, 4.

³⁹¹ 1843 Circular Letter, LCBA, 5.

higher Calvinism and embraced a more Evangelical character. In their respective studies, W.R. Ward and Roger Hayden have demonstrated that the Northamptonshire Baptist Association and the Western Baptist Association, with the Bristol Academy, were largely responsible for disseminating the new Evangelical ethos among the Particular Baptists.³⁹² Both of these associations were influential in shaping the theological and organisational character of the Yorkshire and Lancashire body, particularly through the ministries of Fawcett and Steadman. As a result of their influence, the new association and the later Lancashire and Cheshire Association took measures to minimise theological debate. In doing so, they also minimised the Association's role as an advisory board for practical and theological issues of the individual churches. Likewise, their revivalist attitudes also led the respective associations of Lancashire to establish voluntary organisations as efficient means of evangelism and religious education. As the nineteenth century progressed, the Associations embraced a more activist role in social and political issues, making public pronouncements and petitioning Parliament. The Evangelical character which had been found in the earliest meetings, continued up to 1865 and beyond.

Although the Association continued to expand and the organisational structure became more complex, issues of authority were rarely, if ever, points of contention. As a voluntary society, churches were free to come or go as they pleased, as was the case with the churches forming the North Western Association. The Lancashire groups, likewise, were also autonomous organisations, and each was free to establish its own rules and requirements for membership. The most common reasons for dismissal, however, were not issues of theology or conflict, but failure to participate, which was

³⁹² W.R. Ward, 'The Baptists and the Transformation of the Church, 1780-1830', *Baptist Quarterly*, 25:4 (October 1973), 167-184; Roger Hayden, *Continuity and Change: Evangelical Calvinism Among Eighteenth-Century Baptist Ministers Trained at Bristol Academy, 1690-1791* (Oxford: Nigel Lynn Publishing, 2006).

essential to the success of the increasingly complex Association and its affiliate societies and subsidiaries. There was never a significant struggle for authority between the churches and the organisation, because the Association was primarily viewed and used as a practical means to spread their faith and express their convictions as Evangelical Particular Baptists.

CHAPTER FIVE

New Connexion of General Baptists in the Midlands

The origins of New Connexion may be partially traced to the Baptists of seventeenth-century Dissent. The denomination known as General Baptists emerged from a congregation of English Separatists while in exile in the Netherlands during the reign of James I.³⁹³ After coming to the conclusion that infant baptism was unscriptural, their leader, John Smyth, a dismissed minister of the Church of England and practising physician,³⁹⁴ baptised himself in 1609. Thereafter, he baptised the members of the congregation as believers and reconstituted the church. Smyth died in 1612, and by 1615 the majority of the group had merged with Dutch Mennonites, but not before those who remained Baptists left Amsterdam for London (1611/1612) under the leadership of Thomas Helwys, making them the first Baptists in England. By the mid-seventeenth century General Baptists had emerged as a fixture within English Nonconformity.

General Baptists maintained an early affinity for confessional statements and ecclesiology. In 1651 a group of General Baptist churches from the Midlands, where the sect was strong, drew up a confession of faith entitled, *The Faith and Practice of Thirty Congregations Gathered According to the Primitive Pattern*.³⁹⁵ Of the seventy-five articles agreed upon, approximately thirty were ecclesiastical, dealing with church

³⁹³ For further discussion of General Baptist origins, see relevant chapters in David W. Bebbington, *Baptists Through the Centuries: A History of a Global People* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2010), B. R. White, *The English Baptists of the Seventeenth Century* (Didcot: Baptist Historical Society, 1996), and Stephen Wright, *The Early English Baptists: 1603-1649* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2006).

³⁹⁴ Bebbington, *Baptists Through the Centuries*, 32.

³⁹⁵ William L. Lumpkin, ed., *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, Rev. (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1969), 171-188.

practices and order.³⁹⁶ Although it is unclear if the document was the product of a formal association or an occasional meeting, it is worth noting that the seventieth article stresses the importance for congregations to seek advice in the midst of controversy ‘from some other society [with] which they are in fellowship’.³⁹⁷ The article’s inclusion demonstrates the emergence of the association principle among the churches in the area, which became common among General Baptists of the 1650s.³⁹⁸ By 1660 three attempts at forming a National Assembly had taken place,³⁹⁹ a practice that was later affirmed in the thirty-ninth article of *The Orthodox Creed* (1678), a confession popular among Midland churches:

General councils, or assemblies, consisting of the Bishops, Elders, and Brethren, of the several churches of Christ, and being legally convened, and met together out of all the churches, and the churches appearing there by their representatives, make but one church, and have lawful right, and suffrage in this general meeting, or assembly, to act in the name of Christ.⁴⁰⁰

This statement presents a much higher view of the authority of extra-congregational ecclesiastical organisation than was held among Particular Baptists, and even some General Baptists. The Act of Toleration (1689), furthermore, provided the means of more consistent nationwide co-operation toward the end of the century by removing many of the penalties against Nonconformist congregations and offering greater freedom. Inter-church co-operation was an important part of early General Baptist thought.

During the seventeenth century the General Baptists also developed their own peculiar theological identity. By contrast to the Calvinism of their Particular Baptist

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 173.

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 186. Also quoted in White, *The English Baptists of the Seventeenth Century*, 37.

³⁹⁸ White, *The English Baptists of the Seventeenth Century*, 47ff.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁴⁰⁰ Lumpkin, ed., *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 327.

relatives, the General Baptists believed in general atonement, that is, that Christ died for all and not just the elect. Likewise, though no strangers to debate and disagreement, they also largely adhered to the ‘Six Principles’ derived from Hebrews 6:1-2: repentance, faith, baptism, laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead and final judgement. With the exception of the laying on of hands after baptism, the principles were intentionally vague so as to avoid conflict within the national body, known as the General Assembly. Therefore, in the hope of unity, the ‘Six Principles’ were occasionally reaffirmed as foundational to the General Assembly in the midst of controversy, as was the case in 1709⁴⁰¹ and 1710.⁴⁰² During 1728, in an effort to stem the seemingly consistent controversy over points of ‘abstruce [sic] Speculation’ the Assembly affirmed the ‘Six Principles’ as its sole doctrinal basis, ‘Adding Only for Distinctions Sake...the Doctrine of Universall Redemption’.⁴⁰³ With the ‘Six Principles’ as their sole foundation, much of their doctrine became negotiable and susceptible to erosion.

Emergence of the New Connexion. The New Connexion of General Baptists emerged in the wake of the eighteenth-century Awakening. Most of its churches did not hold seventeenth-century General Baptist ancestry. Instead, the majority of the earliest churches comprising the New Connexion may be traced to two Evangelical movements in the East and North Midlands. The Awakening had inspired an outpouring of zealous, travelling evangelists in several parts of the Midlands, particularly among those influenced by the early Methodists. In the early 1740s, near Barton in the Beans (Leicestershire), a group of congregations, later known as the

⁴⁰¹ W.T. Whitley, ed., *Minutes of the General Assembly of the General Baptist Churches in England: Vol. I, 1654-1728* (London: Kingsgate Press, 1909), 101-103.

⁴⁰² *Ibid.*, 106.

⁴⁰³ *Ibid.*, 149-150.

Barton churches, was founded by the itinerant work of John Taylor, a companion of John Wesley,⁴⁰⁴ and David Taylor, a servant of the Countess of Huntingdon.⁴⁰⁵ Although unaffiliated with any denomination, these churches were very similar to Methodists in practice and in theology. By the mid-1750s, however, they had adopted believer's baptism.⁴⁰⁶ Similarly, in Yorkshire, 1763, David's brother, Dan Taylor, an energetic Methodist travelling preacher, along with a small group of followers, adopted believer's baptism. Taylor had been confirmed in the wake of the revival, having attended the preaching of prominent Evangelicals like William Grimshaw, George Whitefield and the Wesleys.⁴⁰⁷ Aware that the local Particular Baptist churches would not baptise him on account of his Arminian theology, Taylor located a General Baptist church in Gamston (Nottinghamshire) that agreed to perform the ordinance. There he was baptised in the River Idle, and upon his return home Taylor and his adherents reorganised themselves as General Baptists, though they also maintained characteristics of their former Methodism, including a strong sense of inter-church connectivity.⁴⁰⁸ In 1764, soon after joining the Lincolnshire General Baptist Association, Taylor became acquainted with the Barton Churches and their spiritual zeal, and, in turn, made several

⁴⁰⁴ J.R. Godfrey, *Historic Memorials of Barton and Melbourne General Baptist Churches* (Leicester: Buck, Winks and Son, 1891), 11.

⁴⁰⁵ The two were not related. Adam Taylor, *The History of the English General Baptists*, Vol. 2 (London: T. Bore, 1818), 3-4.

⁴⁰⁶ *General Baptist Magazine*, Vol. 1 (September 1798), 359; Adam Taylor, *The History of the English General Baptists*, Vol. 2, 28-31.

⁴⁰⁷ 'Dan Taylor' in Donald M. Lewis, ed., *Dictionary of Evangelical Biography, 1730-1860*, 2 Vols (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004); Frank Beckwith, 'Dan Taylor (1738-1816) and Yorkshire Baptist Life', *Baptist Quarterly*, 9:5 (January 1939), 300.

⁴⁰⁸ Frank W. Rinaldi, *The Tribe of Dan: The New Connexion of General Baptists 1770-1891: A Study in the Transition from Revival Movement to Established Denomination* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008), 3, 37.

unsuccessful attempts at uniting them with the assembly.⁴⁰⁹ When probed further, he discovered that their hesitancy was based on what appeared to them a lack of orthodoxy and unity within the Lincolnshire Association, where some ministers were accused of anti-Trinitarianism, among other heterodox beliefs.⁴¹⁰ They were, however, open to uniting with other comparable, Baptist churches.⁴¹¹ In the coming years, the ministry of Dan Taylor, as well as the Barton Churches, both products of the Awakening and Methodism, would be instrumental in forming the New Connexion.

Driven by their common Evangelical fervour, Dan Taylor and twenty-four disgruntled General Baptist representatives met together on 6 June 1770 to finalise their separation from the General Baptist Assembly and their merger with the Barton Churches to form the New Connexion. The decision to unite had been made the previous year, after conflict over a perceived sense of apathy and theological laxity once again struck the Lincolnshire Association and the General Assembly.⁴¹² In short, the General Baptists, as Taylor recorded, continued to preoccupy themselves with ‘impertinent quibbles’ and failed to affirm ‘the plain truth of the Gospel’.⁴¹³ The Evangelical emphasis of the early New Connexion was clearly visible in the heading of their first minutes: ‘The proceedings of an Assembly of free grace general Baptists..., with a design to service experimental religion, or Primitive Christianity in faith and

⁴⁰⁹ J.H. Wood, *A Condensed History of the General Baptists of the New Connexion, Preceded by Historical Sketches of the Early Baptists* (London: Simpkin, Marshall & Co., 1847), 175.

⁴¹⁰ R.W. Ambler, ‘Church, Place and Organization: The Development of the New Connexion General Baptists in Lincolnshire, 1770-1891’, *Baptist Quarterly*, 37:5 (January 1998), 239.

⁴¹¹ Adam Taylor, ed., *Memoirs of the Rev. Dan Taylor, Late Pastor of the General Baptist Church, Whitechapel, London; With Extracts from His Diary, Correspondence and Unpublished Manuscripts* (London: n.p., 1820), 29-30. See also Wood, *A Condensed History*, 175.

⁴¹² Adam Taylor, *The History of the English General Baptists*, Vol. 2, (London: T. Bore, 1818), 134-135.

⁴¹³ Quoted in Taylor, ed., *Memoirs of the Rev. Dan Taylor*, 22.

practice'.⁴¹⁴ In other words, the New Connexion's churches were not only committed to orthodoxy, but also to heart-felt religion, as was characteristic of churches that embraced the eighteenth-century Evangelical Revival.

The ecclesiastical structure of the New Connexion strongly reflected its Methodist heritage. In fact, the use of the term 'Connexion', itself, was borrowed directly from the Methodist use of the term. The New Connexion was organised into three levels: local churches, regional Conferences, and the national Association, or Assembly. Within British Methodism a distinct structure existed. Societies (local churches), which were made up of individual classes, were gathered into larger Circuits, and multiple Circuits were formed into Districts. The various Districts, together, formed the national body, or the Connexion. With each step the level of authority grew. The Methodist structure provided a strong sense of interconnectedness from top to bottom, and while the New Connexion did not adopt this scale of institutional bureaucracy there was a greater acceptance of authority from outside the congregations than in any other Baptist group, with the possible exception of the Scotch Baptists.⁴¹⁵

The *Six Articles of Religion*. During the earliest decades of the Connexion, measures were set in place to prevent the churches from abandoning its two-fold emphasis and possibly following the General Assembly down a perceived path of theological and spiritual laxity. The records of the first meeting show that the New Connexion, at least initially, required ministers of co-operating churches to affirm and sign the *Six Articles of Religion*, a confession of faith written by Taylor and agreed upon by the other ministers during the first Association. This was not an expansive doctrinal statement. It asserted only what Taylor believed to be the foundational points

⁴¹⁴ MS Minutes of the General Assembly of the New Connexion, 6-8 June 1770, Archives, Angus Library, Regent's Park College, Oxford.

⁴¹⁵ For further discussion of the Scotch Baptists, see Chapter 7.

of Evangelical religion. The *Six Articles* included brief paragraphs under the following headings:

- Article 1st. On the Fall of Man
- Article 2nd. On the Nature and Perpetual Obligations of the Moral Law
- Article 3rd. On the Person and Work of Christ
- Article 4th. On Salvation by Faith
- Article 5th. On Regeneration by the Holy Spirit
- Article 6th. On Baptism⁴¹⁶

Although Adam Taylor, New Connexion historian and son of Dan Taylor, insisted that the document was not considered a ‘perfect creed’ but rather a ‘declaration of their views on those points which had been the chief subjects of debate [within the Old Assembly]’,⁴¹⁷ subscription was still required for membership. ‘We agree’, the first minutes record, ‘that no minister be permitted to join this assembly but what subscribe [to] the Articles we have now agreed upon, and that those who do subscribe [to] them and afterward depart from them shall be considered as no longer belonging to this assembly.’⁴¹⁸ A theological standard was required.

Mere intellectual adherence to the *Six Articles* was not a sufficient measure of faith for the Connexion, however, and at the second meeting ministers spent the majority of the first two days giving personal accounts of their conversions, or ‘religious experiences’ as they were described.⁴¹⁹ In 1775, the topic of requirements for membership in the New Connexion was addressed once again. The majority voted that ‘subscription to a form of articles of faith’, the *Six Articles*, was no longer necessary, but instead that each new member should give an account of his own conversion experience, after which a vote of affirmation by the Assembly was

⁴¹⁶ MS Minutes of the General Assembly of the New Connexion, 6-8 June 1770.

⁴¹⁷ Taylor, *History of the English General Baptists*, Vol. 2, 139.

⁴¹⁸ MS Minutes of the General Assembly of the New Connexion, 7-8 June 1770.

⁴¹⁹ MS Minutes of the General Assembly of the New Connexion, 22-24 May 1771.

required.⁴²⁰ The demonstration of one's personal conversion was just as important as theological uniformity.

This change should not be interpreted as minimising the importance of doctrinal orthodoxy by the Connexion. On the contrary, the same minutes state that prospective members should first receive a written copy of what the Connexion considered the most 'Fundamental doctrines', assembled by a three-person committee, so that there could be no confusion in what 'Religious sentiments' the group held.⁴²¹ Unfortunately, the content of this document has not been preserved. It is worth noting, however, that Dan Taylor, founder of the Connexion and by far its most influential leader, published a lengthy book entitled *Fundamentals of Religion in Faith and Practice* that same year.⁴²² The 357-page treatise contained, according to Taylor, 'several subjects of the first importance',⁴²³ including those doctrines addressed in the *Articles*. Over 160 individuals were listed as financial subscribers for the book, including the Particular Baptist divines John Fawcett and John Sutcliffe, several of whom requested numerous copies.⁴²⁴ While *Fundamentals* was not an official publication of the organisation, the general sentiments, no doubt, reflected those of the larger body. Theological orthodoxy remained important even when subscription was no longer necessary.

The *Articles of Religion* remained the theological core of the New Connexion into the mid-nineteenth century. Although New Connexion historian Frank Rinaldi stated that the document lost its position as a 'theological reference point' for the

⁴²⁰ MS Minutes of the General Assembly of the New Connexion, 7-8 June 1775.

⁴²¹ *Ibid.*

⁴²² Dan Taylor, *Fundamentals of Religion in Faith and Practice; or, an Humble Attempt to place some of the most important Subjects of Doctrinal, Experimental, and Practical Divinity in a clear and scripture Light* (Leeds: Printed for the author, 1785).

⁴²³ *Ibid.*, iii.

⁴²⁴ *Ibid.*, ix-xvi.

Connexion after the ‘early days’, numerous official sources demonstrate that the original confession remained important.⁴²⁵ During the restructuring of the Academy, the attenders of the annual meeting of 1813 agreed that the mission of the Connexion’s new ministerial training school was to ‘promote and cherish the sentiment of the *Articles*, drawn up and signed, in the year 1770, at the formation of the New Connection [sic]’.⁴²⁶ In 1814, the *Articles* were printed in place of the annual circular letter,⁴²⁷ and two years later, as in the earliest years, it was agreed that churches that desired admittance into the Connexion were required to affirm and ‘maintain’ the confession’s principles, or face exclusion.⁴²⁸ During the 1817 meeting, a small number of churches challenged the adherence rule for unspecified reasons, and in 1818 only the church at Louth in Lancashire objected, yet on both occasions the messengers ‘heartily’ reaffirmed the role of the *Articles*.⁴²⁹ When the constitution of the New Connexion was rewritten in 1838, the document provided the clearest statement of adherence of the nineteenth-century New Connexion: ‘That this Union shall consist of such Churches as approve, maintain, and intend to promote, besides other important scriptural doctrines, those views of divine truth which were embodied by the founders of the New Connexion in 1770, in the Six Articles’.⁴³⁰ This statement, which was later described as ‘the most full and pleasing expression of their steady perseverance’, reaffirmed the

⁴²⁵ Frank W. Rinaldi, *Tribe of Dan: The New Connexion of General Baptists 1770-1891: A Study in the Transition from Revival Movement to Established Denomination* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008), 14.

⁴²⁶ Taylor, *History of the English General Baptists*, Vol. 2, 456.

⁴²⁷ 1814 Circular Letter, New Connexion of General Baptists (NCGB), 20-21.

⁴²⁸ Taylor, *History of the English General Baptists*, Vol. 2, 459.

⁴²⁹ 1817 Circular Letter, NCGB, 18; 1818 Circular Letter, NCGB, 116.

⁴³⁰ J.H. Wood, *A Condensed History of the General Baptists of the New Connexion, Preceded by Historical Sketches of the Early Baptists* (London: Simpkin, Marshall & Co., 1847), 276.

role of the *Articles* as the theological foundation of the New Connexion. When an official history of the New Connexion was published in 1844, the function of the *Articles* was dwelt upon once again. The author, James Taylor, described the confession as providing ‘essential doctrines’ that distinguished the New Connexion from the ‘Arian and Socinian Baptists’, namely the older General Baptists from whom they separated. Consequently, ‘every church, every Minister, and every Member, virtually engages to abide by the Six Articles of 1770’, though varying opinion was common in areas of non-essential doctrine. ‘But when any Minister, or Church, departs from [the Six Articles of 1770], or opposes them’, Taylor continued, ‘the bond of union is broken..., and he bids fair to deserve the name of a heretic’.⁴³¹ Contrary to Rinaldi’s statement, the *Articles of Religion* remained an essential aspect of the New Connexion’s identity into the 1840s.

By the 1850s, as the doctrinal distinctiveness that separated Particular and General Baptists diminished, the *Articles* were rarely discussed. The relationship between the churches of the New Connexion and those of the Particular Baptists grew stronger following the reorganisation of the Baptist Union in 1832. When the Union was first established in 1812, the doctrinal standard adopted was typical for Particular Baptists of that time and included moderate Calvinist statements of ‘eternal and personal election’ and ‘particular redemption’, which General Baptists could not affirm.⁴³² In 1832, however, the statement was replaced, offering membership to all Baptists, including New Connexion churches, who agreed with those ‘sentiments

⁴³¹ James Taylor, *Statistics of the New Connexion of General Baptists; From its Formation in 1770 to 1843* (J. Goadby: Leicester, 1844), 41.

⁴³² Quoted in David M. Thompson, ed., *Nonconformity in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Routledge & Kegan, 1972), 41.

usually denominated Evangelical'.⁴³³ Within ten years, J.G. Pike, a Derby pastor and prominent New Connexion leader, was asked to preside over the annual meeting of the Baptist Union, and the minutes were included in the *General Baptist Repository*.⁴³⁴ During the 1850s, the annual Assembly minutes continue to assert the necessity of maintaining Evangelical doctrine, but did so without naming the *Articles* explicitly. In an address to the Association in 1853, 'The Responsibility of the Annual Association', Joseph Wallis, head of the Academy, called hearers to adopt the enthusiasm of preachers like 'a Whitefield, or a Wesley', while denying the use of 'an extended creed of human composition'. Instead, he implored the New Connexion to embrace the 'maxim of the immortal [William] Chillingworth, "that the Bible, and the Bible only is the religion of Protestants"'.⁴³⁵ Wallis's address indicated an affinity with the larger Evangelical Nonconformist community. During the annual address in 1855, the chairman and minister at Nottingham, G.A. Syme, reassured the churches that the 'great principles...which led to the formation of this Association' were still important.⁴³⁶ Syme then proceeded to list the six doctrines addressed in the *Articles*, identifying them by that name, which he lauded as the 'principles of our union'. However, they did not uniquely belong to the New Connexion. The doctrines 'contain the essence of revealed religion, and of Evangelical truth', Syme continued, and could be agreed upon by, Baptists of Calvinist or Arminian leanings.⁴³⁷ Based on his comments, it is not surprising that the Association invited the Baptist Union to gather

⁴³³ Quoted in Ernest A. Payne, *The Baptist Union: A Short History* (London: The Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland, 1958), 61.

⁴³⁴ *General Baptist Repository and Missionary Observer*, 4:42 (June 1842), 183.

⁴³⁵ *General Baptist Repository and Missionary Observer*, 15:176 (August 1853), 352, 354.

⁴³⁶ *General Baptist Magazine, Repository, and Missionary Observer*, 2:20 (August 1855), 340-341.

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*, 341.

with its own congregations in a joint meeting, an invitation that was accepted the following year and realised in 1857.⁴³⁸ During the Association of 1863, financial support for the Baptist Union was recommended to the individual churches,⁴³⁹ and the next year the constitution of the Union was included in the *General Baptist Magazine*.⁴⁴⁰ By 1865, the Association resolved that ministers of the Baptist Union and the students of its colleges should be admitted into the New Connexion, ‘without the usual examination’. The *Articles of Religion*, which had remained important throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, had been largely forgotten and replaced by a broader Evangelical ecumenism.

The Leicestershire/Midland Conference. Unlike other Baptists in Great Britain, the New Connexion congregations met in regional conferences on a quarterly, sometimes monthly, basis. One of the earliest descriptions of the conferences was provided by Samuel Deacon, Jr, *A Comprehensive Account of the General Baptists, with respect to Principle and Practice* (1795).⁴⁴¹ Deacon, a clockmaker by trade and one of the most prolific ministers of the New Connexion, defined the conference as a ‘company of men, who meet at appointed seasons, to confer on the difficult concerns of the churches’.⁴⁴² These gatherings were the first level of denominational organisation beyond the local church.

The conferences began in Leicestershire among the five Barton churches and

⁴³⁸ *General Baptist Magazine, Repository, and Missionary Observer*, 3:32 (August 1856), 291-292.

⁴³⁹ *General Baptist Magazine*, Vol. 4 (August 1863), 283.

⁴⁴⁰ *General Baptist Magazine*, Vol. 66 (August 1864), 293-294.

⁴⁴¹ Samuel Deacon, Jr, *A Comprehensive Account of the General Baptists with respect to principle and practice in which are displayed their manner of Worship, Church order and Discipline* (Coventry: M. Luckman, 1795).

⁴⁴² *Ibid.*, 121.

their various satellite congregations while they were still independent and before the New Connexion was founded. Their purpose, at the time, included spiritual encouragement, the development of evangelistic strategies and the organisation of a preaching rotation.⁴⁴³ Even after joining the New Connexion in 1770, they continued their regular conferences for the same end. Soon the practice was adopted by Dan Taylor in Yorkshire (1772), followed by the formation of the Lincolnshire Conference (1791), London Conference (1799), Nottinghamshire Conference (1803), Warwickshire Conference (1816) and others.⁴⁴⁴ By the early decades of the nineteenth century, the use of conferences was widespread throughout the New Connexion.

During the eighteenth century, matters largely related to supporting and advising local churches dominated the Leicestershire Conference meetings. Time was provided for sermons and prayers but the large majority of the meeting was spent in discussing ‘queries’, ‘cases’ and ‘agreements’.⁴⁴⁵ Decisions were ‘always to be decided by a majority of votes’ and only the ministers in attendance were permitted to speak or vote during the business sessions. On rare occasions, the opinion of the Conference was asked about the interpretation of the scriptures. Such was the case at the Conference in Barton, 1774, when six different passages were considered, but during the remaining seven conferences that year, no further advice on interpretation was sought. It was much more common, however, for the discussions to address concerns of personal discipline encountered by the pastors in their congregations. During the Barton Conference, 1773, the ministers in attendance advised a pastor to

⁴⁴³ Percy Austin, ‘Barton-in-the-Beans’, *Baptist Quarterly*, 11:14-15 (July-October 1945), 418-419; Wood, *A Condensed History of the General Baptists*, 169.

⁴⁴⁴ Taylor, *The History of the English General Baptists*, Vol. 2, 461-463.

⁴⁴⁵ ‘Rules to be observed in the Monthly Conference’ in MS Minutes of the Leicestershire Conference, 1770-1798.

admonish privately a member of his congregation for excessive drinking. Thereafter, the pastor was to bring the offender before the church so that he might ‘confess the crime’, and if the congregation was satisfied, then he could be restored.⁴⁴⁶ The most frequent cases were those concerning church practice and polity, in which the Conference exercised considerable influence. In 1783, the propriety of using musical instruments in worship was raised, to which the majority emphatically replied, ‘NO!’⁴⁴⁷ Likewise, churches were not encouraged to permit congregants to attend wakes (1779) or non-Christians to ‘learn to sing among our brethren’ (1773). When a minister asked the Conference if it was permissible to sell books that might teach sentiments contrary to the New Connexion’s beliefs, the reply was overwhelmingly negative, with the exception of ‘books [that] are first introduced in Conference and approved there’.⁴⁴⁸ During another case concerning church polity, in 1789, members were asked if it was prudent to baptise a ten-year-old, considered too young by many eighteenth-century Baptists. Those in attendance agreed it was acceptable to do so, however, since her testimony was ‘well approv’d’ by her local church.⁴⁴⁹ The authority of the Leicestershire Conference, by the end of the eighteenth century, was largely found in its role as an advisory council to the ministers.

In the nineteenth century, the Midland Conference, which was the product of a merger of the Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire Conferences (1810), became increasingly business-orientated so as to maintain its growing organisational structure. This change was in large part due to the financial oversight of the General Baptist

⁴⁴⁶ MS Minutes of the Leicestershire Conference, 4 May 1773.

⁴⁴⁷ MS Minutes of the Leicestershire Conference, 7 October 1783.

⁴⁴⁸ MS Minutes of the Leicestershire Conference, 27 December 1785.

⁴⁴⁹ MS Minutes of the Leicestershire Conference, 3 March 1789.

Home Missionary Society, originally labelled the Itinerant Fund, which was founded by the New Connexion in 1811 as a means of defraying the expenses of travelling ministers. In 1821, the annual Association passed the financial management of the Society over to the conferences.⁴⁵⁰ Responsibility again increased when the Midland Conference met in 1828 and passed several measures, which were then adopted by the Association, giving the conferences even more control over how the Home Mission's finances would be spent.⁴⁵¹ Realising the increased financial burden, ministers were expected to raise a subscription of sixpence from each of the church members.⁴⁵² In order to fulfil the new requirements effectively, each conference elected a committee to oversee the Home Mission business and report directly to the conferences. The next year, the committee responsible for superintending the affairs of the Home Mission for the Midland district began assembling jointly with the quarterly Conference, and though their official meeting took place separately that evening, almost half of the Conference discussion was filled with Home Mission business as well.⁴⁵³ As the Midland Conference grew, it was thought necessary in 1838 to adopt a new plan for conducting the business of the Home Mission, which divided the Midlands into six smaller circuits, each with its own committee that would also send delegates to the General Conference committee.⁴⁵⁴ In turn, the conference sent representatives to the national Home Mission committee. This decision led to further increase in the bureaucratic nature of the Midland Conference.

⁴⁵⁰ 1821 Circular Letter, NCGB, 21-22.

⁴⁵¹ Wood, *A Condensed History of the General Baptists*, 312.

⁴⁵² MS Minutes of the Midland Conference, 26 December 1828.

⁴⁵³ MS Minutes of the Midland Conference, 22 April 1829.

⁴⁵⁴ MS Minutes of the Midland Conference, 17 April 1838; MS Minutes of the Midland, 5 June 1838; Wood, *A Condensed History of the General Baptists*, 314.

Changes in the nature of the conference by adopting a business-orientated model did not go unnoticed. An article in the *General Baptist Repository* (1842), the organ of the New Connexion, echoed the growing concerns. Therein the writer argued that conferences had ‘degenerated from the original character and design... by [members] making them too exclusively committees of finance, and mere secular arrangement; by losing sight too much of their spiritual intention’.⁴⁵⁵ Likewise, the minutes frequently convey concerns about the decline of attendance. When the Midland Conference assembled at Hugglescote, Leicestershire, June 1841, the first point of business was the issuance of a formal apology to the host church for the ‘disadvantageous circumstances under which the Conference was held’ due to ‘slender’ attendance.⁴⁵⁶ Although the excuse was made that some were involved with an ordination service in Nottingham, it appears that the state of the Conference had already been a matter of concern in recent years, particularly because of the dry nature of the meetings. In response, those in attendance eagerly sought to ‘adopt some method to render the Conference more promotive [sic] of spiritual improvement’. The remedy, attenders agreed, was the discussion of an ‘important practical question’ at each meeting, though there is no evidence that the practice continued beyond that day.⁴⁵⁷ Nor was improvement seen in the attendance of the following meeting, and due to ‘the unusually small congregation’, the first sermon was cancelled in favour of a ‘social prayer-meeting’.⁴⁵⁸ Numerous suggestions were presented in the following months as the quarterly Conferences continued to deliberate how the meetings might be

⁴⁵⁵ *General Baptist Repository and Missionary Observer*, 4:46 (October 1842), 298.

⁴⁵⁶ MS Minutes of the Midland Conference, 1 June 1841.

⁴⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵⁸ MS Minutes of the Midland Conference, 28 September 1841.

‘rendered more interesting’ and attract higher numbers.⁴⁵⁹ In the hopes of gaining wider participation, recommendations were made to eliminate one Conference per year⁴⁶⁰ and also to expand voting rights to the laity,⁴⁶¹ yet both were rejected. Another resolution was passed that sought to revive the spiritual nature of the meeting: ‘That when the business of the Conference is done, the question shall be discussed, “What more can we do to promote the cause of Christ in this District?”’⁴⁶² Once again, there is no evidence that suggests it was ever used.

By the mid-nineteenth century, the Midland Conference had almost entirely ceased to act as an advisory council for the churches in matters of church polity or theology. In rare cases when a church did seek advice, usually concerning financial assistance or a division, the matter was passed to a committee. For example, in 1850, apart from churches seeking membership in the Conference, the majority of the business recorded in the quarterly minutes dealt with a conflict in Nottingham, which was entirely handled by a committee.⁴⁶³ Throughout all four quarterly Conferences of 1853, the only practical discussion relating to the spiritual nature of the congregations concerned the seemingly destitute ‘village churches’. The issue was first raised in the December 1852 meeting but the topic was delayed until the next Conference, ‘if time permit’.⁴⁶⁴ No resolution was agreed upon at the March gathering, but a committee was formed at the next, but by the September Conference, ‘they had not been called

⁴⁵⁹ MS Minutes of the Midland Conference, 28 December 1841.

⁴⁶⁰ MS Minutes of the Midland Conference, 17 May 1842.

⁴⁶¹ MS Minutes of the Midland Conference, 20 September 1842.

⁴⁶² MS Minutes of the Midland Conference, 29 March 1842.

⁴⁶³ See especially, MS Minutes of the Midland Conference, 21 May 1850.

⁴⁶⁴ MS Minutes of the Midland Conference, 28 December 1852.

together and consequently had no report to present'.⁴⁶⁵ In 1865, only three cases were presented to the Conference by local churches. Two of these, Ashford and Ilkeston, asked for assistance for their declining chapel property, while the third, Belper, sought financial and ministerial aid. Each of these cases was referred to a committee.

The shift that occurred within the Leicestershire/Midland Conference from the time the New Connexion was formed to 1865 was dramatic. The authoritative function that it once held in the eighteenth century had been linked to its role as an advisory council for the local congregations, particularly in matters of church practice, discipline, and, to a lesser extent, theology. As this style of Conference passed away by mid-century, it was replaced by a greater emphasis upon finances and committees. This change was necessary, perhaps, to support the growing organisational structure of the larger denomination. By mid-century the Midland Conference held little practical authority over the local churches.

The Annual Association. From the beginning, Taylor and the other founding ministers organised their churches into a single unified body that met in what they termed an annual Association or Assembly. In theory, the body was national, meaning that all New Connexion churches were included, but in actuality the majority of the churches were located in the Midlands. This structural development was different from that among Particular Baptists whose associations were numerous, often regional, and not intended to be national bodies. In fact, Particular Baptists did not develop a national Union until 1812, followed by a more successful, lasting attempt in 1832. At the first Association of the New Connexion, held in London, 1770, eighteen churches were represented either in person or by letter with an estimated total membership of

⁴⁶⁵ MS Minutes of the Midland Conference, 29 March and 20 September 1853.

1,635, not including hearers.⁴⁶⁶

The second Association, also held in London, was largely spiritual in focus, with most of the meeting time spent recounting personal testimonies of conversion, and offering prayers and listening to sermons, but by the third annual Association, the gathering looked more like an advisory council. The time previously spent recounting religious experiences was replaced by a heavy emphasis upon proposing resolutions, queries and answers. Prayers and sermons were still offered and updates by the churches were still read, but the presentation of ‘cases’ became a dominant characteristic as well. The Boston minister, William Thompson, alone, presented five cases in 1772, dealing exclusively with church order and discipline. Each issue was discussed and decided upon separately, usually by a near unanimous vote, but when he asked if ‘women [had] a vote respecting church order and discipline’, it was agreed by a majority of only nine to eight.⁴⁶⁷ The role of the Association as advisory council had quickly gained importance.

As the New Connexion grew, the conciliar nature of the Association became more pronounced, resulting in the adoption of a formal set of rules for conducting the annual meeting, with the office of chairman at the centre.⁴⁶⁸ All matters of concern were to be presented in writing to the chairman, under the condition that the questions submitted were previously approved by the churches and not matters of individual inquiry or concern. Thus the rules gave priority to the concerns of the churches themselves, and not individuals. After a question was presented to those gathered, the first opinion to be heard was that of ‘him who sits on the left hand [of] the moderator’,

⁴⁶⁶ MS Minutes of the General Assembly of the New Connexion, 6-8 June 1770.

⁴⁶⁷ MS Minutes of the General Assembly of the New Connexion, 3-4 June 1772.

⁴⁶⁸ MS Minutes of the General Assembly of the New Connexion, 1-2 June 1774.

after which additional comments and discussion were welcome.⁴⁶⁹ Likewise, all other business, of any nature, was to be submitted first to the chairman, giving him considerable power as he decided the order and content of the meetings, and what items were given priority. The role of this officer, as it was described in the Constitution of the Association (1838), was to ‘preside’ over the Association and act as the person ‘through whom the meeting shall be addressed’.⁴⁷⁰ Moderators, by contrast, were elected to ‘assist the Chairman in maintaining order’ and support ‘the authority of the Chair’.⁴⁷¹ The two moderators were also to sit on either side of the chairman,⁴⁷² visually demonstrating his central role. These rules were reaffirmed again and reprinted ‘by order of the Association’ in 1843.⁴⁷³ Clearly, the office was central to the organisational model adopted by the New Connexion.

Considering the unique role the chairman held, it is worth noting that Dan Taylor acted in this position during each annual Association of the New Connexion from its formation in 1770 until his death in 1816. The only exceptions were the 1773 and 1789 meetings, in both of which he was elected as moderator and his lifelong friend William Thompson acted as chairman.⁴⁷⁴ While Taylor was alive, no formal constitution or governing set of rules was ever implemented for the Association. When the subject of drawing up such a document was proposed in 1816, the year of Taylor’s death and his final year as chairman, the Connexion adopted the following resolution:

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁰ Quoted in J.H. Wood, *A Condensed History of the General Baptists of the New Connexion*, 278-279.

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 279.

⁴⁷² *Ibid.*

⁴⁷³ James Taylor, *Statistics of the New Connexion of General Baptists*, 87.

⁴⁷⁴ MS Minutes of the General Assembly of the New Connexion, 9-10 June 1773; James Taylor, *Statistics of the New Connexion of General Baptists*, 76.

‘That the Connection continue to adhere to the religious principles on which it was established in 1770’.⁴⁷⁵ In other words, under the guidance of Taylor, no written rules were necessary as long as members continued to act in a manner that was consistent with the spirit in which the Connexion was formed. As the clear authority of the New Connexion, Taylor’s consistent presence made a formal policies unnecessary, and his role as perpetual chairman bolstered his unmatched influence over the Connexion.

Public Statements of Connexional Authority. As the polity and structure of the New Connexion changed into the mid-nineteenth century, so did its approach to concerns of authority. Public declarations of the New Connexion’s beliefs illustrated the shift. The early sentiments of the Connexion concerning the relationship of churches with the Conferences and Association were accurately reflected in Samuel Deacon’s *A Comprehensive Account* (1795). Therein, he described the primary purposes of the conferences as ‘[mutual] support and the furtherance of religion’, though often there was ‘more said and less done’.⁴⁷⁶ In answering the question, ‘Is the conclusion of the conference binding on churches or on individuals?’, Deacon emphatically replied, ‘No; they mean no more than opinion and advice: parties concerned are free to judge and to act of themselves, according to the bias of their own minds’.⁴⁷⁷ He described the Association as merely a ‘general conference’ of all the Connexion’s branches, with ‘no more authority than the conference’. ‘The churches’, he continued, ‘are all independent. They only ask advice; they do not esteem it a tribunal.’⁴⁷⁸ Thus, in theory, the Conferences and Associations of the eighteenth-

⁴⁷⁵ MS Minutes of the General Assembly of the New Connexion, 25-28 June 1816.

⁴⁷⁶ Samuel Deacon, Jr, *A Comprehensive Account of the General Baptists*, 122.

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 123.

⁴⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 124.

century New Connexion were largely advisory, and lacked authority.

In the nineteenth century, though, the authority of the annual Association became more pronounced. *A Brief Sketch of Doctrine and Discipline* (1830?) still espoused the local churches' power to regulate their own concerns without 'interference', but countered that 'the cause of Christ may be most effectually promoted by the united exertions of Churches'.⁴⁷⁹ Therefore, they were expected to join in Conferences and the Association, though very little was made of the conferences. Adam Taylor, nephew and student of Dan Taylor, published *Statistics of the New Connexion* (1844), a brief, eighty-eight page statistical history of the New Connexion, at the request and under the authority of the annual Association.⁴⁸⁰ The book included a short, three-page chapter of nine 'Remarks', or observations upon New Connexion distinctives. In addition to multiple statements about the priority of maintaining Evangelical theology, especially as expressed in the *Six Articles*, the sixth of these 'remarks' demonstrated the inter-connectivity of the denomination: 'In every society, all the members are bound by the decisions of the whole, to which they ought either to conform, or peaceably withdraw. This will appear plainer in the cases of...Churches uniting with our Association.'⁴⁸¹ In other words, membership in the New Connexion was voluntary but conformity in certain instances was mandatory. Three years later, when John Wood, a nineteenth-century General Baptist historian, compiled his *Condensed History of the General Baptists of the New Connexion* (1847), he included the revised constitution of the New Connexion, which had been ratified in 1838. Like Taylor's *Statistics*, Wood's study also demonstrated a shift towards more centralised

⁴⁷⁹ *A Brief Sketch of the Doctrine and Discipline of the General Baptist Churches* (Leicester: J.F. Winks for the Midland Tract Society, 1830?), 7.

⁴⁸⁰ *General Baptist Repository and Missionary Observer*, 5:56 (August 1843), 235.

⁴⁸¹ James Taylor, *Statistics of the New Connexion of General Baptists*, 41.

control. Therein, the members ruled, ‘That the decisions of the Association, in all cases which affect the conditions and character of the union, be final’.⁴⁸² It went on to state that it was ‘the duty of the Association to advise and admonish, and if need be, ultimately disown such churches as shall unhappily violate the principles and practices recommended as vitally important’. The constitution also detailed the relationship between the Association and its auxiliary institutions. For example the Foreign Mission was to be ‘under the direction, control, and management of the Association’, which maintained ‘the power at any time ... to investigate the society’s affairs’ and set ‘binding regulations’.⁴⁸³ ‘Every church’, the constitution firmly concluded, ‘shall be expected to comply with these regulations’.⁴⁸⁴ The constitution established the Association as a strong, centralised governing body, more so than when it began.

Maintaining Purity. The New Connexion went to great lengths not to repeat the mistakes of its predecessors, especially considering the split from the General Assembly was based on the latter’s lack of Evangelical zeal and doctrinal purity. One of the primary matters of concern expressed at the first meeting in 1770 was who was qualified to fill the pulpits of churches with absent pastors. In short, could a minister not affiliated with the Association preach at a New Connexion chapel? Because there was not a ‘very hearty agreement’, each minister was asked to go home and write out his opinion for the next assembly. Until that time, churches were not to ‘admit a person of different sentiments’ into their pulpits.⁴⁸⁵ The next year, when the Association re-assembled, it was agreed that the ministers should ‘endeavour by all means’ to fill

⁴⁸² Quoted in J.H. Wood, *A Condensed History of the General Baptists of the New Connexion*, 277.

⁴⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 278.

⁴⁸⁵ MS Minutes of the General Assembly of the New Connexion, 6-8 June 1770.

empty pulpits themselves, so that preachers not belonging to the Connexion would not need to be used.⁴⁸⁶ This measure was particularly surprising since Baptist associations had traditionally avoided involving themselves with matters of local church policy, but monitoring who might be allowed to preach in the local churches was clearly more important.

In 1775, discussion of Calvinism was prevalent at the annual meeting as some members sought to protect their Arminian identity and were adamantly opposed to the spread of other beliefs among the churches. The first case presented to the Connexion concerned ‘persons who go frequently to hear the Calvinist preachers’ after being told that it was ‘contrary to order’ and offended the minister. The Association answered that if these members continued after being warned, they were to be ‘withdrawn from’.⁴⁸⁷ Later that meeting, Brother Preston, a lay member of Church Lane (London), brought forward a case against his pastor, John Brittain, and other members of the congregation, who were accepting Calvinists into the church as ‘transient members’. Preston had confronted Brittain, abstained from attending for two weeks and was now inquiring if he had acted appropriately. The New Connexion unanimously agreed that he had acted appropriately, but was to resume attendance immediately.⁴⁸⁸ Later that meeting, Preston further asked how he was to maintain ‘union’ with his pastor and fellow church members considering they ‘opposed him, and would have overturned the constitution [of the New Connexion]’? The Association responded firmly that Church Lane must decide ‘whether the Church is or shall be under the denomination of a

⁴⁸⁶ MS Minutes of the General Assembly of the New Connexion, 22-24 May 1771.

⁴⁸⁷ MS Minutes of the General Assembly of the New Connexion, 7-8 June 1775.

⁴⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

General Baptist Church, or not'.⁴⁸⁹ Before the Association adjourned for the year, it made a final judgement that reflected its Evangelical, Arminian distinctive. Those in attendance agreed that, 'without exception', it was necessary to 'offer Christ to all', not just the 'sensible' or 'awakened'.⁴⁹⁰ Although some moderate Particular Baptists of that age, like Andrew Fuller and William Carey, might have agreed with this sentiment, the statement was a reaffirmation of a General Baptist distinctive. Calvinism, at that moment, was not to be tolerated in the churches of the New Connexion since it was contrary to their core theological identity.

Not all theological issues were accorded the same importance as general atonement, though. In fact, the New Connexion commonly sought to avoid conflict for the sake of evangelism and co-operation. In 1777, after a reunion was proposed with the old General Baptist Assembly, a list of secondary issues and 'less important matters' was adopted. The approved subjects were not to be points of division. They included:

1. Singing psalms and hymns in public worship
2. Imposition of hands, in reception of Members
3. Personality of Father, Son, and Spirit
4. Final perseverance of saints
5. Christ's active obedience imputed to believers
6. Occasional addresses to the Son and Spirit
7. The Messenger's office
8. Pre-existence of Christ's human soul
9. The eating of blood⁴⁹¹

Although the reunion was ultimately rejected, the list demonstrates the Association's willingness to accept diverging views.

It should be noted that informal ties between the Old General Baptists and the New Connexion continued into the nineteenth century. Gilbert Boyse, leader of the

⁴⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹¹ MS Minutes of the General Assembly of the New Connexion, 21 May 1777. Quoted in James Taylor, *Statistics of the New Connexion of General Baptists*, 33.

former group, maintained a desire to reunite until his death in 1800,⁴⁹² but afterward the Old General Baptists moved increasingly toward Unitarianism. Likewise, Dan Taylor, himself, did not formally revoke his membership with the Old Connexion until 1803. As, the former Connexion moved increasingly toward rational religion, those congregations that maintained a sense of orthodoxy were often absorbed into the New Connexion. In fact, more than twenty Old General Baptist churches joined the New Connexion after 1811.⁴⁹³ The two groups remained loosely connected into the nineteenth century.

By the mid-nineteenth century, denominational affiliation was no longer to be considered a hindrance to evangelism. In 1839 and 1844, the Connexion publicly affirmed that partnering churches should freely baptize any converts, even if they belonged to other denominations and had no intention of joining a General Baptist congregation.⁴⁹⁴ Other Nonconformist groups, including some Particular Baptists, would only baptize those who planned on joining the church. The New Connexion was different. Unity and evangelism were priorities.

Nonetheless, the Connexion insisted that the churches should maintain high standards among the membership, and frequently ministers sought the advice of the Association in handling what they considered potential spiritual or ethical dilemmas. When an individual requested membership with an unspecified church but was not able to attend Sunday meetings because of his employment, the minister brought the case before the annual meeting (1828). The Association, in turn, advised that he should not

⁴⁹² Ian Sellers, 'The Old General Baptists, 1811-1915', *Baptist Quarterly*, 24 (1971), 30.

⁴⁹³ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁴⁹⁴ J.H. Wood, *A Condensed History of the General Baptists of the New Connexion*, 281.

be admitted until the circumstances changed.⁴⁹⁵ The Connexion also insisted that church members should remain active. In 1841, messengers encouraged ministers to review their attendance roll at least once a year and ‘absent members’ should be withdrawn from.⁴⁹⁶ Neither were church members permitted to marry non-Christians (1782, 1793, 1829), own ‘beer-shops’ (1837) or join fraternal societies like Odd Fellows and Orange Clubs (1835).⁴⁹⁷ By passing motions and making public pronouncements, the annual Association of the New Connexion used its authority to maintain an outward sense of purity among the members of the churches.

The Authority of Dan Taylor. The unequivocal leader of the New Connexion from the time of its inception, until his death, was Dan Taylor. By no means an autocrat who ruled from afar, Taylor’s authority was derived from his intimate involvement in the affairs of the New Connexion on all levels of organisation. Taylor’s son recounted his memory of his father’s influence:

For nearly half a century, few cases of perplexity or doubt arose in any of the churches of the New Connexion in which he was not consulted. Few ministers settled with a people, or took any important step without first seeking his advice. When an abstruse query or important measure was proposed at the conferences it was not unusual to “refer it to brother Taylor”.⁴⁹⁸

As an educator, theologian and denominational statesman, he was not only the most visible of the New Connexion’s members, but the architect of its identity, as well.

Discussion among the churches and conferences of the New Connexion concerning the establishment of an academy for the ‘education of young ministers’

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 281-282.

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 283.

⁴⁹⁸ Adam Taylor, *Memoirs of the Rev. Dan Taylor, Late Pastor of the General Baptist Church, Whitechapel, London; With Extracts from His Diary, Correspondence and Unpublished Manuscripts* (London: n.p., 1820), 308.

took place among the Conferences from at least 1786.⁴⁹⁹ Taylor, though, according to his private writings,⁵⁰⁰ had been considering the utility of such a plan since 1779, and had informally tutored young men out of his home for years. As discussions of forming an academy became increasingly common, he was reluctant to assume leadership and urged others, instead, to serve as tutor. His *Memoirs* recorded a letter from 1794 to a confidential recipient that captured his sentiments concerning the formation of a ministerial academy within the New Connexion:

[One] cannot more ardently wish than I do, that our young ministers could be more assisted and better instructed. But who must do it? You were requested to undertake it; but you refused. Where is there another? ... I am so distressed at times, on account of the state of the ministers among the General Baptists, that I am almost ready in my own apprehension to lie down and die. I think I could cheerfully sacrifice my little all, if I could in any way contribute to remedy it... I am almost ready to call it the only thing I wish to see before I die.⁵⁰¹

A formal proposal was brought before the annual Association and passed in 1797.

Initially, Taylor rejected the invitation because he believed there were others ‘more fit for the station’, but when it was clear that the plan was to be abandoned before it began if he failed to commit himself, he accepted the post.⁵⁰² Although some hesitancy existed among a few churches,⁵⁰³ Taylor’s academy commenced in 1798. Informal in its organisation, the early academy consisted of Taylor training future ministers by lodging them and instructing them in his own home at Mile End, London. His manuscript notes for his lectures were 450 pages. In addition to courses on what may be considered the basics (English, Bible, history, geography and moral philosophy),

⁴⁹⁹ MS Minutes of the Leicestershire Conference, 18 October 1786, Archives, Angus Library, Regent’s Park College, Oxford.

⁵⁰⁰ Adam Taylor, *The History of the English General Baptists*, Vol. 2, 329.

⁵⁰¹ Adam Taylor, *Memoirs of the Rev. Dan Taylor*, 215-216.

⁵⁰² *Ibid.*, 216.

⁵⁰³ Raymond Brown, *The English Baptists of the Eighteenth Century* (London: Baptist Historical Society, 1986), 110

students also were tutored in Hebrew antiquities, sermon delivery, logic and geography, among other topics.⁵⁰⁴ By his resignation in 1812, fourteen years after he began, Taylor had mentored and tutored nineteen young men, including his academic successor, Joseph Jarrom, as well as numerous other New Connexion leaders.⁵⁰⁵ In 1813, the Association agreed to move the academy to Wisbech, closer to the heart of the New Connexion's growth. Taylor was asked to remain as tutor, but because of his declining health and unwillingness to move, he resigned instead.⁵⁰⁶ Taylor's influence continued, however, through a committee appointed to reform the institution. Not only was Taylor chairman of that year's annual Association, which now directly oversaw the committee, but his *Six Articles* were also chosen as the doctrinal basis of the school.⁵⁰⁷ Throughout the nineteenth century, the academy relocated numerous times, but endured, even after the New Connexion merged with the Baptist Union in 1891.⁵⁰⁸ The Academy had become another expression and reinforcement of Taylor's authority.

On a popular level, Taylor's role as a theologian and preacher was even wider reaching, as his concerns largely shaped the New Connexion during his lifetime. During the Associations between 1785 and 1816, he not only presided as chairman during all but two meetings, he also preached at all of them but four (1787, 1794, 1802, 1810).⁵⁰⁹ Individual conferences frequently depended upon his scriptural insights to guide them through their own doctrinal struggles. At the Leicestershire Conference, in

⁵⁰⁴ Adam Taylor, *Memoirs of the Rev. Dan Taylor*, 315.

⁵⁰⁵ J.H. Wood, *A Condensed History of the General Baptists of the New Connexion*, 303.

⁵⁰⁶ Adam Taylor, *Memoirs of the Rev. Dan Taylor*, 241-242; J.H. Wood, *A Condensed History of the General Baptists of the New Connexion*, 303; Adam Taylor, *The History of the English General Baptists*, Vol. 2, 455-456.

⁵⁰⁷ Adam Taylor, *The History of the English General Baptists*, Vol. 2, 456.

⁵⁰⁸ Frank Rinaldi, *The Tribe of Dan*, 161-162.

⁵⁰⁹ James Taylor, *Statistics of the New Connexion*, 76-77.

1780, a proposal was unanimously passed requesting that Taylor publish a comparison chart of Baptists, Church of England and Roman Catholics displaying their ‘reasons for Nonconformity to Ether [sic] of the latter’.⁵¹⁰ Likewise, in 1792, the conference requested that Taylor write a commentary on the entire Bible,⁵¹¹ which could be used by the pastors and laity alike. Taylor was a prolific writer, publishing more than forty works,⁵¹² excluding the seventeen circular letters he produced for the Association.⁵¹³ In response to a request by a ‘former Association’ Taylor published *A Catechism, or Instructions for Children and Youth* (1780),⁵¹⁴ which he distributed to ministers throughout the Midlands.⁵¹⁵ The work was found so useful that the short book went through six editions during his lifetime. The same year in which the annual Association appointed Taylor as tutor of the Academy, 1797, a group of prominent ministers also determined to publish a monthly periodical, *The General Baptist Magazine*. ‘When the question was proposed who should superintend the publication as Editor’, Taylor’s son recalled, ‘all as usual looked to Mr [Taylor]’.⁵¹⁶ Taylor’s writings were held in such high esteem, his appointment made the most sense, even though he was ‘already overburdened with engagements’.⁵¹⁷

One should not consider Taylor’s authority and influence as absolute.

⁵¹⁰ MS Minutes of the Leicestershire Conference, 15 March 1780.

⁵¹¹ MS Minutes of the Leicestershire Conference, 5 June 1792.

⁵¹² Raymond Brown, *The English Baptists of the Eighteenth Century*, 110; Frank Rinaldi, *The Tribe of Dan*, 4.

⁵¹³ Frank Rinaldi, *The Tribe of Dan*, 4.

⁵¹⁴ Dan Taylor, *A Catechism or, Instructions for Children and Youth, in the Fundamental Doctrines of Christianity: Published at the Request of Several General-Baptist Churches* (Leeds: G. Wright and Son, 1780).

⁵¹⁵ Adam Taylor, *Memoirs of the Rev. Dan Taylor*, 104.

⁵¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 217.

⁵¹⁷ *Ibid.*

Decisions at conferences and annual associations were still made democratically, and Taylor, himself, often proposed questions for the consideration of the Association. At the Association of 1772, Taylor presented a case concerned with the proper administration of the Lord's Supper. The issue was not quickly resolved and was instead deferred until the next meeting.⁵¹⁸ Likewise his writings were not guaranteed success. After just three years, the *General Baptist Magazine* failed for multiple reasons, including a lack of financing and popularity.⁵¹⁹ It has also been asserted that at the turn of the century the New Connexion 'had acquired but little taste for reading'.⁵²⁰ Two years later, however, the periodical was successfully revived under the leadership of Taylor's son, Adam, and continued under various titles throughout most of the nineteenth century. Neither did the New Connexion of the later nineteenth century always hold Taylor in the esteem he had once freely received during his lifetime. In 1859, when the Yorkshire Conference petitioned the Midland Conference to republish jointly the works of Taylor, the offer was denied. Although the Conference officially held the 'memory of Dan Taylor' in 'great esteem', it found the proposal 'undesirable', fearing it might 'resuscitate the controversy between Andrew Fuller and Dan Taylor' concerning efficacy of the atonement – Fuller believing it was limited.⁵²¹ In other words, the Midland ministers did not wish to reignite a debate between Fuller's Calvinism and Taylor's Arminianism, especially as the New Connexion moved further toward unification with the Baptist Union. Clearly, there were limits to Taylor's influence over the New Connexion.

⁵¹⁸ MS Minutes of the General Assembly of the New Connexion, 3 June 1772.

⁵¹⁹ Adam Taylor, *Memoirs of the Rev. Dan Taylor*, 221

⁵²⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵²¹ MS Minutes of the Midland Conference, 26 April 1859.

The death of Taylor (1816) left a void in leadership that was never fully filled. That does not mean that leaders did not emerge. Certainly they did but never to the same extent, or with the same authority, that Taylor possessed. The most notable individual was J.G. Pike, who was mentored under Dan Taylor as a member of his congregation at Whitechapel, London. While under Taylor's teaching Pike received his calling to preach. From 1810 until his death in 1854, Pike pastored the New Connexion church at Derby. During that time he founded the General Baptist Missionary Society (1816) and was co-editor of the *General Baptist Magazine* (1822-1834).⁵²² While he was important to the Connexion throughout his tenure, Pike never became the prolific author or publisher that Taylor had been, and he lacked the same level of authority. Other significant leaders emerged after the death of Taylor, including Joseph Goadby (Ashby), Joseph Jarrom (Wisbech), John Bissill (Leake), Richard Ingham (Duffield) and James Taylor (Derby), each of whom acted as chairman or moderator of the annual Association on multiple occasions.⁵²³ All of these men were pupils of Taylor at the General Baptist Academy, Mile End.⁵²⁴ No person ever matched the authority of Taylor within the New Connexion, and he remained influential even after death through his pupils and congregants.

Conclusion. The New Connexion was driven by a two-fold zeal for evangelism and doctrinal orthodoxy. These distinctives were the direct product of the Connexion's origins out of the Evangelical Awakening, and out of a separation from the General Baptists of Old Dissent. Through Dan Taylor and the Barton group, the

⁵²² 'John Deodatus Gregory Pike (1784-1854)', *Dissenting Academies Online: Database and Encyclopedia*, Dr Williams's Centre for Dissenting Studies, Accessed May 2015.

⁵²³ James Taylor, *Statistics of the New Connexion of General Baptists*, 76-78.

⁵²⁴ 'General Baptist Academy, Mile End (1798-1813)', *Dissenting Academies Online: Database and Encyclopedia*, Dr Williams's Centre for Dissenting Studies, Accessed May 2015.

early influence of Methodism upon the churches warmed them to a greater interconnectivity and submission to authority than most Baptists of the age were accustomed to tolerate. Taylor, especially, was regarded in unparalleled esteem among the churches, and was involved on every level of the denomination. His authority was not forced upon the people, but voluntarily accepted. The decline of orthodoxy within the old General Baptist Assembly, from which many New Connexion churches emerged, led the members of the new body to adopt the *Articles of Religion* as their theological and authoritative standard for fellowship. Although the *Articles of Religion* were brief, their Evangelical theology was seen as a deterrent against rational heterodoxy.

The structure of the New Connexion was unique among Baptists in England. Beyond the local church, the first line of denominational organisation was the quarterly Conference. The authority of the Conference was linked to its role in advising and supporting local ministers. As the New Connexion expanded, however, the Conferences spent increased time on denominational business, while their involvement in the churches diminished. Similarly, the Association, which was the annual joint national meeting of the New Connexion churches, exercised significant authority over the churches initially, but as it expanded, influence over local churches decreased. Instead, the maintenance of denominational structures, like the academy, became the primary function of the Association. Therefore, as the New Connexion grew, the Conferences and Association became less involved in the affairs of the churches. The New Connexion churches submitted to multiple forms of authority, doing so voluntarily and for the sake of maintaining an Evangelical fellowship.

CHAPTER SIX

The Scotch Baptists

On Monday, Nov. 25 an Antipaedobaptist administered the ordinance of baptism to two adults, in the water of Leith, hard by Canonmills, near Edinburgh, in the following manner. The two persons being first stripped, were cloathed [*sic*] with long black gowns, and then went into the water, along with their minister; who, after repeating some words in their ordinary form, took them by the nape of the neck, plunged them down over head and ears, and kept them for a little time wholly under the water.⁵²⁵

With these words printed in the Edinburgh monthly periodical, *The Scots Magazine*, the so-called Scotch Baptists were publicly introduced to the world. The baptism cited was performed by former Anti-Burgher Secession minister, Robert Carmichael, who had himself been baptised by immersion the previous month.

In 1763, Carmichael and his friend Archibald McLean, a printer from Glasgow, had come to question the biblical grounds for infant baptism and decided to study the Bible separately and communicate their findings at a later date. In July 1764, at the request of Carmichael who had taken a ministry position in Edinburgh, McLean wrote that he had come to the decision that baptism was reserved for professing believers only. Although not immediately persuaded, Carmichael was significantly influenced by McLean's arguments, and midway through 1765, Carmichael and his followers also became convinced of believer's baptism. In October, Carmichael travelled to London and was baptised by a famous Baptist minister, John Gill. Upon his return, he baptised seven others,⁵²⁶ including the two mentioned above, in the Water of Leith and set in order the first Baptist church in Edinburgh, presently Bristo Baptist Church. Still living

⁵²⁵ *The Scots Magazine*, 27 (November, 1765), 614.

⁵²⁶ Archibald McLean, 'A Short Account of the Scots Baptists' John Rippon, *The Baptist Annual Register* (London, 1795), 362.

and working in Glasgow, McLean was baptised some weeks later and within two years moved to Edinburgh in order to work and become an elder in Carmichael's church. From this point forward, McLean would be considered the primary leader of the Scotch Baptists, though no formal title was ever bestowed.⁵²⁷ While a few Scottish Baptist congregations can be traced to Cromwellian occupation, the Edinburgh church began the first significant and lasting Baptist movement in Scotland. McLean and his followers identified themselves as 'Scotch' Baptists to differentiate themselves, especially their doctrine, from their Baptist counterparts south of the border. There were, however, a large number of Scotch Baptist churches throughout England, including congregations in Nottingham, London, Beverley and elsewhere. Under the influence of McLean and Carmichael, especially the former, a new Nonconformist movement had begun with its own peculiar theology and ecclesiology.

Theology. When recounting the history of the Scotch Baptists for John Rippon's *Baptist Annual Register*, an influential periodical that covered contemporary and historic Baptist topics, McLean described his connexion's theology as 'based on no human system'. Instead, he went on to explain, '[We] think our Lord and his apostles used plainness of speech in telling us what we should believe and practise; and hence [we] are led to understand a great many things more literally and strictly'.⁵²⁸ The literalistic interpretation, characterised by a plain reading of scripture as the primary means in the formulation of doctrine was not an altogether new hermeneutical approach, but it led the Scotch Baptists to follow a theology that differentiated them from their other Nonconformist contemporaries.

The literalism of the Scotch Baptist hermeneutic caused frequent rifts and

⁵²⁷ *Ibid.*, 361-362.

⁵²⁸ Archibald McLean, 'A Short Account of the Scots Baptists' John Rippon, *The Baptist Annual Register* (London, 1795), 374.

conflicts within the Scotch Baptist connexion. As a result, many of the earliest conflicts the group faced were theological in nature. Each dispute was based on differences in interpretation, but in all cases, the parties involved were seeking to exegete the biblical text as precisely as possible. The Scotch Baptists were not seeking to read scripture more freely and liberally, but rather, more strictly.

One of the earliest theological controversies within the Scotch connexion originated within the Glasgow congregation in 1776 and was propagated by Neil Stuart, the church's founding elder.⁵²⁹ Stuart was promoting a heterodox doctrine of the Trinity labelled Sabellianism. This doctrine denied traditional Trinitarianism in which God is one substance but three distinct persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In McLean's words, those following Stuart's teachings were 'denying the personal distinction in the Godhead',⁵³⁰ and were instead promoting a modalistic anti-Trinitarianism in which the one divine being (the Godhead) reveals himself at different times as Father, Son (or 'Word' as McLean preferred) and Holy Spirit, thereby denying any distinctiveness between the three.

McLean, in an early expression of his authority, would not stand for such diversity of belief within his connexion. In response to Stuart's teachings, McLean wrote asking him to answer a few questions concerning his doctrine. Stuart's response came after 'considerable delay'⁵³¹ and though the original letter has been lost, McLean quoted portions of the letter in his later reply. The Glasgow elder defended his position citing various passages of scripture, but also using logical argument. McLean's reply, later published as *On Sabellianism*, was a firm rebuke to Stuart's teachings and

⁵²⁹ *Ibid.*, 363.

⁵³⁰ *Ibid.* 365.

⁵³¹ McLean, 'A Short Account of the Scots Baptists' John Rippon, *The Baptist Annual Register*, 374.

defended the Scotch Baptists' traditional doctrine of the Trinity.⁵³² His absolute certainty concerning the complex subject was clearly stated when he wrote, 'I believe what this revelation [the Bible] plainly declares *to be*'.⁵³³ While Stuart argued that 'Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are not three divine *substances*, but only three *characters* or *manifestations* under which the One God fulfils all the offices',⁵³⁴ McLean countered his arguments with numerous scripture passages, extracting what he described as the 'simple and obvious meaning of the very words [of scripture]'.⁵³⁵ He proudly admitted that if he had made any mistake in his defence of the 'adorable and incomprehensible Divine Three',⁵³⁶ it was that he took the scriptures too literally.⁵³⁷ According to McLean, his own argument was so convincing that the Glasgow church could not adequately defend its Sabellian position and retreated into a more modern heresy, Socinianism, which maintained the distinctness and personhood of the Father and the Son.⁵³⁸ This heterodox theology was another form of anti-Trinitarianism that ultimately denied the divinity of Jesus and his pre-existence prior to birth. McLean would not permit any form of anti-Trinitarianism

A few months later, following this disappointing progression of events, McLean wrote to the church once again asking that members should renounce their beliefs and

⁵³² Archibald McLean, 'On Sabellianism' Jones ed. *Miscellaneous Works of Archibald McLean*, vol 4 (Elgin: Peter Macdonald, 1848), 283-292.

⁵³³ *Ibid.*, 284. Emphasis present.

⁵³⁴ *Ibid.* 285.

⁵³⁵ *Ibid.*, 291.

⁵³⁶ *Ibid.*, 292.

⁵³⁷ *Ibid.*, 291.

⁵³⁸ McLean, 'A Short Account of the Scots Baptists' John Rippon, *The Baptist Annual Register*, 365.

return to orthodoxy or be removed from the connexion.⁵³⁹ When the church in Glasgow could not come to a decision, it called for a meeting at the Edinburgh church later that year to discuss the matters, hoping to bring about an acceptable resolution. Instead of arriving at the appointed time, though, the Glasgow elders, Stuart and George Beg, a weaver by trade,⁵⁴⁰ first travelled to Montrose and Dundee where they partially succeeded in swaying the young Baptist churches to their opinions, ‘and not a few were entirely subverted’.⁵⁴¹ When the two men arrived in Edinburgh, Stuart and McLean engaged in a public debate. Stuart, according to McLean, gave a lengthy speech in which he declared that the ‘Person of the Son of God was merely human, and that he had no existence before he came into the world; though he had now a peculiar union with God’.⁵⁴² After much debate and argument, Stuart was left ‘sunk into silence’ by McLean’s defence and dismissed from the connexion.⁵⁴³ The Glasgow church immediately renounced the heresy and only a few followed Stuart. Beg eventually recanted his views and was restored to full fellowship with the Scotch Baptists. It is important to note that though more highly educated elders, like Henry David Inglis (Edinburgh advocate), existed within the connexion, it was McLean who was chosen to combat the heresy. This controversy helped define him as the influential theological mind among the Scotch Baptists, and reinforced his role as a defender of orthodoxy.

The commitment of McLean and the Scotch Baptists to a highly literalist interpretation of the biblical text led them to adopt a number of controversial views,

⁵³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴⁰ *The Burgessess & Guild Brethren of Glasgow, 1751-1846*, ed. James R. Anderson (Edinburgh: J.Skinner & Company, 1935), 24.

⁵⁴¹ McLean, ‘A Short Account of the Scots Baptists’ John Rippon, *The Baptist Annual Register*, 365.

⁵⁴² *Ibid.*

⁵⁴³ *Ibid.*, 366.

including the denial of the eternal sonship of Christ, a widely-held orthodox doctrine. In 1777, Robert Walker, who had recently been re-instated into the connexion after previously being dismissed in 1774 on unspecified grounds, challenged McLean's disapproval of the doctrine of the eternal sonship of Christ. Apparently, the matter originally arose that year in a private conversation between the men and Walker threatened to take the matter immediately before the entire Edinburgh congregation. McLean objected, believing that Walker had misunderstood his views, and asked the gentleman to ponder the issue while McLean put his ideas on paper for Walker to consider. While initially agreeing to the terms, Walker did not wait and took his concerns before the Edinburgh church, accompanied by his friend Francis Shand. The public disputation quickly became a significant challenge to McLean's theological authority.⁵⁴⁴

In 1778, as a response to his challenger, McLean wrote, *On the Divinity and Sonship of Christ*,⁵⁴⁵ in which he advocated a Christology that denied the traditional teaching of the eternal Sonship of Christ held by most mainline Christian denominations of the day. He felt the traditional teaching, as found in the Westminster Confession, could ultimately lead to Arianism, which, in McLean's words, '[denies] that the Son is possessed of the same essence or divine nature with the Father'.⁵⁴⁶ He even asserted that the Christology of the famous Puritan divine, John Owen, known for his orthodoxy and skill, did not significantly differ from Arian teaching on this matter.⁵⁴⁷

⁵⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 368.

⁵⁴⁵ William Jones ed., *The Works of Mr Archibald McLean*, III (Edinburgh: John Trunbull, 1807), 265.

⁵⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 276.

⁵⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 269-270.

This discourse, originally produced as a letter to his congregation in 1778,⁵⁴⁸ is a good example of McLean taking his literal hermeneutic to its limits. He explains that Jesus, although co-eternal with God, was only the ‘Son of God’ while incarnate upon the earth. If the Christ was the ‘Son’ before his earthly birth, then he would need to have been ‘born’ sometime before, which, McLean believed, negated his co-eternal and co-equal status with the Father. Both before and following his time on earth, Jesus ceased to be ‘Son’ but remained the Christ. McLean writes, ‘Christ is eternal, but not as the Christ; the Son of man is eternal, but not as the Son of man; Emmanuel is eternal, but not as Emmanuel; even so the Son of God is eternal in his divine person but it does not follow that he is so as a Son’.⁵⁴⁹ The publication was well received, even by those outside the connexion. A writer from the Edinburgh literary magazine, *Monthly Review*, seemed convinced of McLean’s arguments and suggests, ‘We must own ourselves astonished at the phraseology sometimes employed by those who plead for what is termed *eternal generation*, and consider it as little short of prophane [sic]’.⁵⁵⁰

When Walker and Shand brought the conflict forward, they eagerly sought to persuade the congregation to follow the normative doctrine of the eternal generation of Christ, which stated that Christ had always been the son of God. The Edinburgh church debated the matter for weeks through several special called meetings. Ultimately, the entire congregation rejected the normative teachings of Walker or Shand with the exception of their respective wives and one other woman.⁵⁵¹ When the

⁵⁴⁸ Robert Walker, *A Defence of the Doctrine of the Trinity and Eternal Sonship of Our Lord Jesus Christ as Revealed in Scriptures: In Opposition to a Late Scheme of Temporal Sonship* (Edinburgh: J. Dickson and W. Gray, 1786), iv-v.

⁵⁴⁹ Jones ed., *Works of Archibald McLean*, III, 298.

⁵⁵⁰ *The Monthly Review or, Literary Journal*, 80 (1789), 90-91.

⁵⁵¹ McLean, ‘A Short Account of the Scots Baptists’ John Rippon, *The Baptist Annual Register*, 368.

church reached its decision on the issue, McLean reasserted his authority and gave the minority party two options. The group was either to remain silent on the issue or withdraw from the church.⁵⁵² Although all five initially agreed to stay and keep their views silent, they quickly separated from the church, which Walker had characterised as having ‘departed from the faith of one of the most important truths of divine Revelation’.⁵⁵³ Shortly after his departure from the Edinburgh congregation, Walker advanced the traditional view in *Defence of the Trinity and Eternal Sonship of Christ* (1786), though it was not published until much later when McLean’s pamphlet advocating ‘temporal sonship’ surfaced.⁵⁵⁴

Prior to the controversy, it seems the majority of members of the Edinburgh church held to the conventional views of Walker,⁵⁵⁵ and while the subject had never arisen before, McLean and the controversy surrounding the sonship of Christ seem to have established the view as the official position of the connexion. In fact, adherence to the doctrine became standard for membership, even after McLean’s death. For his book about his time among the Scotch Baptists beginning in the 1820s, James Williamson interviewed an elderly friend who had years before applied for membership to the Edinburgh congregation. Looking back upon his experience the man recalled:

An old Aberdonian weaver, Mr T. – always took the ‘opportunity’ of putting the question, ‘What did the candidate think of the “pairson” [person] and “dignae-tee” [dignity] of Christ?’ This was a poser to a chum of mine, Walter Wilson, who having been brought up a Presbyterian, answered, that He was the ‘eternal Son of God’. This answer was quite heterodox, according to McLean’s theology; so Walter, like Apollos, had to be instructed in the way more

⁵⁵² Ibid.

⁵⁵³ Robert Walker, *A Defence of the Doctrine of the Trinity*, iv.

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid., v.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid., iii.

perfectly.⁵⁵⁶

McLean, by his authority and influence, had taken an otherwise heterodox doctrine and made it standard among Scotch Baptists.

While not originally a doctrine explicitly held by the Scotch Baptists, McLean began developing a missional theology by the 1780s. The earliest influence on this development was most likely George Whitefield, the itinerant evangelist who preached to thousands during religious revivals on both sides of the Atlantic. As a small child McLean heard Whitefield preach during the Cambuslang Awakening (1742) that swept the west of Scotland. Even though he would have been a young boy at the time, the impact of Whitefield was such that decades later McLean would describe the revered minister and his sermons in stories that entertained his friends for hours during parties.⁵⁵⁷

McLean's approach to evangelism often appeared to be dichotomous. At times his fervour for mission was Evangelical and ecumenical. On other occasions he appeared less than progressive and almost insular. The greatest contrasts may be seen in his differing approaches to homeland and foreign mission endeavours.

Although Whitefield's Evangelical influence was substantial, McLean took a more moderate approach to evangelism at home in Scotland, focusing instead on making converts specifically to the Scotch Baptist faith. While he encouraged the work of itinerant evangelists to spread the gospel around Scotland, the message they were to share was that of 'primitive Christianity', void of ecumenical sentiments. In a circular letter from the Edinburgh church, signed and most likely penned by McLean, who

⁵⁵⁶ James Williamson, *Some Reminiscences of The Old Baptist Church Pleasance* (Edinburgh: John Anderson, 1901), 15.

⁵⁵⁷ 'Memoir of the Late Mr. Archibald McLean', *New Evangelical Magazine*, 1 (October 1815), 290.

served as the primary writer for the congregation, the connexion was commended for spreading the faith using itinerant means. The Scotch Baptist churches were admonished, however, because their evangelists and churches failed to ‘teach them to observe all things whatsoever Christ hath commanded’.⁵⁵⁸ This phrase from Christ’s commission in Matthew was used in Scotch Baptist writing as a synonym for their brand of belief and practice, often referred to as primitive Christianity. The letter also warned that the evangelists were not teaching the converts to maintain a pure communion in which unanimity of belief was upheld. McLean’s ultimate frustration was that the itinerants were evangelizing the people but not training them in Scotch Baptist doctrine and ecclesiology. Dissatisfied, he wrote, ‘So that instead of leading the disciples forward to the observance of all things whatsoever Christ hath commanded, they leave them...just where they found them, [and] their care of them ends where that of the apostles began’.⁵⁵⁹ To solve the problem, he went so far as to instruct the evangelists and preachers to refuse baptism to a new believer unless it was his or her intention to join a church belonging to the connexion.

In regard to their approach to foreign mission, the Scotch Baptists were decidedly more ecumenical than at home. This was a sharp contrast to their typical isolationist attitude towards other Baptists in Britain, and a rare instance where McLean led the connexion to support an endeavour in which he or his Edinburgh congregation did not have significant control. The important ecumenical venture by the Scotch Baptists began when a friendly relationship was built between McLean and Andrew Fuller, a leading English Baptist pastor/theologian and co-founder of the Baptist

⁵⁵⁸ Circular Letter, ‘Address of the Baptist Church at Edinburgh’ 18 November 1798. MS Letters of the relating to the Scotch Baptist Churches, National Library of Scotland (NLS), Edinburgh.

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid.

Missionary Society (BMS).

The origins of this relationship are not entirely clear. It appears that McLean originally received copies of some of Fuller's works while visiting William Jones, a Scotch Baptist elder in Liverpool in 1794.⁵⁶⁰ Particularly impressed by Fuller's missiological writings and their similarities to his own *Christ's Commission*, McLean began corresponding with him on the subject of BMS work in India. Within a year and after multiple letters, the two men agreed to meet and McLean visited Fuller's home in Kettering on his way to London in 1796.

Before their face-to-face meeting, however, McLean preached the first sermon in Scotland that called for the fulfilment of the 'Great Commission' by the spreading of Christianity to every nation on earth. Although Talbot mistakenly places the date much later,⁵⁶¹ the sermon was delivered on 27 December 1795 to those at the Baptist church meeting in Richmond Court, Edinburgh.⁵⁶² Entitled *The Promise that All Nations Shall Be Brought into Subjection to Christ*, McLean preached from Psalm 22:27-28, which contains a prophecy that the 'ends of the earth' will ultimately turn to God, and while he had no intention of publishing the discourse, the requests were so numerous that he agreed.⁵⁶³ McLean's sermon, echoing the sentiments of Fuller's *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation* (1785), provided his connexion with a new theological framework for universal evangelism, stating that 'Christ hath appointed means for the advancement of

⁵⁶⁰ Transcription of Wilson, *Origins and Progress of the Scotch Baptists*, 18. of the relating to the Scotch Baptist Churches, NLS, Edinburgh.

⁵⁶¹ Talbot, *Search for a Common Identity*, 51.

⁵⁶² McLean, 'A Short Account of the Scots Baptists' John Rippon, *The Baptist Annual Register*, 376.

⁵⁶³ McLean, *The Promise that All Nations Shall be Brought into Subjection to Christ*, (Edinburgh: H. Inglis, 1796), 2-3.

his kingdom in the world'.⁵⁶⁴ He then went on to declare that God not only desired human involvement, but he also claimed it was demanded. Generally it was believed among mainstream British Protestants that Christ's command to take the gospel to the 'ends of the earth' was reserved for the Apostles, but McLean, like the Particular Baptist William Carey, refuted the assumption, stating, '[The Commission] was not confined to them, nor was it exhausted in their personal ministry; for this would have restricted the preaching of the gospel to one age, whereas it was intended as the means of propagation of Christ's Kingdom to the end of the world'.⁵⁶⁵ McLean's emphasis on the use of means was a common theme in his writing, and it drew the attention and support of other Nonconformists. At the Gosport Academy, for example, David Bogue used McLean's *Essay on the Calls and Invitations of the Gospel* (1797)⁵⁶⁶, in his missionary training lecture, 'On the Obligation and Power of Man in Regard to the Means'.⁵⁶⁷ Although first published in the *Missionary Magazine* (1796), McLean's essay was originally written in 1782,⁵⁶⁸ ten years before William Carey's *An Enquiry* (1792) and three years before Fuller's *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation* (1785). McLean had formulated a popular theological apology for missions.

McLean believed the people of Scotland, especially those within his connexion, had a responsibility to take the gospel to every nation on earth. In order to accomplish this monumental task, he believed there were two requirements. The primary means in spreading the Christian faith, he believed, was to translate the Bible into the native

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid., 17.

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁶ Archibald McLean, *Thoughts on the Calls and Invitations of the Gospel. : Republished from the Missionary Magazine* (Edinburgh: Schaw and Pillans, 1797).

⁵⁶⁷ See Chapter Two. MS Bogue Lecture Notes, 'On the Obligation and Power of Man in Regard to the Means', Lectures on Theology, volume 3, DWL [L14/4].

⁵⁶⁸ Archibald McLean, *Thoughts on the Calls and Invitations of the Gospel*, 2.

languages of unreached people. This is most likely why he felt he could support an endeavour not led by his connexion. McLean once sent a gift of £100 to Fuller to be used exclusively for the support of Bible translation.⁵⁶⁹ He believed the Bible, if read correctly, would naturally lead readers to adopt primitive Christianity as it had led him. The second duty of the connexion was ‘contributing to the support of those who are immediately engaged in that work’.⁵⁷⁰ In other words, they were to contribute financially to the missionaries already at work in India through the BMS.

Early the following year McLean addressed his followers once again, publishing his sermon ‘Address on the Duty of Using Means for the Universal Spread of the Glorious Gospel of Christ’, which he appended to his history of the Scotch Baptists in the *Baptist Annual Register*, a Baptist periodical widely read throughout Britain.⁵⁷¹ This publication was even more important than the original sermon because of its emphasis on praxis as well as its wider distribution. ‘The deplorable state of the heathen world demands our most serious attention’, he said. Then he specifically appealed to readers to send donations for the BMS to his church, care of his co-elder, William Braidwood.⁵⁷²

The appeal by McLean was warmly received by his connexion. In a letter to Fuller, dated April 1796, he enclosed £151 that he had collected from various Scotch Baptist churches, a third of which came from his own congregation.⁵⁷³ McLean then took the opportunity to try to sway Fuller to several of the Scotch Baptist practices. He

⁵⁶⁹ ‘Memoir of the Late Mr Archibald McLean’ *New Evangelical Magazine*, 1 (October 1815), 328.

⁵⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁵⁷¹ McLean, *A Short Account of the Scots Baptists*, 377-380.

⁵⁷² *Ibid.*, 380.

⁵⁷³ Archibald McLean to Andrew Fuller, April 1796, published in *New Evangelical Magazine*, 2 (March, 1816), 76-80.

also, in a regretful tone, apologised that there were none among his connexion that he could recommend as ‘fit for the office of missionary’ but he promised to continue seeking them.⁵⁷⁴ The response from Fuller was very warm and appreciative. He thanked McLean for the generous gift and proceeded to engage in theological dialogue, answering questions and commenting on Scotch Baptist principles.⁵⁷⁵ It is clear that the two had built a lasting friendship and co-operation based on a common passion for global evangelism.

McLean’s primary goal in evangelism, both global and domestic, was the establishment of churches that reflected his Primitivist beliefs. His aim in co-operating with the BMS was to support their work in Bible translation, because he strongly believed that the scriptures were written in such ‘plainness of speech’ that anyone who read them literally would naturally be drawn to Scotch Baptist practices. If he could persuade Fuller, the leader of the BMS, to adopt Primitivism, his goal would be reached much more easily. Ultimately, McLean was using his authority as leader of the Scotch Baptists in attempt to spread their principles throughout the world.

The relationship between McLean and Fuller was not, however, free from conflict. The two men went through a significant theological battle over the nature of faith that was played out in print. This conflict is particularly pertinent because McLean publicly took the role of theological champion of the entire connexion against one of the great leaders of Baptists in England. As discussed earlier, one of the things that drew McLean to Fuller was his writings, especially *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*. McLean was particularly interested because he felt that he and Fuller shared a similar understanding of the nature of faith.

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁵ Fuller to McLean, 20 April 1796, published in *New Evangelical Magazine*, 1 (1816), 100-102.

McLean's earliest writings of length on the nature of faith came in 1791 while on a preaching campaign in England. While in Hull, a Scotch Baptist stronghold, he was given a printed copy of a sermon entitled, 'The Faith of the Operation of God', by the Independent minister Samuel Barnard.⁵⁷⁶ In response to Barnard's message, McLean gave two sermons at Hull opposing the Independents' views, which he published as a single work, *The Belief of the Gospel Saving Faith* (1791), when he arrived back in Edinburgh.⁵⁷⁷ It was in this book that McLean first published his intellectualist view of faith, one of many views that he inherited from the Glasites, predecessors to the Scotch Baptists.⁵⁷⁸ Such a view presented faith as the 'ordinary acceptance of the word'.⁵⁷⁹ He goes on to illustrate his simple view, writing, 'When we are convinced that what a man says is true, ... then we are said to have faith in him, or to believe his word'.⁵⁸⁰ The emphasis here was on ordinary human belief in the resurrection of Christ. This intellectualist view (*assensus*) stood in contrast to the traditional Protestant understanding that equated faith with trust (*fiducia*), which consists of a partnership between the mind and the affections.

McLean would not write again on the subject in any significant way until 1797 when his controversial view would become more public than ever before. The previous year he and Fuller had met at Fuller's home in Kettering where McLean stayed three days. At the conclusion of the trip it was clear to McLean that he and Fuller were not as agreed as he had originally hoped in their views of faith. Upon his return to

⁵⁷⁶ William Jones, 'Memoir of the Author', *Miscellaneous Works of Archibald McLean*, I (Elgin: Peter McDonald, 1847), xxxiv.

⁵⁷⁷ Archibald McLean, *The Belief of the Gospel Saving Faith* (Edinburgh: T. Brown, 1791).

⁵⁷⁸ The Glasites will be discussed further beginning on page 18.

⁵⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁵⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

Edinburgh, McLean began to revise his most popular work, *Christ's Commission*. The additions to this work primarily dealt with his views of faith, but also included some apologetic writing on the resurrection of Christ. The writing style was also more combative than before, presenting questions he had received on the subject, then answering them forcefully. 'Every body knows that faith or belief, in the ordinary sense of the word, is that CREDIT which we give to the truth of any thing...', McLean wrote, 'But many are of the opinion, that justifying faith must be something more than this.'⁵⁸¹ He then proceeded to provide evidence that he felt confounded his critics and implicitly Fuller.

Responding to McLean, Fuller published a second edition of his most famous work, *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*.⁵⁸² To this he added an appendix directed specifically at McLean, whom he addressed by name throughout. He argued that McLean had undermined the doctrine of justification by making faith a mere intellectual act and then proceeded to defend the traditional understanding of faith. The tone of the appendix is defensive. He chastised McLean for his new edition of the *Commission*, accusing him of using their private correspondence for McLean's benefit, though McLean never used Fuller's name.

At this point, the two men were officially embroiled in a public theological controversy that placed Scotch Baptists against English Baptists. In 1802, McLean responded to Fuller by publishing *A Reply to Mr Fuller's Appendix*.⁵⁸³ It was an open rebuke. While McLean acknowledged Fuller's advanced polemical skill, he felt Fuller

⁵⁸¹ Archibald McLean, *The Commission Given by Jesus Christ to His Apostles Illustrated*, 2nd ed. (Glasgow: J. & A. Duncan, 1797), 74.

⁵⁸² Andrew Fuller, *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation: or the Duty of Sinners to Believe in Jesus Christ*, 2nd ed. (Clipstone: J. W. Morris, 1801).

⁵⁸³ Archibald McLean, *Reply to Mr Fuller's Appendix to His Book on the Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation* (New York: Scatched and Adams, 1839).

did not know when to quit. He said, referring to Fuller and other opponents, ‘Success in some things has urged them on to attempt others, wherein they have done little to service [*sic*] the cause of truth’. He also accused Fuller of ‘misrepresentations’ and ‘strange conclusions’.⁵⁸⁴

The conflict caught the attention of Primitivists, those who wished to replicate the precise patterns of apostolic Christianity,⁵⁸⁵ and Evangelicals throughout Britain and beyond. The lead article in the February 1803 issue of the *Theological Repository* dealt with the conflict in depth.⁵⁸⁶ The anonymous author, siding with McLean, desired to end the controversy, advising Fuller not to reply. Fuller did not heed the writer’s advice and published *Strictures on Sandemanianism* in 1810. McLean never responded. Even after the death of both men, the dispute continued to be addressed within theological circles. Alexander Campbell, founder of a substantial restoration movement in North America that led to the establishment of the Disciples of Christ and Churches of Christ, discussed the matter in a much later issue of his *Millennial Harbinger*, siding with McLean. He believed that McLean ‘ably refuted’ and ‘exposed’ the flaws of Fuller’s doctrine,⁵⁸⁷ but with the exception of sympathetic Primitivists like Campbell, McLean’s intellectualist view of faith never gained more than a minority following.

Acceptance is not how this debate should be measured. For McLean, the success came by using his elevated position within the connexion to thrust the Scotch Baptists on to an international stage. McLean, both during and shortly following his

⁵⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁵⁸⁵ See also Chapter Seven on the Churches of Christ.

⁵⁸⁶ *Theological Repository*, 6 (February 1803), 1-14.

⁵⁸⁷ *Millennial Harbinger*, 6:2 (February 1842), 77.

life, was the primary theological spokesman for his connexion. His word was almost always decisive for all who followed his teachings.

Ecclesiology. The Scotch Baptists primarily distinguished themselves from their religious contemporaries in their expressions of ecclesiology. Just as McLean often exercised authority to enforce uniformity of belief, authority was also used to maintain uniformity of practice. There was no emphasis placed upon the Fathers or the sixteenth-century Reformers in establishing the Scotch Baptist pattern. In fact, McLean believed the ecclesiology of his connexion was built strictly ‘upon the apostolic plan, which is the only rule they profess to follow’.⁵⁸⁸ In reality his beliefs were highly reflective of the Independent, Primitivist sect led by John Glas and his son-in-law Robert Sandeman who maintained the same objective as McLean: to replicate the pattern of the earliest, undefiled New Testament congregations, especially the Jerusalem church, which they believed exemplified their teachings. The way in which Scotch Baptists practised their religion was equally as important to them as their other beliefs.

Many of the teachings of McLean, and therefore his authority, had their origins within the Glasite movement. This group, named after their founder, John Glas (1695-1773), was one of the earliest Independent sects in Scotland. As an early champion of primitive Christianity in Scotland, Glas emphasised the same hyper-literalism that McLean later defended. Glas was accompanied in leadership by his son-in-law Robert Sandeman, after whom the movement was named in England and North America (Sandemanianism). This was the group with whom Andrew Fuller identified McLean in his *Strictures on Sandemanianism* (1810). Fuller challenged the Sandemanians and

⁵⁸⁸ McLean, ‘A Short Account of the Scots Baptists’ John Rippon, *The Baptist Annual Register*, 375.

McLean on their views of faith, and yet also commended them because, as he put it, ‘there are many things in the system which are worthy of serious attention’.⁵⁸⁹ Fuller’s work was a refutation of McLean who had not a been a Sandemanian for almost fifty years, but still closely resembled one.

Glas, who studied for the ministry at St Andrews and University of Edinburgh, became the parish minister of Tealing, near Dundee, in March 1719. It was there, in a highly divided and undisciplined church, that he began to develop his doctrine of the church and the Kingdom of God. Ultimately, Glas rejected the nature of the National Covenant and taught that the Kingdom was spiritual in nature, completely separate from state authority and rule. The church, furthermore, was to be composed solely of true believers who had an assured experience of faith, and lived separately from the world. Glas later expounded these ideas in detail in his most frequently published theological work, *The Testimony of the King of Martyrs* (1729), published six times.⁵⁹⁰ As he began to refine his theology, he also became bolder in his public teaching, which attracted the attention of other ministers and officials who believed he was undermining the National Covenant and Church. After protests and an appeal, Glas was eventually deposed in 1730, taking with him nearly one hundred followers.⁵⁹¹

It is best to interpret McLean as a theological imitator of the Glasites. It was from this group, after all, that McLean and many of his followers emerged. Although raised in the Established Church, McLean rejected the union of church and state after reading Glas’s *Testimony of the King of Martyrs*. In 1762, he joined a Glasite church in

⁵⁸⁹ Andrew Fuller, *Strictures on Sandemanianism, in Twelve Letters to a Friend* (Nottingham: C. Sutton, 1810).

⁵⁹⁰ John Glas, *The Testimony of the King of Martyrs Concerning His Kingdom* (Edinburgh: George Lyon, 1729).

⁵⁹¹ D.B. Murray, ‘The Social and Religious Origins of Scottish Non-Presbyterian Dissent from 1730-1800’ (PhD Thesis, St Andrews University, 1976), 39.

Glasgow but left it a year later over an unknown matter of discipline.⁵⁹² The influence, however, was irreversible, since McLean adopted many of the Glasite teachings as the basis for his theology and ecclesiology. This assertion may be defended using a letter of advertisement in the *Christian Advocate and Scotch Baptist Repository*, October 1850, which describes in detail the Scotch Baptist distinctives.⁵⁹³ The author of the letter, 'Investigator', was seeking like-minded Scotch Baptists to join with him in the founding of a new congregation in London.⁵⁹⁴ Of the twelve essential beliefs listed, only two were not Glasite principles: believer's baptism and the acceptability of the presence of only a single elder at the Lord's Supper.⁵⁹⁵ Unlike the Scotch Baptists, the Glasites were infant baptisers and required multiple elders to preside over communion, not just one.

The first similarity between the groups may be observed in their literal approach to hermeneutics. Like McLean, Glas saw the Bible, especially the New Testament, as containing a perfect law of faith and practice. By reading the scriptures, both men believed they could accurately replicate the doctrine and ecclesiology of the New Testament churches. When Glas removed to Dundee after being deposed, he was able to form a church in the manner he felt reflected the apostolic teachings. The first change he enacted was to abandon the traditional monthly communion in exchange for weekly communion, just as McLean later did. Both men attributed this teaching to the description found in the New Testament book of Acts and the Early Church.

⁵⁹² William Jones, 'Memoir of the Author', *Miscellaneous Works of Archibald McLean*, I (Elgin: Peter McDonald, 1847), xxiii.

⁵⁹³ *Christian Advocate and Scotch Baptist Repository*, 1 (October, 1850), 240.

⁵⁹⁴ *Christian Advocate and Scotch Baptist Repository*, I (October, 1850), 240.

⁵⁹⁵ A good discussion of this relationship may be found in Derek Murray, 'The Scotch Baptist Tradition in Great Britain', *Baptist Quarterly*, 33 (October, 1989), 187-188.

Other notable similarities between the two groups included practising the kiss of charity and an abstinence from food containing the blood of strangled animals, both products of a literalistic hermeneutic. The issue of eating meat from a strangled animal or containing blood was extensively addressed by Glas in his treatise *The Unlawfulness of Blood-Eating* (1743), which he based on Acts 21 and other passages.⁵⁹⁶ He argued that while ‘Gentile’ Christians were not required to follow the Old Testament laws, the New Testament clearly required abstinence ‘from meats offered to idols and from blood, and from things strangled’.⁵⁹⁷ McLean echoed his sentiments when he defended abstinence on the basis of a literal reading of the New Testament:

‘[The Scotch Baptists] abstain from the eating of blood and things strangled, i.e. flesh with the blood thereof; because these were not only forbidden to Noah and his posterity...but also under the gospel they are most solemnly prohibited the believing Gentiles, along with fornication and things offered to idols’.⁵⁹⁸

McLean obviously believed this was a major issue since he equated it with fornication. Concerning the ‘kiss of charity’, this custom was described by McLean as an essential aspect of his followers’ ecclesiology,⁵⁹⁹ and it was maintained as a common practice among his followers into the 1850s.⁶⁰⁰ He included the custom as one of their defining beliefs in all three of his summaries of the Scotch Baptist faith. Glas, when addressing the significance of the practice for his group in *Grave Dialogues Betwixt Three Free-Thinkers* (1738), based the importance of the ritual on its practical use as an outward expression of brotherly love, as well as its frequent appearance in scripture. He wrote,

⁵⁹⁶ John Glas, *The Unlawfulness of Blood-Eating* (Edinburgh: Sands, Brymer, Murray and Cochran, 1743).

⁵⁹⁷ *The Works of Mr John Glas*, II (Perth: R. Morison and Son, 1782), 160.

⁵⁹⁸ Archibald McLean, ‘A Short Account of the Scots Baptists’ John Rippon, *The Baptist Annual Register* (London, 1795), 375.

⁵⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰⁰ *Christian Advocate and Scotch Baptist Repository*, I (August, 1850), 173-176.

‘They also observe...the Christian salutation, or kiss of charity, which, however ridiculous it may be to many Christians, they find no less than five times expressly enjoined in the New Testament’.⁶⁰¹ From these few examples it is clear that McLean adopted Glas’s extremely literal interpretation of scripture and embraced most of his uncommon expressions of that hermeneutic, including others which have not been discussed, such as ‘love feasts’, foot washing and use of an unlearned ministry. McLean, who was accepted as a unique authority among the Scotch Baptist was in many ways merely continuing in the tradition that had been set for him by John Glas, from whom McLean adopted many practices.

The importance the Scotch Baptists placed upon church practice and polity is evident in the numerous works they produced specifically and peripherally on the subject. How they practised the church was every bit as important to them as what they confessed theologically. As Primitivists, the Scotch Baptists understood the Bible, and particularly the New Testament, to contain not only a perfect rule of faith but also a perfect law of church practice. This belief was the source of most of their internal conflicts and divisions. On four occasions prior to division in 1834, brief surveys of Scotch Baptist practices were published for the public. In some ways, they were written to build bridges with those outside the connexion by clarifying their beliefs, but they were also written as a teaching tool for doctrine, summarizing what they believed to be true apostolic religion.

Of the four short overviews, Archibald McLean authored three: *A Short Sketch of the Church Order* (1786),⁶⁰² *A Short Account of the Scots Baptists* (1795)⁶⁰³ and *A*

⁶⁰¹ *The Works of Mr John Glas*, IV (Perth: R. Morison and Son, 1782), 246-247.

⁶⁰² Archibald McLean, *The Nature and Import of Baptism, with its Indispensable Obligation, in a Letter to a Friend, to which is added, A Short Sketch of the Church Order and Social Religious Practices of the Baptists in Scotland* (Edinburgh: W. Gray, 1786).

Compendious Account of the Principles and Practices of the Scottish Baptists (1808).⁶⁰⁴ The most significant with regard to ecclesiology was the first as the two later articles were mostly summaries of the first. While the Scotch Baptists had no formal statement of faith or creed, one should not falsely assume that McLean's three writings were suggestions. His writings were typically the final word on subjects. The language within the texts left no room for understanding the works as merely McLean's personal views. It is strongly implied within the three writings that the pages contained a summary of the New Testament's teachings on church practice and that to contradict his teachings would be the same as denying the teachings of the New Testament. In the opening advertisement to *A Short Sketch*, which was intended as an apologetic for other British Baptists, McLean wrote, 'If the following Sketch, or indeed any other of our publications, contain any principle or practice which the word of God condemns,' then the reader should avoid the Scotch Baptists, but if no error was found then it would be 'inexcusable' for the reader not to join the connexion. Failure to do so would result in 'evil consequences, both to [the reader] and to the common cause.'⁶⁰⁵ Likewise, in the opening paragraph of the main text he writes, 'We hold it as our indispensable duty to copy the pattern of the primitive apostolic churches as recorded in the New Testament', just before detailing what he believed those patterns should be.⁶⁰⁶ McLean believed these writings to be an accurate summary of scripture.

⁶⁰³ McLean, 'A Short Account of the Scots Baptists' John Rippon, *The Baptist Annual Register*, 361-376.

⁶⁰⁴ Archibald McLean, 'A Compendious Account of the Principles and Practices of the Scottish Baptists', *The Theological Repository*, 4 (1808), 154-159 and 194-205.

⁶⁰⁵ Archibald McLean, *A Short Sketch of the Church Order and Social Religious Practices of the Original Baptist Church at Edinburgh, to which are added, A Few Arguments Shewing that Baptism Must Precede Church Communion or Admission to the Lord's Supper* (Edinburgh: John Ritchie, 1808), 2.

⁶⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

McLean's first ecclesiological summary, *A Short Sketch of the Church Order and Social Religious Practices*, was originally published as an addendum to *The Nature and Import of Baptism* in 1786 and was the first concise summary of Scotch Baptist ecclesiology. When the original pamphlet was produced, the Scotch Baptists had no other Baptists to compete with or defend themselves against in Scotland, where all Baptists were 'of one mind', according to McLean.⁶⁰⁷ By default, their ecclesiology was the norm among Scottish Baptists as none others were present. The publication essentially solidified their practices and was used as an apologetic and recruitment tool.

When it was republished in 1808, the sequence of the pamphlet was altered. The piece on church order became the primary work and the defence of believer's baptism was made the addendum. This was undoubtedly because the Scotch Baptists were in the midst of connexion-wide disunity and were combating competition from emerging Baptist groups, like the Haldaneites, those who followed the leadership of the Scottish brothers Robert and James Haldane. The preface to the later addition indicates the Scotch Baptists believed all Baptists in Scotland outside their connexion to be guilty of dividing the body of Christ. The challenge was made to find any scriptural error within the pages of the pamphlet to justify such divisions. On the other hand, if no errors could be found, then those who failed to co-operate would be found 'inexcusable' before God.⁶⁰⁸ The boldness of McLean shows his absolute confidence that he had properly interpreted and summarised in his essay 'the pattern of primitive apostolic churches as recorded in the New Testament'.⁶⁰⁹

A Short Sketch of the Church Order is the most thorough and lengthy of

⁶⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁶⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁶⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

McLean's three ecclesiological summaries and he placed significant emphasis on the nature and purpose of the local church. Departing from the traditional Presbyterian or Episcopal understandings of church government, McLean and the Scotch Baptists adopted congregationalism, a belief that the individual local church was an independent body and free to make its own decisions. According to McLean, there were certain characteristics all churches needed to possess to be considered set in order. Since local churches were the visible representation of Christ's kingdom on earth, churches were to consist solely of faithful baptised believers, who showed their commitment to 'observe all things whatsoever he hath commanded', a popular phrase used to maintain uniformity.⁶¹⁰ Those who departed 'in any instance from the faith or obedience of the gospel' were excluded from their communion.⁶¹¹ Churches were also to meet in a single location and maintain a plurality of elders and deacons, a practice that was often under scrutiny as elders were difficult to secure. A group that met without elders was not considered a true church because, according to the Scotch Baptists, the New Testament habitually referred to 'elders' in the plural, and even though the Bible never explicitly instructed on the matter, the pattern that was believed to be exercised by the apostolic churches was to be uncompromisingly adopted.

McLean and the Scotch Baptists believed the only authority above the autonomous congregation was Christ himself.⁶¹² Such an understanding was prevalent throughout Britain among most Independents and Baptists. It is worth emphasising, however, that while McLean described each church within his connexion as having 'full power of government and discipline within itself', and 'subjected by Christ to no

⁶¹⁰ McLean, *The Nature and Import of Baptism*, 75, 77.

⁶¹¹ Ibid.

⁶¹² McLean, *A Short Sketch of the Church Order*, 4.

other authority of jurisdiction but his own', he included an exception clause in a footnote in his second edition.⁶¹³ The note insisted that all like-minded churches should associate for the purpose of administering 'mutual advice and assistance when necessary'.⁶¹⁴ This caveat was included to dissuade Scotch Baptist churches from practising independently of the connexion and acting outside its watchful eye.

Seventeen years after the death of McLean, *An Account of the Faith and Practices of the Scotch Baptists*,⁶¹⁵ the fourth of the surveys, was written by George Jamieson, an elder from Paisley, and posthumously published in 1829. Jamieson began his work with a general survey of Scotch Baptist theology, most of which maintained classic Calvinism, but some items, like the intellectualist view of faith,⁶¹⁶ are explicitly Scotch Baptist. Part two focuses primarily on church order, but other issues, like free will, were also discussed.

Jamieson's account of Scotch Baptist church order did not address any new ecclesiological matters yet it proves significant for the current investigation. After studying Jamieson's views, it is obvious that he relies heavily upon McLean for much of his teaching. In one place he recommended his readers to examine McLean's *Commission*, the standard of Scotch Baptist ecclesiology, which will be discussed below.⁶¹⁷ His dependence on McLean was so great that on multiple occasions Jamieson simply quoted him word for word, failing to attribute the citation. As an example, Jamieson wrote, ' "Christ's religion contains no *non-essentials*, which his people may

⁶¹³ Ibid., 4.

⁶¹⁴ Ibid.

⁶¹⁵ George Jamieson, *An Account of the Faith and Practices of the Scotch Baptists with Remarks on Scriptural Union: A View of The Faith and Order of the Primitive Churches of Christ* (Paisley: J. Neilson, 1829).

⁶¹⁶ Ibid., 19.

⁶¹⁷ Ibid., 58.

observe, if they please, or may neglect, without displeasing him.” His authority can never clash with itself, by giving laws, and at the same time a dispensation to neglect them’.⁶¹⁸ It is unclear why Jamieson ends his quotation with the first sentence since together the two sentences were directly taken from *A Short Sketch of Church Order*.⁶¹⁹ In another instance, Jamieson directly quoted McLean’s *Short Account of the Scots Baptists* without the use of quotation marks and without citing the source. He said, ‘The nature of our union...requires that we should be *strict* and *impartial* in the exercise of *discipline*; both to preserve *purity of communion*, and to keep open and clear the channels of *brotherly love*’.⁶²⁰ It is unlikely Jamieson was trying to deceive his audience, however, as he knew his readers would recognise the famous leader’s words. By quoting him, though, Jamieson is lending credence to McLean as the distinctive extra-biblical authority for accurate ecclesiology.

Of supreme importance to the Scotch Baptists, as well as most other Baptists, was their insistence on believer’s baptism. Those holding to this practice believed baptism by immersion was reserved for those who publicly professed their faith in and obedience to Christ, thus rejecting paedobaptism. The adoption of this principle shows a break from the Glasites who still held to covenant infant baptism and separated the Scotch Baptists from most other religious dissenters in Scotland. While never an issue within their own churches, the rejection of infant baptism by the Scotch Baptists was the issue that drew the most attention and criticism by those outside the group. A need to defend and explain this practice led McLean to write a number of apologies,

⁶¹⁸ Ibid., 32. Emphasis present. Jamieson replaces ‘circumstantial’ with ‘non-essentials’.

⁶¹⁹ Archibald McLean *A Short Sketch of Church Order*, 5-6

⁶²⁰ Jamieson, *An Account of the Faith and Practices of the Scotch Baptists*, 31. Emphasis present. Originally in McLean, ‘A Short Account of the Scots Baptists’ John Rippon, *The Baptist Annual Register*, 375.

pamphlets and treatises on the subject. His first, *Letters Addressed to Mr John Glas in Answer to His Dissertation on Infant Baptism*, originally released in 1767, was the first printed defence of believer's baptism in Scotland. It proved to be a great novelty throughout Scotland, especially since Glas's *A Dissertation on Infant Baptism*, first published in 1746, was a popular doctrinal statement among Scottish Independents.

McLean's authority among the infant group was already emerging at the time of his own baptism. When he arrived in Edinburgh to be baptised by Carmichael (McLean was still residing in Glasgow at the time), he was 'much solicited' to produce the aforementioned response to Glas.⁶²¹ McLean, though an experienced printer, was far from the most educated among their ranks. He had no formal university or theological training. If education or social status had been the measure, surely Dr Robert Walker, an esteemed surgeon,⁶²² would have taken the lead. If ministerial experience had been the measure of authority, it would surely have been Carmichael, a vocational Antiburgher Secession minister. Instead, the other new converts must have read and been impressed with the correspondence between Carmichael and McLean. Whatever the draw, McLean was chosen by the group to write the response⁶²³ and from this time forward he would be the chief apologist for the Scotch Baptists in matters of ecclesiology.

Baptism was never a source of internal strife for the Scotch Baptists. It was an issue that all understood as a prerequisite for being Baptist. Since it was essential to church membership and fellowship, all within the connexion had already submitted to the teaching. Adherence, however, did not necessitate acceptance into the group.

⁶²¹ McLean, 'A Short Account of the Scots Baptists' John Rippon, *The Baptist Annual Register*, 363.

⁶²² *Ibid.*

⁶²³ *Ibid.*

McLean and the Scotch Baptists believed themselves to be distinct from the ‘English’ (Particular Baptists) and Haldaneite Baptists of Scotland in other matters of ecclesiology and rarely co-operated with Baptists outside the connexion. To show the distinctions, McLean republished *A Short Sketch of the Church Order* in 1808.⁶²⁴ So, while it was essential, baptism was not the sole standard of co-operation.

McLean believed that if his young connexion was to survive the rising competition from the growing number of dissenting groups, internal divisions must be minimised. For him and the Scotch Baptists, unity was not merely an abstract hope or goal as it was among most Christian denominations; it was an important aspect of their ecclesiology. If they were to function as ‘primitive apostolic churches’, it was, according to McLean, ‘[their] duty to be all of *one mind* in everything that regards our faith and practice as a body’.⁶²⁵ In order to achieve his imperative goal of unity throughout the Scotch Baptist connexion, McLean insisted on uniformity by unanimity, which he said was patterned for them by the Jerusalem church of the New Testament.⁶²⁶ In *A Short Sketch of the Church Order*, McLean went into detail about the practice:

Upon this principle nothing is decided amongst us by a majority of votes, but all our church transactions are carried on by the unanimous consent and agreement of every member; and should any dissent, all due pains is taken to satisfy them, unless it appear they are under the influence of wrong motives, in which case they must be admonished accordingly.⁶²⁷

This proved especially difficult because the Scotch Baptists denied the use of connexion-wide creeds and confessions, though individual churches often exchanged

⁶²⁴ McLean, *A Short Sketch of the Church Order*, 2.

⁶²⁵ *Ibid.*, 6. Emphasis present.

⁶²⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶²⁷ *Ibid.*, 6.

confessions as evidence of orthodoxy.⁶²⁸ For the most part, the doctrinal decisions were made by McLean through his writings.

The practice of unanimity may be clearly observed in the process of admitting new churches into the connexion. In 1834, when it was discovered that a likeminded Baptist church in Haggate, Lancashire, existed, Samuel Swan, a Scotch Baptist elder from Leeds, opened correspondence with the church. They eventually exchanged statements of faith so that each could examine what the other believed.⁶²⁹ In his reply to the statement of faith by the church at Leeds, elder John Hudson of Haggate writes, ‘Your letter came duly to hand and was read last Lord’s day, and we all *unanimously* acknowledged the statement to be ours. Therefore since we have one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all, we are bound to receive each other as brethren in the Lord Jesus Christ.’⁶³⁰ While Haggate was not yet a part of the connexion, it seems from the letter that the church was already committed to the principle of unanimity and equally eager to connect with the Scotch Baptists.

The process of accepting a new church into fellowship was more complicated than merely exchanging doctrinal statements and letters. After receiving the letter requesting association, Swan forwarded the letter and confession of faith to the church in Walkergate, Beverley, for inspection. Swan showed great excitement in the discovery of Haggate church, which he believed the connexion should receive, but he knew the decision was left to all within the connexion. He acknowledged the importance of such a practice the next year in a letter concerning a similar conflict of

⁶²⁸ See confessions of Dundee and Largo. MS Letters of the relating to the Scotch Baptist Churches, National Library of Scotland (NLS), Edinburgh

⁶²⁹ Samuel Swan, Leeds, to James Everson, Beverley, 7 October 1834. MS Letters.

⁶³⁰ John Hudson to the Church Meeting near Leeds, 24 September 1834, cited in Swan to Everson, 7 October 1834, MS Letters. Emphasis added.

unanimity. Writing to James Everson, an elder at Walkergate, Swan said, ‘I admit the independent right of each church to judge, but surely when a number of churches are associated, none ought to be received into the association without the concurrence of the whole’.⁶³¹ Each church in the connexion had to approve the inclusion of any new congregation.

The practice of unanimity ultimately led to problems and divisions among the Scotch Baptists. In 1834, an Aberdeen church desired to be reunited with the connexion after formerly withdrawing fellowship. The Edinburgh church responded, reminding the Aberdeen congregation that a church could only be received into the connexion by unanimous agreement from all members of all the co-operating bodies:

Our earnest desire is, that in receiving Churches into the fellowship, we may proceed so as to preserve entire our present connection. The rule which we would lay down for our own guidance in receiving back churches formerly in fellowship with us, is, first, that it *should be agreed harmoniously among ourselves* [the Edinburgh Congregation], and *then approved of by our sister churches*, before we [act] on it. This appears to us the natural course to preserve and extend our connection, and we do not doubt it is the course which the other Churches and yourselves would adopt.⁶³²

As the discussion progressed and no agreement was made, the Aberdeen elders responded none too pleasantly to the Edinburgh church and questioned the biblical validity of the policy. Their letter also called into question the integrity and motivation of some within the association, saying,

Let it be understood that the concurrence of all the members in the church, at present in the connection, is necessary to be obtained before any one church can act on [its] own convictions or present duty, and it does not require much discernment to foresee that a few misguided men may prevent a union among

⁶³¹ Swan to Everson, 15 February 1835, MS Letters. Emphasis present.

⁶³² ‘The Church in the Pleasance; To the Church of Christ, Meeting in the South Silver Street, Aberdeen’, 22 October 1834, printed as an appendix to a circular letter, *The Church Assembling in the Pleasance, Edinburgh; To the Church of Christ assembling in _____*. (Edinburgh: R. Marshall, 1834), 3. Emphasis added.

the churches during our lifetime.⁶³³

Still following the pattern set by the deceased McLean, the strict Edinburgh congregation would not give its consent, and the Aberdeen church did not join the connexion.

In a pamphlet published in the same year as the Aberdeen controversy, the issue of unanimity was attacked once again. The practice was criticised on biblical grounds and the question was asked, ‘How is it that we have required a uniformity of sentiment, where the apostles and the first Christians did not require it?’⁶³⁴ Claiming the practice was a departure from ‘primitive Christianity’, the anonymous author goes on to use the same logic that McLean had used in instituting the measure decades before, insisting that the practice could not be found in scripture. Ultimately, as will be discussed, the connexion was not united and swiftly divided as the debate progressed, leading to a fatal blow to the Scotch Baptists.

One can see how decision-making was difficult according to this practice. The time it took for churches to receive letters, fully discuss the matters at hand and then compose letters of affirmation or rejection was particularly lengthy. It is also worth noting that while unanimity assumes every church held an equal vote, the cited letter from the Edinburgh church implies that the Edinburgh congregation held a special place of authority among the other churches: ‘... [admittance] should be agreed harmoniously among ourselves [the Edinburgh Congregation], and *then approved of by*

⁶³³‘The Church of Christ assembling in South Silver Street, Aberdeen; To the Church of Christ assembling in the Pleasance, Edinburgh’, 3 November 1834, appended to *The Church Assembling in the Pleasance*, 5.

⁶³⁴ Anonymous, *An Exhortation to Christian Forebearance and Union: Addressed to the Scotch Baptist Churches* (Edinburgh: Waugh and Innes, 1834), 10.

our sister churches'.⁶³⁵ Edinburgh received the initial letters of correspondence and petition, which was discussed amongst themselves before referring it to the other congregations. The church's decision could ultimately determine the outcome before letters were ever delivered to the other churches. Upon his death in 1812, it appears that his former church in Edinburgh, if only briefly, inherited a portion of McLean's authority.

The leaders and writers of the Scotch Baptist connexion also believed the practices of forbearance and discipline were essential aspects of their ecclesiology, ideally working seamlessly together. As a small dissenting sect, unity was essential to their survival. In *A Short Sketch of Church Order*, McLean spent considerable time addressing the dichotomy. He writes, 'We hold it our duty to *forbear* one another in love, by making all due allowances for differences in natural tempers, capacities, growth in grace, &c. and by exercising all lowliness, meekness, and long-suffering.'⁶³⁶ However, he qualifies this statement by also cautioning his followers not to be too lenient by failing to discipline, because while forbearance is important, 'There is nothing which Christ's subjects are called to observe in his kingdom that is not of great importance'.⁶³⁷ Church order and government, McLean believed, were very plainly stated in the New Testament.⁶³⁸ Forbearance ended where the Bible was explicit, and as a literalist, he often saw scripture as being very precise.

Individuals and churches that failed to follow the 'rules' described in the New

⁶³⁵ 'The Church in the Pleasance; To the Church of Christ, Meeting in the South Silver Street, Aberdeen', 22 October 1834, printed as an appendix to a circular letter, *The Church Assembling in the Pleasance, Edinburgh; To the Church of Christ assembling in _____*. (Edinburgh: R. Marshall, 1834), 3. Emphasis added.

⁶³⁶ McLean, *A Short Sketch of Church Order*, 5.

⁶³⁷ *Ibid.*, 5-6.

⁶³⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

Testament were to be corrected or expelled. In *The Theological Repository*, McLean explained that discipline was of the ‘highest utility, and absolutely necessary for the preservation of love and unity among its members; consequently essential to the very being of a Christian church’.⁶³⁹ In other words, a church ceases to be a true New Testament church when it fails to enact discipline. Such strictness in discipline was believed to provide purity within the connexion, and led to the full expression of unity by ‘keep[ing] clear the channels of brotherly love, that [unity] may circulate freely throughout the body’.⁶⁴⁰ Because of the greater emphasis placed upon discipline, forbearance was often a neglected topic among the Scotch Baptists. Typically, it was the more progressive within the connexion who called for increased forbearance by the strict, especially during disputes.

Conflicts concerning the observance of communion, also referred to as the Lord’s Supper, best illustrate the Scotch Baptist struggle to balance forbearance and discipline. Communion was an important part of the Scotch Baptist worship service and was celebrated weekly. The main controversies surrounded the role and necessity of elders in relation to the Lord’s Supper. McLean taught that the ordinance was to take place only within a gathered constituted church, not a casual meeting of Christians, and always under the authority of at least two present presiding elders.

As one of the most outspoken defenders of McLeanite ecclesiology, the Edinburgh elder William Braidwood expounded McLean’s teaching by publishing multiple letters on the subject in 1808.⁶⁴¹ Braidwood began his defence of the doctrine by beginning with the nature of a church. He argued that some believers had demeaned

⁶³⁹ *The Theological Repository*, 4 (1808), 200.

⁶⁴⁰ Rippon ed., *Baptist Annual Register*, 375.

⁶⁴¹ William Braidwood, *Letters on a Variety of Subjects Relating Chiefly to Christian Fellowship and Church Order* (Edinburgh: John Ritchie, 1808).

communion by allowing unofficial gatherings of believers to participate in the Lord's Supper. He was adamant that 'two or three persons *cannot be* a church of Christ',⁶⁴² and as an ordinance belonging to proper churches, the Lord's Supper was not to be held in those circumstances. Braidwood was also convinced that the only persons to dispense communion were elders, so churches without such should not be allowed to participate.⁶⁴³

One such example of those McLean and Braidwood spoke against was a group of new Scotch Baptists converts in Newburgh, Fife. This small group was not yet set in order and had no elder but met on occasions under the authority of the Edinburgh congregation as a branch of the mother church. The group was allowed to worship in every way like the other churches except by holding the Lord's Supper.⁶⁴⁴ In 1784, William Hynd, one of the Newburgh members, objected to the restriction and persuaded several others to his opinion. When they wrote a letter to the Edinburgh church requesting permission to observe communion, their opinion was met primarily with resistance, but a few within the Edinburgh congregation were persuaded. As a result of the Edinburgh church's refusal of forbearance, some left the connexion and others, like Hynd and Charles Stuart, a member of the Edinburgh congregation, were excommunicated from fellowship.⁶⁴⁵ While small in size, this departure was the first of multiple splits among the Scotch Baptists related to communion controversies.

In 1810, towards the end of McLean's life, the first major split of the connexion took place when a minority number of members left the Edinburgh church, again

⁶⁴² Braidwood, *Letters on a Variety of Subjects*, 49.

⁶⁴³ *Ibid.*, 80.

⁶⁴⁴ Rippon ed., *Baptist Annual Register*, 371.

⁶⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 371-372.

concerning communion and the necessity of elders. The controversy actually started years earlier as can be seen from heated discussions in the *Theological Repository*. In 1807, a response came to an inquiry asking, 'Is it the duty of a Church of Christ, in any case whatever, to eat the Lord's Supper without the presence and assistance of an Elder?'⁶⁴⁶ The letter to the editor under the name 'A Missionary', called the practice of eating the Lord's Supper without elders, 'disorderly'⁶⁴⁷ and 'a mistake'.⁶⁴⁸ In a reply to the conservative response, a writer identifying himself as 'A Pastor' argues that those meeting together, though not an official church, were still members of the 'body of Christ' and should be allowed to partake of communion amongst themselves. He also stated that elders were not necessary for the ordinance, as ordinary members were just as qualified, especially since there was no 'proof that [the practice] is absolutely peculiar to the Elder'.⁶⁴⁹ Various letters continued to be produced favouring both sides of the argument well into 1808. Even Braidwood joined the argument by contributing several letters.

By 1809 churches began to divide over the subject. In the Beverley congregation, which had no elders, two prominent members left because three or four other members in the church had travelled to Hull to participate in the Lord's Supper with another Scotch Baptist congregation that had elders.⁶⁵⁰ The two that left believed one should take communion only within one's own church. This was an extreme decision, even by the conservative party's standard. The division attracted the attention

⁶⁴⁶ *The Theological Repository: New Series*, 4 (1807), 74-83.

⁶⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁶⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 75.

⁶⁴⁹ 'Answer to the Query of Philalethes' in *The Theological Repository: New Series*. vol 4, (1807), 144.

⁶⁵⁰ Archibald McLean, Edinburgh, to John Selley and John Brondham, Beverley, September 7, 1809, MS Letters.

of McLean who contacted the two men asking them to reconsider. Seeing his connexion on the brink of division, he wrote to the men pleading,

Now, my dear Brethren, let me beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, our great pattern, dearly to consider the evil of these things as they affect brotherly love and unity, the peace and comfort of our connection as brethren, and the tranquillity and happiness of your own mind and the stumbling-block which the splits and divisions of Christians lay in the way of the world...⁶⁵¹

McLean's forbearance on this issue was rare, but it was most likely evoked because both churches participating in the conflict professed the strict opinion, though Hull later adopted the moderate stance. In the end, almost half of the churches divided or left the connexion, including the Glasgow church in which 160 members left with Dr James Watt, a prominent elder and evangelist.⁶⁵²

In 1834, the debate was resurrected. On this occasion, there is no evidence to suggest that any group actually participated in the Lord's Supper without elders. The controversy only dealt with opinions on the subject. An anonymous pamphlet was published that year in favour of forbearance. It argued on behalf of those who did not see the necessity of elders during the Lord's Supper and those who did not see the debate as a dividing issue.⁶⁵³ The author appealed to the conscience of all involved asking, 'does it not become us in these circumstances to have consideration for the consciences of our brethren in Christ who differ from us'.⁶⁵⁴ Interestingly, the strict party also called for forbearance from the moderates: 'We desire it to be understood that we do not approve of the practice of eating the Lord's Supper without the presence of an elder, all we plead is for forbearance with those Churches, who think they may do

⁶⁵¹ Ibid.

⁶⁵² Transcription of Patrick Wilson, *The Origins and Progress of the Scotch Baptists*. Originally published in Edinburgh: Fullarton and Co., 1844. MS Letters, 29.

⁶⁵³ *An Exhortation to Christian Forbearance and Union: Addressed to the Scotch Baptist Churches* (Edinburgh: Waugh and Innes, 1834).

⁶⁵⁴ Ibid., 14.

it lawfully'.⁶⁵⁵ The splits occurring for the renewed controversy significantly damaged the connexion, whose vitality and growth was never seen again. McLean, who had established the principle, was still being followed by the strict party over twenty years after his death.

As can be seen, the Scotch Baptists maintained an ecclesiology that insisted on uniformity and discipline, and while forbearance was often preached, it was rarely exercised. Such strictness, as well as division, was based on a desire to practise their religion exactly as it had been done in the New Testament, which they unashamedly interpreted very literally. Verbally, the Scotch Baptists maintained that their only authority in ecclesiastical matters was Christ and the Bible, but it was McLean to whom they looked for their answers and direction.

In matters of ecclesiology, McLean's authority was primarily based in his writings, especially *The Commission Given by Jesus Christ to His Apostles* (1786),⁶⁵⁶ or as it was regularly described, *Christ's Commission*. Although the various surveys discussed above briefly summarised the Scotch Baptist ecclesiology, it was this work that firmly established and defended most of the church distinctives in detail. Many of the Scotch Baptist practices had their origins among the Glasites, but it was McLean who formally adopted and systematised them in *Christ's Commission*. Reprinted ten times, it was the most popular and influential Scotch Baptist publication ever produced.

In the opening preface, McLean clearly defined his purpose in writing the popular book: 'The design of this publication is to draw the Reader's attention to that kind of Christianity which was instituted by Christ himself, and propagated by his

⁶⁵⁵ *On the Split of Baptist Churches over the Celebration of the Lord's Supper*, ii-iii.

⁶⁵⁶ Archibald McLean, *Commission Given By Jesus Christ to His Apostles Illustrated* (Edinburgh, 1786).

inspired apostles'.⁶⁵⁷ He continued by arguing that while many of his contemporaries appealed to the authority of the early Fathers as a guide for primitive Christianity, their knowledge was already corrupted by false religion. McLean believed the only source of true, undefiled religion was in the New Testament teachings, which he believed he had captured and summarised in his book.

A year following the publication of a second edition, McLean wrote an allegorical essay in the form of a conversation between two men discussing a fictitious *Apostolical Commission* (i.e. *Christ's Commission*). It was a mild understatement of his understanding of the book's role within his connexion. Ebenezer, a Presbyterian Seceder, asks John, a Baptist, 'I suppose "The Apostolical Commission" may be considered as the creed of your church?' In a typical Primitivist response, John replies, 'we have no creed but the Bible'. Ebenezer clarified and reframed his question, asking if the book contained what (Scotch) Baptists understood as a summary of the scriptures, to which John simply replies, 'It does'.⁶⁵⁸ Clearly, while McLean would never have described *The Commission* as a creed or accept any published theological statement as such, he does acknowledge its special role as a summary of Christ's teachings and a conduit of 'pure and undefiled religion'.⁶⁵⁹

On one occasion, McLean felt he received a poor review of *The Commission* from a writer in the *Missionary Magazine*. After writing a lengthy letter to the editor he received a reply denying an opportunity to publish his response. He then approached the editor of the *Edinburgh Quarterly Magazine* who complied with the request in 1798.

⁶⁵⁷ Archibald McLean, *Commission Given By Jesus Christ to His Apostles Illustrated*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh, 1797). iii.

⁶⁵⁸ Archibald McLean, *A Conversation between John, a Baptist, and Ebenezer, a Seceder, on the Faith of the Gospel: Occasioned by Mr M'Lean's Treatise on Christ's Commission to His Apostles* (Edinburgh: Thomas Turnbull, 1798), 4.

⁶⁵⁹ McLean, *The Commission Given by Jesus Christ*, x.

His eleven-page response firmly accused the original reviewer of misrepresentations and misunderstandings.⁶⁶⁰ McLean defended his work and his connexion while criticising the establishment (Church of Scotland) on matters of doctrine, church order, discipline and ordinance.⁶⁶¹

McLean took very literally Christ's commission to his followers to go into all the nations of the world and teach them 'whatsoever I have commanded you' (Matthew 28:18-20).⁶⁶² *Christ's Commission* was the closest the Scotch Baptists ever came to developing a comprehensive theology that summarised the teaching they were charged to spread. Over 350 pages in length, the work covers a variety of subjects from prophecy to church-state relations. It quickly became the basis for all the Scotch Baptist ecclesiology. In fact, most of the aforementioned summaries of ecclesiology by Scotch Baptists were mere abbreviations of *Christ's Commission*. A particularly clear example may be seen by comparing McLean's chapter, 'The Public Ordinances of Divine Service',⁶⁶³ with the summary of Sunday meeting practices in *A Short Sketch of the Church Order*.⁶⁶⁴ Both works cover the same material in almost the same order with the former expounding in greater detail.

One of the major emphases of the publication was that Christ's followers were to continue in the work that he commissioned his apostles to perform. For McLean and his adherents, however, the mission was not simply to spread a message of eternal salvation through the atoning death and resurrection of Jesus. The message also

⁶⁶⁰ *Edinburgh Quarterly Magazine*, 1 (1798), 139.

⁶⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 141.

⁶⁶² Quoted in McLean, *The Commission Given by Jesus Christ*, 1.

⁶⁶³ McLean, *The Commission Given by Jesus Christ*, 272-295.

⁶⁶⁴ McLean, *A Short Sketch of the Church Order*, 7-10.

consisted of the equally important spreading of the ‘commandments and institutions of Christ’, which he believed to be the Scotch Baptist church order.⁶⁶⁵ This, according to McLean, is what was meant by ‘teaching them to observe all things’ and he spent three quarters of his book on the content of these teachings.

On occasions, McLean used his status to correct those who were not emphasising the primitive faith found in *Christ’s Commission*. He spent so much time propagating his ecclesiology that it seems he often placed a higher emphasis on how the members of the connexion should *practise* their faith than on how the connexion could *spread* their faith. In November 1798, he penned a circular letter to the other churches within the connexion. Addressing the churches, he commended those who were zealously spreading the gospel, but he was concerned that they claimed to ‘act under the authority of Christ’s commission in preaching the Gospel; yet it seems they have it not in their plan to follow out the different parts of that commission ... nor teach them to observe all things whatsoever Christ hath commanded’.⁶⁶⁶ He also goes on to mention that these preachers did not teach them to maintain ‘purity in communion which is essential to brotherly love’. As a result, he continued, ‘...instead of leading the disciples forward to the observance of all things ... they leave them, ... just where they found them’.⁶⁶⁷

Ecclesiology, according to McLean, could not be separated from evangelism, because evangelism was incomplete on its own. He believed Christ had also called his followers to spread primitive Christianity, and likewise, plant churches based on the model presented in the New Testament. This is why he wrote *Christ’s Commission*. It

⁶⁶⁵ McLean, *The Commission Given by Jesus Christ*, 158.

⁶⁶⁶ ‘Address of the Baptist Church at Edinburgh to their sister churches and to all who are connected with them in the fellowship of the Gospel’, 1798, Bundle 2, Waugh Papers.

⁶⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

was, for his followers, an accurate summary of New Testament teaching on the nature of a biblical church. It was also the extra-biblical basis for all Scotch Baptist ecclesiology and a significant contributor to McLean's authority.

Unlike the other associations and connexions included in this study, the Scotch Baptists never met in annual meetings or conferences. There were no official agencies or academies. Some communication appears to have spread through the use of circular letters, most authoritatively from the Edinburgh church, but more commonly, correspondence came from magazines, which kept readers informed of events, ideas and controversies. The most authoritative voice, though, came from the writings and decisions of Archibald McLean, the founder and unequalled leader of the Scotch Baptists. McLean's highest priority was the dissemination of Scotch Baptist doctrine and ecclesiology, and while he was moderately affected by the Evangelical Awakening, his desire for missions and evangelism was always motivated by teaching people to obey 'whatsoever I have commanded you', which was to be understood as the Scotch Baptist system of faith and practice. Since he was the one who determined the churches' belief system, McLean was unrivalled and unique as the leader of the Scotch Baptists.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Churches of Christ in Great Britain

From their inception, the Churches of Christ in Great Britain constituted a relatively small, yet lively, denomination of Protestant Nonconformists. In fact, the churches of this association long maintained a thriving community, until most congregations merged with the United Reformed Church in 1981. Little scholarly research has been devoted to the group, with the most important exception being *Let Sects and Parties Fall* (1980) by David M. Thompson.⁶⁶⁸ Although Thompson's work is foundational for any study of the group, only the first two and a half chapters deal with the period prior to 1865, and the book has very little to say about the role of authority or freedom because of its other concerns.

The Churches of Christ in Great Britain were part of a larger Christian Primitivist movement, which emerged out of the Enlightenment and manifested itself in the advent of and influence upon multiple Protestant Nonconformist sects during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This movement was especially popular in Great Britain and the United States. Primitivism, frequently and confusingly referred to as Restorationism, was the belief that a true church should base its doctrine, as well as ecclesiastical practices, solely upon the pattern set forth in the New Testament. The term "Restorationism" more commonly refers to a specific nineteenth-century American expression of Primitivism called the Restoration Movement, whose leadership included Thomas and Alexander Campbell, Walter Scott and Barton Stone. In theory at least, the Bible alone, especially the New Testament, was the only source

⁶⁶⁸ David M. Thompson, *Let Sects and Parties Fall: A Short History of the Association of Churches of Christ in Great Britain and Ireland* (Birmingham: Berean Press, 1980).

of faith and practice for Primitivists, and no other external authority was accepted, including creeds or other traditions. Prototypes of the movement have appeared throughout the history of Christianity, especially among those influenced by the Reformation, most notably sixteenth-century Anabaptists. The radical reformers, called Anabaptists, however, did not uphold the focus on ecclesiastical practices that was later found in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

In Great Britain, Christian Primitivism was first vocalised by censured Church of Scotland minister, John Glas, and was made popular outside Scotland by his son-in-law, Robert Sandeman. Their followers in Scotland have been labelled Glasites, while elsewhere in the world they are referred to as Sandemanians. The movement continued to draw followers from a variety of traditions and influenced several denominations throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This is the tradition from which the Churches of Christ emerged.

It would be an unfortunate mistake to begin a study of the Churches of Christ in Great Britain with their first General Meeting, 18-19 August 1842, especially since several congregations emerged during the preceding decade. Their origins may be traced to the early decades of the nineteenth century and two Primitivist movements in particular, the first domestic and the second transatlantic. The Scotch Baptists, who, as we have seen, distinguished themselves from their more mainstream Evangelical brethren in Britain, provided the domestic contribution.⁶⁶⁹ Although part of a greater Primitivist movement with origins among the Glasites, Scotch Baptists were the immediate predecessors of the Churches of Christ, and while they were by no means the only source from which the Churches drew early adherents, they definitely comprised a large portion. Such was the case of James Wallis and more than a dozen

⁶⁶⁹ See the discussion of Scotch Baptists in Chapter Six.

others who separated from a Scotch Baptist church in Nottingham to establish what would become the first British Church of Christ on Christmas Day 1836.⁶⁷⁰ The cause of the division, as will be discussed below, was partly due to Wallis' adoption of baptismal regeneration. The second source was the American Restoration movement, particularly the writings of Alexander Campbell, which were being published in Britain by 1835 in William Jones's periodical, *The Millennial Harbinger*, and subsequently by Wallis's *Christian Messenger*. In a letter, published in the August 1837 edition of *The Christian Messenger*, Wallis praised Campbell for his role in the founding of the fledgling British movement: 'It is to you, Brother Campbell, under the providence of a gracious God, that myself and others in this place are indebted...'.⁶⁷¹ Both influences were instrumental in the early formation of the British Churches of Christ.

Magazine Publication. Even before the establishment of a National Meeting in 1842, the Churches of Christ, as they would later be identified, co-operated through far less formal means. In fact, there was apparently no formal structure at all, yet through their common ideology found in the publication of periodical literature, they quickly identified with one another as a distinctive people. What had previously been scattered groups of Campbellite followers from various traditions, eventually evolved into part of a larger transatlantic sect.

William Jones, a prominent leader among the Scotch Baptists, published the first Campbellite materials in Britain beginning in 1835. *The Millennial Harbinger and Voluntary Church Advocate* (1835-1836)⁶⁷² primarily reproduced materials from Campbell's American magazine, *The Christian Baptist*, but the title was explicitly

⁶⁷⁰ David King, 'On the Life and Death of James Wallis', *The British Harbinger*, 20:7 (July 1867), 223.

⁶⁷¹ *The Christian Messenger and Reformer*, 1:6 (August 1837), 204.

⁶⁷² *The Millennial Harbinger and Voluntary Church Advocate*, Vols 1-2 (1835-1836).

copied from Campbell's more famous magazine, *The Millennial Harbinger*.⁶⁷³ From the beginning, Jones made it clear that he did not agree with Campbell on every aspect of faith, understandably considering that Campbell had once declared in a letter to a mutual friend, 'The world would not be converted in ten thousand years by the system of operations got up by our good father M'Lean, and his co-adjutors, whose names are all familiar to me.'⁶⁷⁴ The comment, critical of the Scotch Baptists and their revered founder, Archibald McLean, troubled Jones, who wrote to Campbell for clarification. In return, Campbell replied: 'Scotch Baptists...appear to me to be so straitened by the cords and stays of hypercalvinism, that they are afraid to command all men to repent and obey the gospel, lest they should savour of Arminian works, and make void the grace of God'.⁶⁷⁵ In the second issue, Jones provides his own response to this judgement by including a letter he had written to Campbell, dated 16 March 1835, under the title, 'A Word of Apology for the Scotch Baptist Churches in Britain'.⁶⁷⁶ Over the next several issues and months, Jones began to distance the *Harbinger* from Campbellism, until he ultimately discontinued publication after sixteen months (1836) on the grounds of what he identified as '*heretical* sentiments' being espoused by Campbell.⁶⁷⁷ Jones could not, however, revoke his introduction of Campbell to the British people and especially his fellow Scotch Baptists.

The work of Jones was quickly taken up by one of his avid readers and fellow Scotch Baptists, the aforementioned James Wallis of Nottingham. Originally

⁶⁷³ *The Millennial Harbinger and Voluntary Church Advocate*, 1:1 (March, 1835), 20.

⁶⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁶⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁶⁷⁶ *The Millennial Harbinger and Voluntary Church Advocate*, 1:2 (April, 1835), 69-77.

⁶⁷⁷ William Jones, *Autobiography of the Late William Jones, M.A.* (London: John Snow, 1846), 125. Emphasis present.

apprenticed as a tailor in Kettering and baptised under the Baptist divine Andrew Fuller,⁶⁷⁸ Wallis was introduced to Campbell's teachings by Jones's magazine while living in Nottingham. Compelled by what he read, he began to obtain more of Campbell's writings, along with other Primitivist works including Henry Grew's controversial work, *Tribute to the Memory of the Apostles* (1832),⁶⁷⁹ directly from America. Inspired, he began his own publishing career by reprinting Grew's *Tribute*,⁶⁸⁰ which had been endorsed by Campbell but chided by Jones as a 'direct attack on the doctrine of the Trinity'.⁶⁸¹ The publication was a success, selling 1000 of 1500 printed copies in less than three months.⁶⁸² Within a few months of Jones's final issue of the *Millennial Harbinger*, Wallis began his own Campbellite magazine, *The Christian Messenger and Reformer*.⁶⁸³ First printed in March 1837, just three months after Wallis's split from the Scotch Baptists, *The Messenger* underwent a series of name changes throughout its long history and is most commonly known as *The British Millennial Harbinger* or *The British Harbinger* but should be viewed as a single continuous publication. The original title was dropped because of a Church of England periodical of the same name.⁶⁸⁴ The magazine became the organ of the British Churches of Christ and remained as such until 1889 when the delegates of the General

⁶⁷⁸ David King, 'On the Life and Death of James Wallis', *The British Harbinger*, 20:7 (July 1867), 222; David M. Thompson, "James Wallis (1793-1867)", in Douglas A. Foster, Paul M. Blowers, et al., eds, *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2004), 768-769.

⁶⁷⁹ Thompson, *Let Sects and Parties Fall*, 20-21.

⁶⁸⁰ Henry Grew, *Tribute to the Memory of the Apostles* (London: G. Wightman, 1836)

⁶⁸¹ William Jones, *Primitive Christianity Illustrated in Thirty Sermons* (London: G. Wightman, 1837), 502.

⁶⁸² *The Christian Messenger and Reformer*, 1:6 (August 1837), 202.

⁶⁸³ *The Christian Messenger and Reformer*, 1:1 (March 1837).

⁶⁸⁴ David King, 'On the Life and Death of James Wallis', *The British Harbinger*, 20:7 (July 1867), 223.

Meeting agreed to establish a replacement publication. Wallis had initiated a new era in Churches of Christ history by publishing a lasting, unifying periodical.

Prior to the 1847 National Meeting, when the conferences became annual, Wallis's *Christian Messenger* was the only mass means of communication serving the British Churches of Christ. The first volume was published by two London printers, as well as others in Nottingham, Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, Beverley, Leicester, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Carlisle, Banbury, Huddersfield, Dunfermline, Stockton-upon-Tees and Wrexham. The following year three additional Scottish publishers were added in the cities of Edinburgh, Glasgow and Dundee.⁶⁸⁵ As is evident from the list, the distribution covered a broad geographic area. In 1845, the magazine began a new series under a slightly different title, *The Christian Messenger and Family Magazine*, but no longer included a long list of publishers, simply saying that it 'may be had of the booksellers in any part of England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales'.⁶⁸⁶ However, this change should not be misunderstood as demonstrating a decline in distribution.

Another means of judging the breadth of the publication may be found by observing the number of various churches that were involved in writing letters to the editor and general readership. In the 1845 volume, letters from twenty-seven different Churches of Christ from throughout the British Isles were printed, while others undoubtedly did not submit letters in time for publication.⁶⁸⁷ Because of space constraints, the omission of letters was common when articles were exceptionally long. Such was the case in the

⁶⁸⁵ Publishers are listed on the title pages of *The Christian Messenger and Reformer*, Vols 1-2 (1837-1838). Cited in Thompson, *Let Sects and Parties Fall*, 24.

⁶⁸⁶ *The Christian Messenger and Family Magazine*, 1:1 (May 1845), title page.

⁶⁸⁷ *The Christian Messenger and Family Magazine*, 1:1 (May 1845), 49, 50; *The Christian Messenger and Family Magazine*, 1:2 (June 1845), 92, 98; *The Christian Messenger and Family Magazine*, 1:4 (August 1845), 193; *The Christian Messenger and Family Magazine*, 1:5 (September 1845), 242, 243; *The Christian Messenger and Family Magazine*, 1:6 (October 1845), 289; *The Christian Messenger and Family Magazine*, 1:7 (November 1845), 337.

January 1847 issue when the editor noted that letters from members of twelve different British Churches of Christ had been received, and six from the United States, as well as various other queries and items of news, but space did not permit their inclusion.⁶⁸⁸ Wallis was unable to publish them because of the ‘unexpected length’ of a sermon by Campbell that stretched over twenty-four pages.⁶⁸⁹ Two years later, when *The Christian Messenger* began collecting funds to sponsor a trip by Alexander Campbell to Britain, a list of financial contributors was published in the May issue. At that time, individuals and churches in thirty-seven different locations had made donations, almost all of whom would have learned about the need by reading the magazine.⁶⁹⁰ When members from the churches throughout Britain met corporately for the first time, forty-two of the known fifty churches were represented and they estimated their total membership at 1300.⁶⁹¹ When this statistic is placed against *The Messenger’s* circulation of 600 per month in 1845,⁶⁹² one can see that this periodical was read by at least forty-six percent of members, not to mention those who possibly passed the magazine along to members who could not afford the subscription. When during their second meeting, 1847, their membership was reported as having risen to 2300,⁶⁹³ no explicit statistic was provided regarding circulation but Wallis did state that he hoped to increase circulation from 1500 to 2000.⁶⁹⁴ Therefore, one may conservatively estimate that *The Messenger* had a circulation of 1000 per month that year. With this

⁶⁸⁸ *The Christian Messenger and Family Magazine*, 3:1 (January 1847), ii.

⁶⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹⁰ *The Christian Messenger and Family Magazine*, 3:4 (April 1847), 193.

⁶⁹¹ *Churches of Christ Yearbook, 1886* (Southport: R. Johnson & Co., 1886), 63.

⁶⁹² *The Christian Messenger and Reformer*, 9:8 (April 1845), 413.

⁶⁹³ *Churches of Christ Yearbook, 1886*, 63.

⁶⁹⁴ *The Christian Messenger and Family Magazine*, 3:12 (December 1847), 574.

in mind, it is clear that *The Messenger* was the most vital means of communication for the British Churches of Christ prior to their adoption of annual National Meetings and a critical influence upon the development of their identity.

The Authority of James Wallis. During his lifetime, the most noted authority among the British Churches of Christ was James Wallis of Nottingham. Although formally uneducated in the ministry, Wallis had sat under the ministry of two influential Protestant Nonconformists, Andrew Fuller (Kettering)⁶⁹⁵ and Robert Hall, Jr (Leicester).⁶⁹⁶ Especially among Baptists, these two men were highly esteemed and noted Evangelical leaders, and both widely published, perhaps inadvertently teaching Wallis the importance of the press. His increasingly strict views of ecclesiology led him to leave first the Particular Baptists and later the Scotch Baptists before becoming the primary publisher, editor, as well as unofficial leader of the Churches of Christ. While Thompson acknowledges the peculiar role of Wallis as the ‘pioneer of the movement’, because of the broad scope of his book he is unable to give due attention to his role as a figure of authority.⁶⁹⁷ As with the Baptists and Congregationalists, the Churches of Christ viewed centralised authority with great suspicion, yet Wallis maintained an unparalleled amount of influence.

The earliest indication of Wallis’s influence among the early Churches is demonstrated by his role in the founding of what later became the Nottingham Church of Christ. Following a theological conflict within the Scotch Baptist congregation, Wallis and his co-labourer, Jonathan Hine, led an exodus out of the church on

⁶⁹⁵ Thompson, “James Wallis (1793-1867)”, *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement*, 768.

⁶⁹⁶ David King, ‘On the Life and Death of James Wallis’, *The British Harbinger*, 20:7 (July 1867), 222.

⁶⁹⁷ Thompson, *Let Sects and Parties Fall*, 22.

Christmas Day 1836.⁶⁹⁸ Accounts of the split and the cause have varied. In a *British Harbinger* (1867) tribute to Wallis's legacy, David King, Churches of Christ national leader, as well as close friend and successor of the pioneer, commented that the split had solely to do with a Scotch Baptist communion controversy, in which Wallis took the more liberal stance.⁶⁹⁹ He repeated this claim a year later in a letter to America.⁷⁰⁰ An alternative account is found in an 1842 letter to a Scotch Baptist church in Liverpool, written by Alfred Booker, co-pastor of the Nottingham Scotch Baptist congregation following Wallis's departure.⁷⁰¹ Booker identified two, primarily theological, reasons for the conflict. First, he characterised Wallis with the most condemning label a Scotch Baptist might bestow upon any Christian: 'an Arminian in the fullest sense'.⁷⁰² Booker did so partly because of Wallis's unorthodox view of faith, especially the absence of any essential role for the Holy Spirit in salvation.⁷⁰³ Secondly, he justly accused Wallis 'and his *followers*'⁷⁰⁴ of adopting baptismal regeneration, the belief that the remission of sins for salvation was dependent upon baptism. It is worth emphasising that it was Booker, not Wallis, who identified the latter as the leader of those who were dismissed. Wallis later published Booker's letter in the *Christian Messenger* along with a personal response, which contains the clearest description of the events and issues surrounding the split.⁷⁰⁵ According to this account, the content of

⁶⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 223.

⁶⁹⁹ *The British Harbinger*, 20:7 (July 1867), 223.

⁷⁰⁰ *The British Harbinger*, 21:11 (November 1868), 374.

⁷⁰¹ *The Christian Messenger and Reformer*, 6:3 (May 1842), 100-101.

⁷⁰² *Ibid.*, 100.

⁷⁰³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 101. Emphasis added.

⁷⁰⁵ *The Christian Messenger and Reformer*, 6:3 (May 1842), 101-103.

the debate had indeed included a baptismal controversy, as well as an argument concerning the role of the Holy Spirit in conversion, both as Booker had stated. Wallis had held the belief that saving faith was a mere intellectual assent, with no necessary involvement of the Holy Spirit. Concerning the conflict, he placed the emphasis on the baptismal controversy, not on his so called ‘Arminian’ assertions. Perhaps he saw this idea of faith as less of an issue than baptism because the former was an idea also common among Scotch Baptists who had inherited it from the Sandemanians. However, King and all the most popular secondary literature ignore this aspect of the split. One of the Nottingham pastors, John Bailey, hoping to avoid division, urged Wallis and the others holding these views, particularly baptismal regeneration, to remain members under the condition that they did not teach the doctrine.⁷⁰⁶ In response, Wallis and the others initially refused either to keep quiet or to leave. Equally divided, Wallis writes that ‘a command was sent to the brethren’, presumably by Bailey, that communion should not be taken under the ‘existing circumstances’, at which stage more than thirty of the estimated sixty to seventy regular attenders withdrew over the next three weeks, but were not dismissed.⁷⁰⁷ A group of the faction formed their own church and Wallis and Hine were chosen to lead. The congregation grew from fourteen members to ninety-seven within a year of their split from the Scotch Baptists.⁷⁰⁸ The majority of these joined by baptism, indicating that they were new converts.⁷⁰⁹ Hine’s election as elder was necessary because both Scotch Baptist and Campbellite teaching emphasised the requirement of a plurality of the office within

⁷⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 101.

⁷⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 101-102.

⁷⁰⁸ *The British Harbinger*, 20:7 (July 1867), 223.

⁷⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

a congregation. In actuality, his role as a leader within the congregation was secondary for all practical purposes, although he was still a respectable figure within the Nottingham church and the movement at large, serving on various committees.⁷¹⁰ Even so, he never matched the influence of Wallis, who became the leading voice of the Churches.

The Christian Messenger and Reformer, and subsequent series, provided the greatest platform for the emergence of James Wallis as the primary domestic authority for the early Churches of Christ in Britain. As editor, it was solely his responsibility to choose what articles were worthy of publication, thus giving him unmatched influence in shaping the theological trajectory of the British movement. From the first issue, his stated purpose in continuing the publication work begun by William Jones was to supply his British audience with the works of Alexander Campbell, the person he considered ‘the ablest writer of the day’.⁷¹¹ After receiving and reviewing Campbell’s complete works directly from America, as well additional writings by other leaders of the movement, he initially estimated that republication of the relevant works would fill only four volumes of the *Christian Messenger*, a calculation greatly underestimated. In the first issue’s introduction Wallis boldly asserted that the republication of these writings would serve ‘to unfold the *meaning of the Scriptures*, to *enlarge the mind of all inquirers after truth*, to impart a *more perfect knowledge of God*, and the nature of *that kingdom which is not of this world*; and thus be the means of *purifying* the hearts of all who *understand and believe* the gospel’.⁷¹² Following this statement, however, he also added a disclaimer disavowing any responsibility for the teachings and

⁷¹⁰ Thompson, *Let Sects and Parties Fall*, 42-43.

⁷¹¹ *The Christian Messenger and Reformer*, 1:1 (March 1837), 1.

⁷¹² *Ibid.*, 2. Emphasis present.

cautioned readers to ‘judge [the essays] for themselves’.⁷¹³ Such a cautious statement must have seemed ironical following such an overwhelming endorsement for Campbell’s writings. Nonetheless, Wallis fills the first volume, twelve issues and 430 pages, with personally chosen articles either written by Campbell or ones that endorsed his teachings.

Wallis wasted no time exerting his editorial influence in shaping the Primitivist nature of the movement in Britain. The first issue of the *Christian Messenger and Reformer* began with a spirited essay by Campbell, in which he urged readers to view themselves as ushering in a new ‘reformation’.⁷¹⁴ As the periodical’s title indicates, Wallis had already adopted the role of a reformer and saw his magazine as an agent of change. According to Campbell, the primary example to follow was John the Baptist,⁷¹⁵ whom he identified as ‘the Harbinger of the Messiah’ and ‘precursor of the period called “the Reformation”’.⁷¹⁶ Here, ‘Reformation’ was not used in its classical sense, but instead to describe the life and ministry of Christ. However, Campbell also used the term to describe various periods of social and/or spiritual renewal throughout history. As a result, examples of reformers identified by Campbell included Peter, Paul, Wycliffe and Luther, as well as Enlightenment thinkers such as Locke, Newton, Franklin and Washington, who exemplified Campbell’s emphasis on free enquiry.⁷¹⁷ The ‘extent’ and ‘means’ of the coming reformation he declined to pursue, focusing

⁷¹³ *Ibid.*

⁷¹⁴ ‘John the Harbinger, or the Character of a Reformer’, *The Christian Messenger and Reformer*, 1:1 (March 1837), 3-8.

⁷¹⁵ Campbell does not use the term ‘John the Baptist’, preferring instead ‘the Harbinger’ or ‘the Immerser’.

⁷¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

⁷¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 6

instead upon the expected character of the reformer, as patterned by John the Baptist.⁷¹⁸ Wanting to emphasise the distinctively Primitivist nature of the movement in the earliest volumes, Wallis included extracts from the clearest summaries on the matter produced by Campbell to date, ‘A Restoration of the Ancient Order of Things’⁷¹⁹ and ‘The Ancient Gospel’.⁷²⁰ Not included were the portions of the essay already reproduced in Jones’s *Millennial Harbinger*. The thirteen instalments were exclusively related to ecclesiology, which was the primary emphasis of Primitivism. While ‘A Restoration of the Ancient Order of Things’ addressed matters of church order and government, particularly with regards to communion, ‘The Ancient Gospel’ dealt exclusively with baptism. Foundational to these teachings was Campbell’s, and likewise Wallis’s, radical biblicism. Campbell, reflecting the anti-credalism of the Enlightenment, opposed the use of creeds and confessions of faith, which was becoming increasingly common among the Nonconformist tradition, both orthodox and otherwise. He exceeded typical Evangelical esteem for the Bible’s unique authority, however, by arguing that the scriptures, particularly the New Testament, were not only sufficient for communicating all things necessary for faith and salvation, but also authoritative in providing an exact outline for church practice. This Primitivist notion, also held by the Scotch Baptists, was clearly illustrated in ‘The Ancient Order of Things’ when Campbell wrote, ‘the word of the apostles shall be the only creed, formula, and directory of faith, worship and christian practice’. ‘The constitution and law of the primitive church’, he continued, ‘shall be the constitution and law of the

⁷¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁷¹⁹ *The Christian Messenger and Reformer*, 1:1 (March 1837), 14; 1:2 (April 1837), 55; 1:3 (May, 1837), 73; 2:11 (January 1839), 386; 2:12 (February 1839), 397; 3:8 (October, 1839), 256.

⁷²⁰ *The Christian Messenger and Reformer*, 1:4 (June 1837), 120; 1:5 (July 1837), 163; 2:7 (September 1838), 236; 2:10 (December 1838), 330; 3:1 (March 1839), 19; 3:3 (May 1839), 102; 3:9 (November 1839), 314.

restored church'. Once the churches had rejected the use of creeds in any 'substance or form', he argued, then they would return to their Apostolic glory, 'united, complete, and happy'.⁷²¹ Within the first three volumes of Wallis's periodical, he had used his editorial power to select essays that plainly presented the Primitivist claims of the Churches of Christ movement in Britain.

Although *The Christian Messenger* largely depended upon the writings of Campbell to educate and inspire the British Churches, Wallis inserted his own material into the periodical and quickly became heard as an authoritative voice by members of the British Churches of Christ. By the second issue, he had expanded his role as editor by devoting a portion of the publication to fielding and responding to queries proposed by the readers, a feature repeated three additional times within the first volume.⁷²² This type of 'question and answer' format was peculiar among Nonconformist periodicals at the time. Initially, Wallis intended to field only questions concerning the published articles, largely using Campbell's own words to respond, but the first instalment included his own answer in addition to one given by Campbell.⁷²³ In time, his personal opinions would become more common. In the tenth issue, Wallis answered the only two proposed questions himself, neither of which concerned published articles. The first query struck at a core precept of the movement and was largely controversial in nature: 'Why do you immerse for the remission of sins, seeing it was not found in the commission which our Lord gave to his apostles?'.⁷²⁴ The question was an overt challenge to the Churches of Christ core tenet of 'baptism for the remission of sins',

⁷²¹ *The Christian Messenger and Reformer*, 1:1 (March 1837), 14.

⁷²² *The Christian Messenger and Reformer*, 1:2 (April 1837), 71; 1:3 (May 1837), 107; 1:8 (October, 1837), 283; 1:10 (December 1837), 360.

⁷²³ *The Christian Messenger and Reformer*, 1:2 (April 1837), 71-72.

⁷²⁴ *The Christian Messenger and Reformer*, 1:10 (December 1837), 360.

and Wallis's decision to answer himself, without referring to Campbell or others, demonstrated a growing confidence in his own ability to make pronouncements upon important issues. In his defence of the controversial belief, he emphasised a plain reading of the Great Commission and the New Testament book of Acts. If a person would simply examine the Great Commission 'in connexion with the Acts of the Apostles, and all the Epistles, he may find the reasons for our conduct'.⁷²⁵ In 1841, a year before the first co-operative meeting, several short letters were sent directly to Wallis by individuals and churches in Huddersfield, Lincolnshire, Manchester, London, Tremadoc (Wales) and Dunamanagh (Ireland), most seeking answers to their theological questions. Wallis, in turn, published the letters, which included some updates on the progress of the movement in those areas, along with his answers, so the other churches might benefit.⁷²⁶ These letters demonstrates a growing recognition within the movement of Wallis's unique position.

Even outside the British Churches of Christ, the perception of Wallis as the primary leader was growing. In 1839, two different men from the Church of England wrote to Wallis describing their desired 'reformation'. In the first letter, the writer dramatically described his life as a 'series of disobedience', and while educated in the doctrines and discipline of the Established Church, he found they were 'utterly unable to afford the slightest protection against the storm of eternal wrath'. His search for 'eternal salvation', he claimed, was 'greatly assisted' by Wallis's *Christian Messenger* and the works of Campbell. The writer concluded: 'I entreat your [Wallis's] assistance that I may become a Christian by immersion into Jesus: after which, I am confident of a

⁷²⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷²⁶ *The Christian Messenger and Reformer*, 5:1 (March 1841), 33-35.

prosperous gale, as I sail upon the troubled waves...to the haven of eternal rest'.⁷²⁷

Wallis's reply instructed the man that before baptism, he must first acknowledge and believe a series of propositions about the person and work of Christ, which he had listed. Only after 'an intelligent belief of these facts', wrote Wallis, could the man be baptised and 'scripturally engrafted into Christ'.⁷²⁸ Two days later, 13 January 1839, the man was baptised by Wallis.⁷²⁹ Internationally Wallis's importance was also recognised. He frequently received and printed letters from American churches, a key fixture of the magazine, in which he was viewed as the primary voice of the movement in Britain. These letters were frequently written by prominent American leaders, such as Campbell, evangelist Walter Scott, and the divisive millenarian John Thomas. On other occasions, unsolicited correspondence from relatively unknown American churches would be received, like one from New York that wished to connect with their 'brethren in the Old World'.⁷³⁰ More than any other person in Britain, Wallis was seen as the primary representative for the Churches of Christ, even by those outside the movement.

Co-operative Meetings. Although the Churches of Christ in Britain had passionately argued against the existence and formation of religious sects, which they believed to be unbiblical divisions in the 'Body of Christ', they nonetheless adopted the common Nonconformist pattern of developing regular co-operative meetings, similar to the association or connexion meetings of other denominations. Initially, there was some opposition to the development. However, under the leadership of Wallis and

⁷²⁷ *The Christian Messenger and Reformer*, 2:12 (February 1839), 423.

⁷²⁸ *Ibid.*, 423-424.

⁷²⁹ *Ibid.*, 426.

⁷³⁰ *The Christian Messenger and Reformer*, 2:8 (October 1838), 276-281.

others, the annual Co-operative Meeting became a distinctive aspect of Church of Christ practice and government in Britain.

It is not surprising that there was some early resistance to increased organisation beyond the local church level, especially to something as formal as connexion-wide conferences. The Scotch Baptists, from whom many of the congregations had emerged, never met in formal associations or connexion-wide meetings. This surely caused some to approach the development more hesitantly than others. After touring many of the churches, one writer observed that some had argued that such an organisation was without scriptural basis, not finding it in the New Testament.⁷³¹ Other congregations, he commented, feared that it would probably create a new ‘order of priests’ or an ecclesiastical hierarchy.⁷³² The opposition was understandable. From the beginning, the movement had stressed anti-sectarianism and unity as foundational to Primitive Christianity. In the first issue of the *Christian Messenger* (1837), Wallis included an essay in which Campbell had mocked Baptists for being ‘extremely fond of annual associations and advisory councils’ and Methodists for their ‘Conference of Clergy’.⁷³³ In fact, the first volume included at least seven articles addressing Christian unity and its antitheses, sectarianism and schism.⁷³⁴ For the Churches of Christ, ‘unity’ was not simply the absence of conflict within and among congregations, but the abolition of denominations, because, as Campbell argued, ‘If a kingdom be torn by factions, that kingdom cannot subsist’. The Co-operative Meeting, some feared, might undermine this essential principle.

⁷³¹ *The Christian Messenger and Reformer*, 5:9 (November 1841), 361.

⁷³² *Ibid.*

⁷³³ *The Christian Messenger and Reformer*, 1:1 (March 1837), 7.

⁷³⁴ *The Christian Messenger and Reformer*, 1:4 (June 1837), 109; 1:6 (August 1837), 188; 1:8 (October 1837), 260, 284; 1:11 (January 1838), 391; 1:12 (February 1838), 408, 421.

The early hesitancy was neither universal nor insurmountable. In actuality, Campbell, while cautious, was not completely opposed to organisational structure beyond the local churches. He, himself, had been involved with associations while a Baptist, including membership with the Redstone Baptist Association in western Pennsylvania. He even held co-operative meetings in 1831 and 1832, merging his followers with the ‘Christian Churches’ of Barton Stone.⁷³⁵ Consequently, similar association meetings were held in the United States throughout the 1830s and beyond among members of the Campbell-Stone Movement. Furthermore, the anti-sectarian emphasis of the *Christian Messenger* declined sharply after the first volume. Articles explicitly dealing with the issue occurred only four times in the second volume (1838),⁷³⁶ twice in the third (1839)⁷³⁷ and none in the fourth (1840). Not until 1842 did Wallis himself directly address this issue of instituting a formal gathering. In April of that year he published, along with his own comments, extracts from the minutes of a ‘general meeting of messengers’ held in Wellsburg, Virginia, in which thirteen American Restoration churches met to correct what had been ‘wanting to the good order of the congregations’, namely ‘aid and co-operation’.⁷³⁸ This event was not recent news from the States. In fact, the Wellsburg meeting had taken place eight years earlier. Wallis had included the report ‘for the purpose of ascertaining if a similar meeting to that mentioned could be convened’,⁷³⁹ as well as provide an example to the British

⁷³⁵ D. Newell Williams, ‘Barton Warren Stone’ in Douglas A. Foster, Paul M. Blowers, *et al.*, eds, *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2004), 715-716.

⁷³⁶ *The Christian Messenger and Reformer*, 2:2 (April 1838), 42; 2:3 (May 1838), 80; 2:5 (July 1838), 157, 159.

⁷³⁷ *The Christian Messenger and Reformer*, 3:3 (May 1839), 79; 3:8 (October 1839), 259.

⁷³⁸ *The Christian Messenger and Reformer*, 6:2 (April 1842), 56.

⁷³⁹ *Ibid.*, 55.

churches of what such a meeting might involve. Although he left the decision of forming the meeting in the hands of his readers and churches, Wallis was clearly in favour of adopting the practice. Firmly, with the tone of one in charge, he urged congregations to send him letters expressing their opinion on the matter: ‘Let it be understood, then, that such letters will be expected, ... after which, if the editor finds them sufficiently encouraging, he will submit, through the following *Messenger*, proposals as to time, place, and other details’.⁷⁴⁰ Their consideration of the matter, he went on to say, would be ‘intimately connected with their own happiness, and the prosperity of the cause of truth and righteousness in the world’.⁷⁴¹ Clearly, there was strong support for organising.

The urgent calling of the British churches to co-operate was not confined to Wallis but was actually driven by the evangelistic zeal of others. The idea of partnership among the churches first emerged from the congregations themselves. William Thompson of Edinburgh and ‘E.A’ (presumably E. Allenby) of Lincoln sent letters to Wallis in February 1840, pleading for ministerial assistance.⁷⁴² Thompson noted that he was aware of seventy recent converts, twenty-three from Dundee that he had just been made aware of that day.⁷⁴³ ‘I have no doubt that the brethren in this country could uphold two evangelists’, he wrote, ‘sowing the seed and planting churches in every place.’ ‘Can such an arrangement be made?’, he hopefully concluded.⁷⁴⁴ Assistance would come, but not immediately from Wallis. Instead, the help Thompson had sought came from the leader of the Dundee converts that he had

⁷⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴² *The Christian Messenger and Reformer*, 4:1 (March 1840), 38

⁷⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

previously mentioned, G.C. Reid. Reid had been minister of the ‘United Christian Church’, an independent, Evangelical congregation, similar to, but in no way connected with, the Methodists. Originally trained by his father as a hairdresser and ‘perfumer’, Reid had been converted to Calvinistic Methodism in 1825, as a young adult. He later joined an ‘undenominational’ church while in Liverpool, and upon being invited to pastor an already established church of about three hundred members, returned to Dundee in 1837. In the autumn of 1839, after being convinced by his own study of the New Testament that baptism was intended for believers alone, he was immersed by a Scotch Baptist elder and, in turn, baptised his remaining followers.⁷⁴⁵ It is unclear how Reid became acquainted with *The Christian Messenger*, but by January 1840 he was corresponding with Wallis,⁷⁴⁶ and in addition to ministering at his own church, had already begun preaching around Scotland, including Glasgow, Kilsyth and Partick.⁷⁴⁷ He made such an impression at the King Street Church (Church of Christ, Glasgow) that one of its leaders, J. Gowans, wrote to Wallis urging that measures ‘instantly be adopted’ that would provide a way for Reid to be secured as a full-time evangelist in Scotland.⁷⁴⁸ His letter closed, ‘Oh that we had a hundred such heralds to proclaim these glad tidings to the deluded people!’⁷⁴⁹ Wallis responded to the passionate request with regret, noting that it would be financially impossible considering the ‘present state of our immediate connexions’.⁷⁵⁰ Despite the lack of funds, Reid continued his

⁷⁴⁵ *The Christian Messenger and Reformer*, 4:7 (September 1840), 240-241; Anonymous, *George C. Reid: Our First Evangelist* (Southport: Powell & Green Printers, 1885), 4-7.

⁷⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 240.

⁷⁴⁷ *The Christian Messenger and Reformer*, 4:4 (June 1840), 144-145.

⁷⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 145.

⁷⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

evangelistic efforts, embarking upon a ten-month tour in July 1840, and just one month after his return, a second lengthy tour that took him as far south as London.⁷⁵¹ While preaching in the north of Scotland, Reid addressed an open letter to ‘To the Faithful Disciples of Jesus Christ Throughout England and Scotland’ (19 November 1841), in which he presented his assessment of the churches.⁷⁵² Published immediately in *The Christian Messenger*, the letter also included three suggestions for their continued progress, the last of which specifically called for the development of a ‘correct and co-operative plan’ for the continuation of evangelistic efforts around Britain. Within four months of Reid’s public prompting, and after numerous pleas for evangelistic assistance, Wallis had called for the first ‘Co-Operative Meeting’, in hopes that it might ‘enable [the churches] to diffuse the ancient gospel over the length and breadth of the land’.⁷⁵³ Wallis may have made the official motion, but Reid and others had urged him to do so.

In the months proceeding the conference, measures were taken to ease the hesitancy of the sceptical. Although never discussed, Wallis clearly limited his visible involvement so as not to appear as wielding too much power. Extracts from letters by churches affirming the meeting were published,⁷⁵⁴ and an additional plea was made by Reid,⁷⁵⁵ who by this point had visited most of the known churches. Consequently, most correspondence from the *Messenger* came through John Frost, Wallis’s capable assistant and fellow member of the Nottingham congregation. After two months of requesting feedback and commitments from the churches, twenty-one letters had been

⁷⁵¹ *George C. Reid: Our First Evangelist*, 12-13.

⁷⁵² *The Christian Messenger and Reformer*, 5:10 (December 1841), 357-362.

⁷⁵³ *The Christian Messenger and Reformer*, 6:2 (April 1842), 55.

⁷⁵⁴ *The Christian Messenger and Reformer*, 6:4 (June 1842), 143-146.

⁷⁵⁵ *The Christian Messenger and Reformer*, 6:3 (May 1842), 105.

received, with only one expressing disapproval of the meeting. In June, with only one month before the details were to be issued, Frost published an additional request for replies from the churches, attempting also to calm any fears of sectarianism. Therein, he proposed that subjects of secondary theological importance, such as communion controversies and local church leadership, should not be addressed. These had been matters that had plagued the Scotch Baptists. Instead, ‘consultation’ would only be made on issues that affected the churches as a whole. Following these guidelines, he assured churches they ‘need not fear a “synod” or a “Methodist conference”’.⁷⁵⁶

Initially it had been proposed by Reid to hold two different meetings, one in Edinburgh and the other in Nottingham, to ease travel burdens and attract more attenders,⁷⁵⁷ but when the official invitation and details were published in July, the decision had been made to hold only a single joint meeting in Edinburgh. According to the circular letter, ‘several’ Nottingham elders had denied the request to hold a gathering there for reasons they ‘need not mention’.⁷⁵⁸ Since Wallis was clearly the most influential elder in the church, it is unlikely that this decision was made without his consent. The decision was most likely the result of Wallis not wishing the Nottingham congregation, nor himself, to be perceived as privileged or more authoritative. If any individual or church was still concerned about the nature of the meeting, Wallis reassured his readers that their purpose was to discuss the means and manner of achieving a ‘more enlarged and effectual proclamation of the gospel’. ‘Let it be distinctly understood’, Wallis continued, ‘that any brother who feels sufficient interest to induce him to attend, is as much entitled to take a part in the proceeding as the messenger who may be sent by the

⁷⁵⁶ *The Christian Messenger and Reformer*, 6:4 (June 1842), 143.

⁷⁵⁷ *The Christian Messenger and Reformer*, 6:3 (May 1842), 106-107.

⁷⁵⁸ *The Christian Messenger and Reformer*, 6:5 (July 1842), 176.

churches'.⁷⁵⁹ In other words, no delegated authority by the churches existed in the meeting and each attender could act upon his own conscience. Great lengths had been made by the leadership to alleviate all concerns.

The first 'Co-Operative Meeting', as it was called, which was held just four months after Wallis's proposal, 18-19 August 1842, established an initial pattern for future combined Churches of Christ work that placed evangelism at its core. According to the official report, organisers were surprised by the high attendance considering 'the short time the cause of reformation has been pleaded in this country', and especially since most participants had emerged from denominations that practised the 'horrors of such schemes' such as 'conferences', 'synods' and 'general assemblies'.⁷⁶⁰ The statistics concerning the meeting were conflicting. At first, Wallis noted there had been forty messengers present and forty-three total congregations representing themselves either in person or through letter, but he did not mention attendance.⁷⁶¹ When the official report was published, however, it was estimated there were about fifty in total attendance, including only twenty-three messengers representing fifteen churches and a visitor from America.⁷⁶² This account confirmed that there were forty-three churches accounted for, but also mentioned eight other known churches that failed to send statistics and possibly two hundred individuals in various Welsh congregations. Based on those reporting, the Churches of Christ membership numbered 1,233.⁷⁶³ The first order of business was to appoint a chairperson, or 'president', John Davies of Mollington (Cheshire), and two secretaries.

⁷⁵⁹ *The Christian Messenger and Reformer*, 6:5 (July 1842), 177.

⁷⁶⁰ *The Christian Messenger and Reformer*, 6:8 (October 1842), 279.

⁷⁶¹ *The Christian Messenger and Reformer*, 6:7 (September 1842), 247-248.

⁷⁶² *The Christian Messenger and Reformer*, 6:8 (October 1842), 279-282.

⁷⁶³ *Ibid.*, 282.

Once the meeting was ‘organized’ and participants had engaged in a brief period of worship, the next act of business was to make a statistical account of the churches, including reports on the ‘general condition of the churches’, followed by a statement from the president. Discussion then ensued on ‘the question of co-operation – whether the churches of Jesus Christ ought to untie their means and efforts for the maintenance of evangelists’. The dialogue prompted the passing of the most important official resolution of the entire meeting, and undergirded the parameters for co-operation: ‘*Resolved* – That this meeting deem it binding upon them, as disciples of Jesus Christ, to co-operate for the maintenance of evangelists to proclaim the gospel’. In other words, the churches would now formally and co-operatively support the work of vocational evangelists like Reid, which had been the key motivation for establishing such a meeting in the first place. Following this decision, six additional resolutions were passed by the messengers. Each dealt with the practicalities of the first decision, including the formation of a financial oversight committee, which consisted entirely of elders from Nottingham, home of Wallis and the *Messenger*, and by far the most influential of the connexion’s churches. Although not included in the official report, Wallis later noted that the messengers had also decided to employ another evangelist in the near future, in addition to Reid.⁷⁶⁴ It was later announced that William Thomson of Edinburgh had accepted the position.⁷⁶⁵ It was apparent that home mission was at the heart of their initial co-operative efforts.

The next Co-Operative Meeting was not held until 1847, five years after the first, and during the interim the movement frequently faced challenges. Just months after describing the ‘unanimity of heart’ and ‘catholic christian charity’ that

⁷⁶⁴ *The Christian Messenger and Reformer*, 6:7 (September 1842), 248.

⁷⁶⁵ *The Christian Messenger and Reformer*, 7:1 (March 1843), 38.

characterised the first conference, Wallis was considerably less optimistic about the state of co-operation when he urged ‘more frequent interchange’ and ‘more united co-operation’, which had been thwarted by obsession with ‘human opinions and dogmas’. ‘Some brethren’, he continued, ‘cannot visit where the church does not use teetotal wine at the table of the Lord; others contend for the use of unleavened bread; others would not give a shilling for the support of the evangelists’.⁷⁶⁶ Additionally, the meeting scheduled for 1843 was deemed unnecessary by the churches because there was nothing of ‘sufficient importance’ to be discussed, but John Frost, in his announcement of the cancellation in the *Messenger*, urged churches to renew their commitment to the Evangelists’ Fund which the previous meeting had established. ‘During the past year’, he announced, ‘there has not been quite so much contributed to the evangelists’ fund, as was estimated at the Edinburgh meeting’.⁷⁶⁷ Not only was no meeting scheduled for 1844, but George Reid, the movement’s first and most active evangelist, was forced to resign due to his failing health. That same year evangelist William Thomsom also resigned,⁷⁶⁸ leaving only George Greenwell of Bedlington, who had been hired the previous year.⁷⁶⁹ The fledgling movement had struggled to maintain its initial unifying zeal.

When the second meeting commenced at Chester, 1847, it began a period of unbroken annual meetings that lasted until 1940, during which the conferences gradually began to take action beyond the mere support of evangelists. That year, Alexander Campbell, who had toured Britain for several months upon request, was

⁷⁶⁶ *The Christian Messenger and Reformer*, 7:4 (May 1843), 102; Thompson, *Let Sects and Parties Fall*, 36.

⁷⁶⁷ *The Christian Messenger and Reformer*, 7:6 (March 1843), 38

⁷⁶⁸ *The Christian Messenger and Reformer*, 9:8 (April 1845), 409-410.

⁷⁶⁹ Thompson, *Let Sects and Parties Fall*, 36.

unanimously made president of the meeting. His carefully chosen words were used to appeal to both the independent spirit of the churches and their co-operative nature: ‘The Church of Christ is one grand community. It is a community of communities’.⁷⁷⁰ Messengers from twenty-six churches were represented, including five from Wales and one from Ireland. When statistics were calculated to include absent churches as well, there were eighty churches and 2,300 members.⁷⁷¹ When the business portion of the meeting commenced, the breadth of subjects considered was greater than before. The first general decision approved by the messengers was to begin partially financing the *Christian Messenger*, which had been published independently for ten years by Wallis at an overall financial loss. The churches did not suggest a total underwriting of the periodical, but they recognised Wallis’s ‘onerous labours’ and felt it ‘highly improper’ for him to lose money.⁷⁷² It is worth noting, however, that authority over the *Christian Messenger* may not have been seen as belonging to Wallis, as evidenced by a resolution which formally requested that he should continue as editor, as if the magazine was not autonomous.⁷⁷³ Thereafter, a complaint was raised concerning one church’s acceptance of a member ‘whom another church had expelled’, at which time Campbell was requested to reply to the issue. His remarks, which were recorded in the official report, declared the receiving church had acted disrespectfully to its sister congregation and it should be ‘renounced as a sister church’ by the others. His comments were received with ‘satisfaction’, and led to numerous additional questions

⁷⁷⁰ *The Christian Messenger and Family Magazine*, 3:11 (November 1847), 494.

⁷⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 519.

⁷⁷² *Ibid.*, 497.

⁷⁷³ *Ibid.*, 499.

being referred to Campbell for ‘consultation’.⁷⁷⁴ This was the first time the meeting was used as an advisory-style board, involved in the workings of local congregations. The thirteen resolutions passed at Chester were almost double the number of the first meeting. Most of these either reaffirmed the co-operative evangelism plan or considered how it might be improved. With less than £200 in reserve, the financially struggling churches donated £100 to Campbell’s Bethany College (West Virginia), while only giving £79 to ‘the maintenance of a general evangelist’.⁷⁷⁵ The messengers then established a committee dedicated to defend Campbell against pending legal charges in Scotland. He had been sued for libel after denying that slavery was unbiblical and later arrested for ten days in Glasgow.⁷⁷⁶ Although evangelistic efforts were the central theme of the meeting, business had expanded to include a variety of other interests.

Future meetings demonstrate that the annual conferences continued to adopt a more developed structure and dealt with issues beyond evangelism. During the 1848 meeting at Glasgow, messengers exercised their authority over who might serve as a delegate by excluding the messenger from Lincoln, Dr John Thomas, for ‘being a stranger from another country and not acknowledged by our brethren’.⁷⁷⁷ Thomas, born and educated as a doctor in Britain before emigrating to America, had separated from the American Restoration Movement following numerous well documented theological conflicts with Campbell. After founding the Christadelphians, his own antitrinitarian Primitivist sect, he travelled to Britain in search of additional followers.

⁷⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 498.

⁷⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 499; see also Thompson, *Let Sects and Parties Fall*, 41-42.

⁷⁷⁷ *The British Millennial Harbinger*, 1:11 (November 1848), 531.

A radical millenarian, he was known as a schismatic, but had been a frequent, though controversial, contributor to the *Christian Messenger*. After the messengers had already deemed his presence out of order, the following day the issue was raised again, at which point the attenders collectively agreed ‘that all motions made...be made by delegates only’.⁷⁷⁸ In Response to the conflict, it was then decided that a five-member Committee on Difficulties be appointed ‘to take into consideration any difficulties that may arise and report to the meeting’.⁷⁷⁹ The third day, when the issues surrounding Thomas’s presence were again raised, the committee voted and confirmed, with a single vote of dissent, his exclusion. In business concerning the increasingly developed structure of the Churches of Christ, the Glasgow meeting saw fit to arrange the churches into regional districts that would occasionally meet together ‘for the promotion of a more efficient co-operation in missionary and all other purposes’.⁷⁸⁰ District meetings were initially held in London, Newcastle-on-Tyne and Fife, and the following year in Lancashire.⁷⁸¹ At the annual meeting held in Sunderland (1849), the structural developments were affirmed by the churches in their yearly reports and congregations were encouraged to continue the forming of ‘associations’ for the purpose of ‘closer union and co-operation in the work of reformation’.⁷⁸² The Churches of Christ annual meeting was no longer just concerned with raising money for itinerant evangelists.

As the organisation developed, steps were taken to prevent it from becoming too powerful and usurping the authority of the local congregations. At the London

⁷⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 529.

⁷⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸¹ *The British Millennial Harbinger*, 2:7 (July 1849), 323-324.

⁷⁸² *Ibid.*, 320-321.

meeting (1851), resolutions were passed which outlined the parameters of their collaboration. The churches were to recognise that the organisation existed for ‘evangelization, and disclaims all intention of forming a body having power’, and the messengers had no ‘power to hear or settle matters of discipline, or differences existing between brethren or churches’.⁷⁸³ Also those churches that wished to join the union were to be recommended by another church and contribute to the Evangelist Fund quarterly.⁷⁸⁴ When, in 1853, some suggested the formation of a General Sick Fund, the messengers were hesitant to expand and recommended that provisions be made on the local level.⁷⁸⁵ When the Annual Meeting met in Leicester (1861), resolutions were passed, once more, that defined the parameters of co-operation among the Churches of Christ and rejected ‘any intention or desire to recognise themselves as a denomination’. Their ‘objective’ remained ‘evangelization only’ and disputes between churches or individuals would be heard only as they related to their association with the Annual Meeting.⁷⁸⁶ The Annual Meeting had taken significant steps to limit its own power.

The desire to spread their particular faith by organising their efforts led the various independent Churches of Christ to form the Annual Co-operative Meeting. At the forefront, its purpose had always been to find means to evangelise Britain. Although there were occasions that the messengers exercised some limited power in the resolutions passed or actions taken, little authority was ever held over the local churches. It cannot be convincingly argued, however, that the Churches of Christ did not develop a formal structure similar to those of other free church denominations at

⁷⁸³ *The British Millennial Harbinger*, 4 (August 1851), 371.

⁷⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸⁵ *The British Millennial Harbinger*, 6 (September 1853), 417.

⁷⁸⁶ *The British Millennial Harbinger*, 14 (September 1861), 464.

the time, especially in their use of committees, districts and vocational evangelists. Likewise, in regards to organisational structure, there was little that distinguished the Churches of Christ from the numerous Baptist and Congregationalist unions, associations and connexions of the nineteenth century.

Conclusion. From the earliest publication of the *Christian Messenger*, its central purpose was the propagation of the ‘ancient gospel’ throughout Britain, which became the theme of the Churches of Christ as a whole, and particularly their co-operative efforts. Their leading voice had been James Wallis, the most influential individual of the movement during the nineteenth century. As publisher of the *Christian Messenger* and its subsequent titles, he controlled the dissemination of information and the direction of theological discourse. The magazine was a powerful tool and distributed carefully selected essays, largely by Alexander Campbell, throughout Britain, and unified Churches of Christ belief. Wallis, who emerged from the Scotch Baptists, was deeply entrenched in Christian Primitivism, especially in matters of ecclesiology, and encouraged similar teaching in his magazines. Unlike his predecessors, he maintained flexibility of belief, providing a voice for alternative views, but when controversy did arise, he never hesitated to offer his influential opinion. Truth, he believed, would prevail and churches throughout Britain, and ultimately the world, would be unified during a global ‘reformation’. Wallis believed his publications existed as an organ for that very purpose.

While Baptists had met together in association and connexions, and Congregationalists in their unions, it was the Annual Co-operation Meeting that organised the Churches of Christ together with the goal of home evangelization, though the Churches would never have drawn a comparison between their meetings and those of the other nonconforming free churches. The annual conference was not meant to

form a judicial body or advisory committee for the churches, which would wield authority over local congregations. Such a thought was contrary to the Churches of Christ understanding of unity and antisectionarianism. Instead, resolutions were generally reserved for passing measures to promote their faith more efficiently. While the Annual Meeting expanded and became more complex, it was never seen as authoritative. Although the Annual Meeting became the organisational structure behind the Churches of Christ, what began as a means to provide financial support for vocational evangelists in Britain, continued to place co-operation for evangelism as it fundamental tenet.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Conclusion

In the wake of the Evangelical Awakening, many of the Nonconformist traditions that had embraced the revival also experienced an evolution in their ecclesiastical structure. The shift was most clearly demonstrated in the emergence of associations and connexions during the final third of the eighteenth century. Although associations, in particular, had also been present among seventeenth-century British Dissenters, they had fallen into decline. On the rare occasions when associations continued to meet before the Evangelical Awakening, the primary goals were to share fellowship or to act as an advisory council. When a resurgence of associationalism occurred following the Awakening, the new groups acted to establish pragmatic agencies like missionary societies, educational boards and social charities, which required new expressions of authority. Understanding where or with whom this authority was located has been the chief objective of this study.

Hampshire Congregational Union. Although the association was established largely for fraternal reasons in 1781 and initially had emphasised preaching and fellowship, the members reconstituted themselves in 1797 under the leadership of David Bogue, with the goal of ‘spreading the Gospel through every part of Hampshire’.⁷⁸⁷ Maintaining this end as the driving motivation, the HCU structure grew more complex and by 1802 it was financially supporting its own itinerant evangelists. As the ministry expanded, further evangelists were hired and additional benevolent endeavours were added, such as financial assistance for chapel construction and

⁷⁸⁷ MS Minutes of the Association of Protestant Dissenting Ministers, 5 April 1797, Hampshire Records Office [HRO], Winchester, 127M94/1.

renovation. The expansions required the formation of new committees to oversee the various projects, and therefore broadened the authority of the association by placing more responsibilities under its direction.

David Bogue, pastor and tutor at Gosport, demonstrated more authority than any other individual in the HCU. This was especially the case in regard to the Evangelical character of the group, which he had helped to establish. Bogue not only led the churches to reorganise for the sake of missions in 1797, but the ministers also chose him as one of two representatives at the formation of the Missionary Society, which in turn, chose him to educate all of its missionaries, more than two hundred. Bogue's authority was grounded in his Evangelical zeal and his motivational leadership rather than forceful decision-making. Likewise, he was never considered as an authoritarian who controlled the churches, nor was he the instigator of any theological controversy. Instead, his authority was found in his ability to motivate the churches and their ministers to adopt his passionate concern for domestic and foreign missions.

There were very few times when the HCU exercised more than a limited amount of authority over individuals or churches. Out of necessity, as the association grew during the nineteenth century, it was sometimes practical for committees and occasionally individuals to act on behalf of the whole, such as in the supervision of the itinerants, but major decisions that affected the whole body were taken before the entire group and the annual meeting. As an autonomous entity itself, the Association also maintained the authority to determine its own membership, which no doubt minimised controversy, and because the Evangelical character of the group was evident to others through the publication of periodicals and circular letters, heterodox ministers and churches would have sought co-operation from elsewhere. In 1813, the structure of the HCU was altered in such a way that additional authority was given to the Executive

Committee that carried out the duties of the organisation between annual meetings. Because a church's number of representatives depended upon its donation to the Association, the wealthier and larger congregations had greater influence. Still, authority was never lorded over the co-operating congregations. The mission of the group remained the unifying feature of the voluntarily associating churches.

Lancashire Congregational Union. The authority of the Lancashire Congregational Union was exercised primarily through actions taken during its Annual Meeting. Even though the organisation was not founded until 1806, it still reflected the influence of the Evangelical Awakening, especially in the spiritual emphases of the meetings. The gatherings were far from mere business meetings as the mornings began early with prayer meetings and sermons were scattered throughout the rest of the day. This is not to say that there was an absence of practical matters, for the LCU was highly organised, but even the pragmatic business was typically related to evangelistic causes. For example, on an annual basis, the most common theme of business concerned the employment and management of itinerant evangelists. In fact, by the second annual gathering, the first two itinerants were already hired. Unlike those employed by the Hampshire Congregational Union, these evangelists reported directly to the Annual Meeting, where they were required to give an annual account of their ministry. Likewise, they were to be visited annually by a representative chosen during the Annual Meeting by the Executive Committee, those who maintained the work of the Association between the meetings. The HCU, instead, placed the authority to supervise with the churches in the geographical vicinity of the itinerant. Rarely was the LCU observed acting as the authoritative voice of the congregations, but exceptions existed, such as a few instances when parliament was petitioned on behalf of the churches. The Association, however, typically deferred to the individual congregations.

The focus of the organisation, from the time of its founding, was co-operation for the sake of itinerancy.

The motivational factor in the development of the LCU was also its fundamental leader, William Roby. He, more so than any other individual, was the central personality and motivator among the partnering churches, and as such, he carried the greatest influence and authority. His ability to organise, as well as his tireless itinerancy, was carried over from his contact with the Methodists and his service in Lady Huntingdon's Connexion. Both influences contributed to the development of the religious enthusiasm that he worked to spread among the Lancashire Independents.

Lancashire Baptists. The Yorkshire and Lancashire Baptist Association (YLBA) and the later Lancashire and Cheshire Baptist Association (LCBA) maintained a much more complex structure than many of the other contemporary associations and connexions. The annual meetings were very uniform, but this prevented each event from becoming monopolised by what was considered nonessential theological debate, which had plagued earlier associations in Lancashire. Matters of business and debate were confined to specific times over the course of the gathering. The distinguishing marks of the meetings were the significant amounts of time spent participating in spiritual activities such as prayer, preaching and singing. Four, and occasionally five, sermons were preached over a two-day period. Worship services that were open to the public frequently attracted great crowds that could not fit into host chapels. Since theological debate had been purposefully minimised, purity was measured through the use of annual letters from the churches, which updated the Association on congregational health. On occasions these reports were used to request prayer or even advice on behalf of the congregations, but they were also used by the organisation to

evaluate theological orthodoxy and spiritual zeal. Most associations and connexions eventually read publicly and later distributed circular letters to communicate with co-operating churches, but the YLBA and LCBA did so in a way that made the essays applicable to Christians outside their associations as well. Although the first two letters dealt with Baptist church order, the vast majority of those that followed would have appealed to a broad variety of Evangelicals. Circulars dealing with revival or evangelism were particularly popular and included titles like *The Means of Reviving and Promoting Religion* (1795), *Thoughts on the Revival of Religion* (1802), *The Necessity of Attempting a More Extensive Spread of the Gospel at Home* (1818), *The Means of Revival* (1832), *The Best Means of Reviving the Piety of our Churches* (1847) and *The Lessons of Recent Revivals of Religion* (1860). Clearly, the emphasis of the two associations was on the broad dissemination of Evangelical religion and not rigid doctrinal uniformity. In fact, any doctrinal controversy that did arise, dealt with the minority becoming increasingly strict rather than more liberal. In order to accomplish its evangelistic initiatives, increased structure was added, resulting in the founding of Horton Academy, auxiliaries, committees and special funds to help meet the challenge. The most authoritative individual of the two groups was John Fawcett. When the YLBA was established, primarily under his leadership, he led his fellow ministers to adopt a format and attitude that reflected the co-operative spirit of the Evangelical Awakening, not for the sake of piety alone but also for the successful advance of the gospel.

New Connexion of General Baptists. Unlike the Congregationalists and other British Baptists, the New Connexion of General Baptists was the product of New Dissent. In many ways the group reflected its Methodist roots as much as its Baptist ones, especially in ecclesiastical practices. The New Connexion was revivalistic,

stressed itinerancy and held to orthodox Arminianism. Likewise, during the era of Dan Taylor (1770-1816), the group also revolved around him as an authoritative personality, similar to the Methodists' relationship with John Wesley or Jabez Bunting.

Theologically, the authoritative extra-biblical document for measuring uniformity and orthodoxy was the *Six Articles of Religion* (1770),⁷⁸⁸ written by Taylor. At first, in order to be admitted into the New Connexion, ministers were required to subscribe to the document. However, by 1775, just five years after the founding, it was determined that a minister's personal testimony of conversion would suffice, thus making a conversion narrative authoritative proof of orthodoxy. Even so, the *Six Articles* remained the official doctrinal statement of the Connexion into the second half of the nineteenth century. The affirmation of the *Articles* and the public recounting of conversion were both means of assuring the Evangelical identity of the members. Doctrinal purity was a central concern of the New Connexion and was the motivating factor for separating from the old connexion of General Baptists. As a result, the Annual Association was more involved in the business of the individual congregations than among most Baptists or Independents. Pastors were urged to guard their pulpits from the Calvinists and the heterodox, though attitudes towards Calvinism relaxed during the Victorian period. Similarly, the ministers were admonished to maintain a high standard of membership, and several resolutions were passed concerning individual piety. The authority of the New Connexion was intentionally used to secure purity of faith and action on denominational and local levels.

The structure of the New Connexion reflected the influence the Methodists had over its organisation. From early on, co-operating churches gathered at least quarterly, sometimes monthly, into regional conferences, such as the Midland and Leicestershire

⁷⁸⁸ MS Minutes of the General Assembly of the New Connexion, 6-8 June 1770, Archives, Angus Library, Regent's Park College, Oxford.

Conferences. These gatherings decided preaching schedules and circuits, as well as evangelistic strategies. They also acted as an advisory board to the ministers and churches, which greatly contributed to the authority of the Conferences. However, as the regional gatherings ceased to act in an advisory manner during the mid-nineteenth century, the authority of the gatherings was lost. Beyond the regional meetings, the New Connexion gathered for Annual Associations, which representatives of all the co-operating churches throughout the country could attend. Even more so than the Conferences, the yearly meetings acted as an advisory council, led by the chairman, who maintained a great amount of influence over the meetings due to the fact that all proposed business was to be submitted to him for prioritisation. With the exception of twice, Dan Taylor held the office for forty-six consecutive years, further reinforcing his vast influence over the Connexion. During that period, he opened an academy to train New Connexion ministers and wrote prolifically, both of which solidified his authority further. After his death, leadership of the New Connexion was widely distributed, and no single individual replaced him.

Scotch Baptists. More so than any of the other Nonconformist groups of this study, the Scotch Baptists were led by a single figure. Archibald McLean established and directed the connexion until his death, and while a small number of congregations survived, the group was weakened substantially by his absence. The small sect adamantly denied having any other authority than scripture that could be easily understood through a plain reading of the text. McLean advanced a peculiar brand of Calvinistic theology and set of practices, clearly adopted from the Glasites, including an intellectualist view of faith. Whenever doctrinal controversy emerged over issues such as Sabellianism, McLean was the figure who responded in person and in writing. His authority was not absolute and he was not always followed blindly. Those who

disagreed, though, left the connexion rather than McLean changing. By the 1790s, McLean had developed a form of missional theology that led him to believe that the Scotch churches should support the foreign missionary endeavours of the Baptist Missionary Society (Particular Baptist). This is the only instance where McLean is known to have co-operated outside the Scotch Baptists. He did so, in part, because the Baptist Missionary Society was highly involved in Bible translation, and he believed that if a person was to read plainly the scripture in his or her native language then the natural result would be a conversion and the adoption of Scotch Baptist principles, which he believed to be a pure representation of the church that Christ had intended. McLean's influence was found in all aspects of Scotch Baptist beliefs. The connexion held no annual meetings, which prevented a setting where another individual might have ascended to an authoritative position, and as there were no circular letters to distribute various views, McLean's writings were by far the most important means of transmitting Scotch Baptist views.

The adherence by Scotch Baptists to radical unanimity was itself, an authoritative concept. In this custom the Scotch Baptists were unique when compared to the other five associations of this study. Total agreement was necessary for any church's admission into the connexion. This practice also demonstrated the authority of the Edinburgh church, even after the death of McLean, because potential congregations had to win first the approval of the mother church and then the connexion as a whole. Equally important to these churches was the exercise of discipline, an essential characteristic, it was believed, of a true church. When a church lacked discipline, it was no longer considered a legitimate congregation. Therefore, when a congregation broke the Scotch Baptist custom of only sharing the Lord's Supper in the presence of two elders, the church was excluded if it would not comply.

Insistence upon unanimity and discipline was vital. Failure to have multiple elders when administering the Lord's Supper, or not adhering to commonly accepted practices could lead to expulsion from the connexion.

Churches of Christ. The Churches of Christ in Great Britain were part of a larger Primitivist movement, along with the Scotch Baptists and the earlier Glasites. In fact, the emergence of the group may be traced to the Scotch Baptists, the unintended influence of William Jones in particular, and the writings of Alexander Campbell. Authority within this group was varied and found expressions in multiple sources. The *Christian Messenger and Reformer*, as well as its subsequent titles, was the organ by which the group's doctrine was disseminated. The monthly publication acted as the primary unifying force before the congregations developed an associational structure. The authority of the periodical was based on the fact that it was the sole means by which the co-operating churches received official correspondence and theological exposition from their leaders. The periodical also contributed to the authority of the primary British leader of the movement, James Wallis, the editor, who not only published the writings of Campbell but his own compositions as well. Through use of the press, Wallis was able to unify the movement, while also controlling the direction it moved depending on the content he chose to publish. The Churches of Christ were further solidified as a distinct group with the establishment of the annual Co-operative Meeting, which had been instigated by Wallis. The gatherings were intended to promote the expansion of evangelistic efforts throughout Britain, and while ecclesiology was highly important to the group, concerted efforts were made to minimise the controversial debate that had plagued and divided the Scotch Baptists. Following this plan, one of the first decisions made by the co-operative body was to give financial support to full-time evangelists. As the organisational structure of the

Churches of Christ grew more complex and regional districts were established, the associated churches took measures to prevent the national body from becoming too powerful. In hopes of reassuring the churches, public statements were frequently made emphasising the evangelistic nature of the co-operation.

When these six associations and connexions are compared with one another particular themes arise that were common amongst them. First, these groups all retained a high level of dual autonomy in which both the individual congregations and the organisations themselves possessed significant authority. Membership in associations was always voluntary. If a church withdrew its membership, then it still remained an autonomous congregation. Likewise, the associations and connexions themselves maintained the right to determine their own prerequisites for membership. Failure to meet expectations or maintain certain standards, such as attendance or orthodoxy, could disqualify a church from participation.

Secondly, the Evangelical Awakening shaped the character of each of the groups. All of them emerged during a resurgence in associationalism and pragmatic co-operation for the sake of evangelism. The centrality of mission, therefore, served as an authoritative force because it affected decisions concerning organisational structure and spending. Even the Scotch Baptists and Churches of Christ, who were much more inwardly focused than the others, emphasised co-operation for the sake of financing and support of itinerant evangelists. Actually, the only group that did not participate financially in the support of global mission was the Churches of Christ, who were founded last. They did not develop a global outlook until the end of the nineteenth century.⁷⁸⁹ As such the implications for missions, foreign and domestic, were minimal for these two bodies but extensive with the Congregationalists and Baptists.

⁷⁸⁹ David M. Thompson, *Let Sects and Parties Fall* (Birmingham: Berean Press, 1980), 89.

The extent to which each group accepted and practised congregational independency varied somewhat. Among Hampshire Congregationalists, the churches maintained a common mind. Just as Bogue urged the churches to restructure their association in order to promote evangelism more efficiently, the churches responded willingly. The focus with this group was not on the passage of motions or resolutions, but more time was spent raising and distributing money to supply the demand for chapel construction and repair. Itinerancy was important as well and the HCU was the employer of several evangelists, but the churches of his area and the district committees supervised the work. Lancashire Baptists and Congregationalists both accepted a more complex system of association than the HCU. This difference was certainly the result of a greater openness to organisational structure because of the presence of a more industrialised society in Lancashire, especially Manchester, as opposed to Hampshire's more rural culture. Still, these two associations from the North –West of England operated with very little authoritarianism. The LCU spent most of its energy on itinerancy, but unlike the HCU the evangelists were under the direct authority of the annual meeting to which they gave a regular account. The two Lancashire organisations, especially the Baptists, made public statements concerning political and moral issues, more so than the other associations. In these situations, each Association was speaking on behalf of the co-operating churches, using its authority as spokesperson to call for social change on issues like slavery and religious liberty.

The New Connexion churches adopted an organisational style that reflected the Methodist influence of Dan Taylor and many of its early congregations. There was a more complex structure that included the annual Association, regional conferences and smaller districts. Theological orthodoxy was never challenged, nor was it a contested issue of authority. Heterodoxy was discouraged through the requirement of public

conversion testimonies and subscription to a simple confession of faith. The two Primitivist groups may have been similar in ecclesiology, but they were structured differently. With the Scotch Baptists, there was no inter-church structure. The authority of McLean, himself, and their financial co-operation for evangelism, held the churches together. There was very little leniency in matters of doctrine or practice, which were both dictated by McLean. It was not that McLean was never challenged or questioned, but those who did so left the connexion, some of whom, like James Wallis, helped establish the British Churches of Christ. In that body, theological debate was more tolerated, and even Alexander Campbell's views were questioned, but not to the point where it caused disunity. In fact, churches that contributed to conflict were in danger of being dismissed by the connexion.⁷⁹⁰ James Wallis, together with the Nottingham church that he served as an elder, determined the central concerns and agendas. Through his expert use of the press, Wallis established the *Messenger* as the organ of the united congregations, and without malicious intent, controlled the movement of information in such a way that he defined the group's ideological character. When taken as a whole, the extent that authority was exercised over the churches was very moderate and direct interference with the congregations was even less common, almost non-existent.

In the wake of the Evangelical Awakening each of these six associations and connexions was largely guided in its formative years by a single authoritative figure. Bogue (HCU), Roby (LCU), Fawcett (YLBA), Taylor (NCGB), McLean (Scotch Baptists) and Wallis (Churches of Christ) were each instrumental in establishing the structure and character of his particular group based on each one's personal theology and character. In every instance with the exception of Wallis, there was some type of

⁷⁹⁰ See page 215.

connection with eighteenth-century Evangelicalism that led those groups to reflect that character. Whether one might identify McLean and the Scotch Baptists as Evangelical is a matter of debate, but based on the isolation of the group and its internal focus it is unlikely. However, McLean's *Christ's Commission*, conveying his emphasis upon the necessity to fulfil the Great Commission during the present age, was reflective of the writings of the other enthusiastic Christians of the age, including Bogue, Fawcett, Taylor and Roby. The Churches of Christ were not of that persuasion before 1865. In the cases of Taylor, McLean and Wallis, new sects emerged from their ministries. These three men were also the most authoritarian of the six leaders. Individuals were essential in the development and character of the organisations.

In each of the six groups studied, one or both of two incentives was observed as motivation for its formation and encouraged continued adherence, thus creating a source of authority. At times both might have been present, but one factor generally took precedence over the other. The first was purity of faith and practice. This was the driving force behind the two Primitivist groups. The Scotch Baptists and the British Churches of Christ were both motivated by the desire to replicate the first-century church of the apostles. This aspiration resulted in an ecclesiology that was of equal importance to the rest of their theology. Additionally the rigidity of their beliefs lent itself to authoritarian leadership and writings that clarified the often-complicated belief system. The second motivating factor was evangelism, which inspired the Hampshire Congregationalists, the Lancashire Congregationalists and the Lancashire Baptists. Whether at home or abroad, these county unions organised with the intent of churches co-operating together in order to support itinerant and missionary activities. Other emphases emerged, like support for academies and aged-minister funds, but the Evangelical zeal for gospel expansion was the primary cause. Even when large

portions of the association meetings were spent on building funds, expansion was cited as the motivation. In one instance, both factors equally contributed to the inception of a movement. The New Connexion of General Baptists was born out of a separation from the increasingly heterodox General Baptists and an evangelistic zeal adopted from the Methodists. In this case, the ability to vocalise one's conversion narrative was as important as adherence to the *Six Articles*. In each association or connexion either theological purity or evangelism was the authoritative basis for its emergence and continuation.

In *Associationalism Among Baptists in America, 1707-1814*,⁷⁹¹ Shurden takes a broad approach to the subject by examining numerous American Baptist associations from a wide geography and integrating them into a single tradition of associationalism. In some of his case studies associations clearly involved themselves in local church affairs. Shurden asserted, however, that such occasions were not typical,⁷⁹² and in some instances he may be correct. He also indicated that during the last decade of the eighteenth century the American associations began to cultivate co-operative plans for domestic and international missions, but these developments were 'relatively slow and gradual'.⁷⁹³ In fact, there was no American equivalent to the London Missionary Society or Baptist Missionary Society until 1814. In Britain, these efforts emerged much earlier. The same post-Awakening development was also true on the local level among British Nonconformists who formed domestic and county missions earlier. The chronological distance between the two was certainly the result of an earlier

⁷⁹¹ Walter Shurden, *Associationalism Among Baptists in America, 1707-1814* (New York: Arno Press, 1980).

⁷⁹² Walter Shurden, *Associationalism Among Baptists in America* (New York: Arno Press, 1980), 151.

⁷⁹³ *Ibid.*, 170.

industrialisation in Britain, which led the associations there to be more receptive to greater organisational structure. Gregory Wills's *Democratic Religion: Freedom, Authority, and Church Discipline in the Baptist South, 1785-1900* also investigates authority but arrives at different conclusions.⁷⁹⁴ He argues that Baptists in the American South rejected individualism and were 'unashamedly authoritarian'. Contrary to Shurden, Wills narrows his research almost exclusively to Calvinistic Southern Baptists in Georgia where, he correctly concludes, associations were much more involved in the affairs of the congregations. In Britain, both of these conclusions would be adequate. Rarely did associations among Nonconformists impose themselves upon local chapels, but neither would they have accepted heterodoxy or even a lack of co-operation. Connectivity was expected by the leadership on theological and practical grounds. By associating churches believed they would be more effective in spreading their faith domestically and globally. This was true beyond Baptists and could be said about the Independents also.

Nathan Hatch's *Democratization of American Christianity* (1989)⁷⁹⁵ has been beneficial in providing direction for this present study. He has convincingly argued that spirit of the age contributed to populist religion in America, and in that environment new leadership emerged that were neither part of the professionalised clergy nor trained to lead whole associations or connexions. Hatch's study of 'democratic' ecclesiology failed to acknowledge that similar shifts occurred in Britain as well. Likewise, *Democratization* did not adequately emphasise the obvious limits of freedom later demonstrated by Wills in *Democratic Religion* (1997). Some traditions

⁷⁹⁴ Gregory A. Wills, *Democratic Religion: Freedom, Authority, and Church Discipline in the Baptist South, 1785-1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

⁷⁹⁵ Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

of British Nonconformity were equally democratic as those in America, yet did not arise from republican or revolutionary contexts, as has been illustrated by Bebbington in 'The Democratization of British Christianity'.⁷⁹⁶ Likewise, as was the case in America, British Nonconformity saw the emergence of a largely untrained leadership that often carved out new movements for themselves. Although they were at times slightly more educated than the Americans but certainly not by Established Church standards or to the degree one might assume necessary to lead a movement. These men were not approached to lead their religious collectives, but instead the organisations rose up around their own enthusiasm. Many of the democratic trends that Hatch observed in America might also be found in Britain during the same period.

In some respects, the present study complements the conclusions made by Lovegrove in *Established Church, Sectarian People: Itinerancy and the Transformation of English Dissent, 1780-1830*,⁷⁹⁷ which followed the rise of itinerancy and to a lesser extent, the growth dissenting academies, but his findings further highlight the divide between the Primitivists and the others. Lovegrove focused his research efforts primarily upon Evangelical Calvinists and did not take into account similar trends that emerged within New Connexion of General Baptists. Each of the associations and connexions maintained some type of academy for the education of its young ministers, except for the two Primitive sects. The Scotch Baptists and Churches of Christ believed the Bible to be the only necessary source of religious authority and so no educational institutions were necessary. Near the end of the scope of the present research, the Churches of Christ were just beginning to discuss the possible necessity of

⁷⁹⁶ David W. Bebbington, 'The Democratization of British Christianity: The Baptist Case, 1770-1870' in Anthony R. Cross, ed., *Ecumenism and History: Studies in Honour of John H. Y. Briggs* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2002), 265-280.

⁷⁹⁷ Deryck W. Lovegrove, *Established Church, Sectarian People: Itinerancy and the Transformation of English Dissent, 1780-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

educating its evangelists, but it was not until 1865 that the connexion established an education fund.⁷⁹⁸ The Baptist and Independent associations followed similar patterns but the Primitivists were substantially different from the others.

Authority among Nonconformist associations and connexions, particularly those denominations practising congregational polity, was primarily exercised on the grounds of doctrinal purity and evangelistic expansion. Even when an individual leader, such as Archibald McLean or Dan Taylor, acted as the primary authority, the motivation was typically one of these two factors. As the nineteenth century continued, the organisational structures grew more complex. In turn, increased control was voluntarily granted to the organisations' governing bodies so they might more efficiently minister. Following the Awakening, these voluntary bodies found new life as a pragmatic expression of Evangelical zeal.

⁷⁹⁸ David M. Thompson, *Let Sects and Parties Fall*, 67-68.

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