

ABSTRACT OF THESIS

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Title of Thesis The Life, Work and Thought of John Angell James (1785-1859)

John Angell James (1785-1859) was one of the most prominent Nonconformist ministers in Britain during the first sixty years of the last century. Trained for the ministry by the venerable Dr. Bogue at the Gosport Independent Academy, James became minister of the Carre Lane Church of Birmingham at the age of twenty and during his life-long work with this congregation saw its membership increase to over a thousand and the regular attendance at each service on Sunday rise to almost two thousand. Pre-eminently a minister in the tradition of the Evangelical Revival of the eighteenth century, he early distinguished himself as a preacher of exceptional ability and from the beginning determined to make the "conversion" and "care" of souls the goal of his work. A prolific, popular writer, he was skilled in making the evangelical message vital to the practical needs of people in his time, but neither his training nor his ability enabled him to move in the higher intellectual spheres. His most famous work The Anxious Inquirer After Salvation Directed and Encouraged reached a circulation of over a million copies and is representative of the practical evangelical bent of his thought.

As a pastor he had his weaknesses, but he did develop a vigorous organizational program in his church and was instrumental in the formation of several Congregational Churches in and around Birmingham. As a Congregationalist he was undoubtedly one of his denomination's most prominent leaders. By his pen and through his personal influence he took an active part in the movement toward and formation of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, in the framing of the Union's Declaration of Faith and Order, in the life



and work of Spring Hill College, and in the formation of a Pastor's Retiring Fund. But he was not sectarian in his denominationalism. He identified himself with the most prominent Evangelical organisations of his time and sought to bring Christians closer together by various ways, but most notably through his leadership in the formation and work of the Evangelical Alliance. He was a continual advocate of the need for revival among Christians and was one of the most indefatigable promoters of foreign missions. He was especially interested in China and it was largely through his influence that funds were collected to send over two million New Testaments to the Chinese. The response in China, however, soon made it inadvisable to print and distribute all of the New Testaments at once, but the money collected in this scheme provided for the total expenditure of the British and Foreign Bible Society in China for twenty years. James's last gesture for China was a call for one hundred missionaries, but this overture did not achieve noticeable results. Taking all into consideration, therefore, it must be said that James's significance in his own time was not in the realm of intellectual achievement but in his devotion to Christ and in his successful, practical efforts to extend and strengthen His Kingdom.

THE LIFE, WORK AND THOUGHT OF JOHN ANGELL JAMES (1785-1859)

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Divinity
of the University of Edinburgh in partial
fulfilment of the requirements for the
Doctor of Philosophy degree.

BULSTON

Extra Strong

by

Jack Reynolds Kennedy

October 1956



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PREFACE

If it is true to say that no age can hope to understand its own mind and temper, its purposes and ideals, except through a study of the past from which it has sprung, then it is also true to say that the more we know about the past the more qualified we are to interpret the present. One of the most interesting periods in the history of English Religion and one which is very relevant to an understanding of the religious scene in our own time is the first sixty years of the last century. It was in these years that the processes began to work in the minds of men which were to result ultimately in a change of the whole religious scene in Britain. Biblical criticism was steadily advancing, the influence of German thought was extending, and the discoveries of science were profoundly modifying men's views of nature, organic and inorganic. Naturally such advances could not occur without conflict with religious traditionalism. A few men, like F. W. Robertson, attempted to show that religion had nothing to fear and much to gain from the new emphasis upon investigation, but the vast majority of the religious leaders were uncompromising.

Considerable attention in the academic world has been given all along to the study of men in this period who sought in religion to blend the vital elements of Evangelicalism with the advancing knowledge and discoveries of the times, but considerably less attention has been given to the prominent men representative of the

traditionalism which resisted the new onslaught. Undoubtedly this is due in part to the fact that the traditionalists had few distinctive thinkers as spokesmen. But on the other hand, if they could claim few original thinkers, they could rejoice that among their number were scores of notable men who in other ways were contributing to the strengthening and extension of God's Kingdom. One such person was John Angell James of Birmingham.

Essentially a practical man, he was not distinguished in his own time as a profound thinker, but Churchmen and Dissenters alike revered and respected him for his character, for his catholicity, and for his persistent efforts to spread and strengthen evangelical religion. By his writing, his preaching, and his work with the various denominational and interdenominational organisations with which he associated himself, he undoubtedly left his mark on his time and consequently deserves more recognition than has been given him up to this point. This thesis is at least one attempt, therefore, to satisfy this need.

It is almost uncanny that a thesis on James should appear at this particular time, for John Campbell wrote soon after James's death in 1859:

John Angell James has now disappeared from our midst.... Anticipating the flight of time, we may place ourselves among the men of 1959, with their eyes survey the present generation, and place in the balances the venerated men of whom we are speaking. Can there be a doubt as to the place which, among the men of the present age, they will assign to him, and the estimate which they will form of his services?

It has been my aim in this thesis, therefore, to place James

"in the balances" by surveying and interpreting his life, work and religious thought as objectively as possible.

Perhaps a word about the plan of the thesis will be helpful. I have not divided it into three sections in the sense of devoting one part to his life, another to his work, and the other to his thought, but have attempted to weave his life, work and thought together throughout the whole thesis. In order to do this it has been necessary at times to arrange the material according to theme rather than to consider each part in the consecutive chronological order in which it occurred in the life of James. Apart from these explanations, however, I think the thesis will explain itself.

Naturally, in composing a work of this sort, I am greatly indebted to many people for their counsel and aid. Both my tutors, the Reverend Principal Charles S. Duthie, M.A., D.D., and the Reverend Professor William S. Tindal, O.B.E., D.D., have helped me immeasurably and I shall always be thankful for the opportunity of working with them. The Reverend John Lamb, Ph.D., and Miss Erna Leslie, M.A., B.Comm., have helped me to use the facilities of the New College Library and have given me many helpful suggestions. I am also indebted to the staffs of the National Library of Scotland, the Edinburgh City Library, the British Museum, Mansfield College Library, Oxford, the Birmingham City Library, and the Carrs Lane Church, Birmingham. I am also very grateful to Miss Joan Tooke who also has made many valuable suggestions and to Mrs. Thomas Chalmers who has so faithfully typed the manuscript into its final form.

But most of all I am grateful to God for His great mercy in allowing me the opportunity to study a man of the calibre of John Angell James, and it is my sincere prayer that this experience will enable me to be a more effective servant of Christ upon my return to my own country.

JACK R. KENNEDY.

Edinburgh
October, 1956.

CHAPTER ONE

YEARS OF PREPARATION

NOBLESSE

EXTRA STRONG

John Angell James was born on the 6th of June, 1785, at Blandford Forum in Dorsetshire, England. Blandford Forum lies pleasantly in the valley of the River Stour and in the midst of very scenic surroundings. It was one of those quiet respectable boroughs which are still so common in the south and west of England and which appear to persons accustomed to the hurry of city life to lie in perennial slumber. It had no cathedral or castle to fill the hearts of the children with fantasy, nor was there an ancient street with quaint windows and carved doors to intrigue them, since the town on two occasions was completely destroyed by fire in the eighteenth century. It was simply an ordinary community in which people worked, married, had their children, and lived in reasonable peace with little of the spectacular to deter them, and the family of Joseph and Sarah James, with their new son John Angell, was no exception.¹

On a wider scale, the world was far from being composed and peaceful. The early years of James's life were years of world political and social revolution of paramount significance, the fruits of which we are still reaping. Fisher has pointed out that "the American declaration of rights gave the cue to every friend of liberty in the old world".² Following the American

¹Blandford at present is an English market-town and contains a population of less than five thousand. Odhams Encyclopaedia, p.123.

²H. A. L. Fisher, A History of Europe, p.791.

example, the French started a revolutionary upheaval in 1789 which resulted in the overthrow of the old order. The effects of this movement were strongly felt in England, and even while Englishmen feared lest a similar uprising should take place in their country, they awoke to find one already much in evidence. The Industrial Revolution, which exerted such a far-reaching influence upon all phases of English life, had its origin "in our island, and may for convenience be dated from the early years of George III".¹ Within a short time after James's birth, England was threatened by war with Napoleon, which broke out in 1793. The danger was great. The French forces were massed along the coast from Ostend to Brest, and ships, gunboats, and transports were ready for an overwhelming descent upon the English Coast.² In 1805 Lord Nelson met the French fleet under the command of Admiral Villeneuve off Cape Trafalgar. It was during this memorable battle that Nelson ran up his famous signal, "England expects every man to do his duty"³, and though the gallant commander fell mortally wounded, he won a decisive victory for the English, so that Napoleon gave up his dream of crossing the channel and invading Britain. In 1815 he was completely and finally overthrown by the Duke of Wellington at the battle of

¹G. M. Trevelyan, History of England, p.507.

²E. A. Payne, The Church Awakes, p.13.

³J. R. Green, A Short History of the English People, p.821.

Waterloo, and England emerged victorious from the Napoleonic wars. She was Mistress of the Seas, the greatest manufacturing country in the world, and possessor of a vast new Empire.¹ The following paragraph by Trevelyan is an appropriate commentary on the general period of James's life:

The closing years of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth comprise one of the grimmest and yet most glorious epochs in the annals of English history. It was a period of paradoxes. Rarely have the fortunes of this proud and determined nation been at a lower ebb than at the beginning of the nineteenth century, nor have they often been higher than at the middle of this century. A historian, in looking back over these crucial years, summarised them in ten brief words: 'It was an hour of gloom and glory for England'.²

James was descended from an old and respectable Dorsetshire family. His progenitors were not men of wealth, but belonged to the yeomanry of the country principally around Dorchester. Unable to boast of relatives of title and rank, he took great pride in the fact that some of his forbears were among "God's Nobility". For several generations his family had been associated with Dissent, some of them having suffered for their faith, and it is quite clear that Joseph James, Angell's father, had inherited many of their good qualities. He was a kind, peaceable man, not mighty in intellect, but affectionate and generous toward his family.³ A draper by trade,

¹G. M. Trevelyan, Ibid., p.508.

²Ibid., p.578.

³John Angell James, The Works of John Angell James, 17 volumes. Vol.17, pp.105-06. The mammoth task of collecting and arranging James's numerous publications was undertaken by his son T. S. James and completed in the early sixties. He omitted very little of his father's material and supplemented what he did include with appropriate editorial comment. Hereafter in this thesis all reference to this collection will be designated Works, followed by a specific volume number.

he participated, along with most of the men of the town, in the manufacture of wire buttons for which Blandford had early distinguished itself¹, and later led his son into the same business for a season. Although he had always held stiff and narrow nonconformist views, he apparently made little effort to foster religious character in his children, and only towards the end of his life did he become a member of the Independent Church in Blandford. Angell was always doubtful as to whether there had been any genuine conversion, but hope was possible because towards the end of his life there had appeared to be more "light".² Upon his death in 1812 he was buried in the churchyard of the Independent Church in Blandford.³

Information about the ancestry of Mrs. James is quite meagre, although Dale says she was perhaps descended from one of the

¹R. W. Dale, The Life and Letters of John Angell James, p.11. This very excellent biography by Dale included, in addition to Dale's biographical material, an unfinished autobiography by James and a supplementary section by James's son, T. S. James. This book was of invaluable aid in the writing of this paper and throughout the thesis all footnotes referring to books by Dale should be interpreted to mean this work unless another book is specifically cited.

²John Campbell, John Angell James, p.11. This book, which the author prefers to call a "review" rather than a biography, was published in 1860. It includes a brief biographical outline of James's life, the author's evaluation of his character and pulpit "eloquence", and a brief survey of James's principal literary works. As a whole the work lacks objectivity and does not contain nearly so much factual information as Dale's biography.

³R. W. Dale, Ibid., p.17.

younger brothers of the great Admiral Blake.¹ Her father was a well established builder in Blandford, but for some unknown reason he permitted his daughter to be reared by her aunt, Mrs. Angell, from whom James's cognomen was derived. It is probable that Mr. and Mrs. Angell, who were highly respected in the town as well as financially secure, were Arian General Baptists. Their home provided an environment of culture, comfort and religion for her, and she received the best that her adopted parents could give. Mrs. Angell's devotion to her adopted daughter was so great that when she died she left her whole fortune, amounting to about four thousand pounds, to her. But her most significant gift was the example of her own religious character, which her adopted daughter early began to imitate.

Soon after her marriage to Joseph James, Mrs. James began to attend the Independent congregation in Blandford with her husband. The Independent Church there, like most of the Presbyterian and many of the Independent Churches of the eighteenth century, was very respectable, cold, formalistic,

¹Admiral Robert Blake (1599-1657) served under Cromwell and carried the title "General-at-Sea". He defeated the brilliant Dutch admirals, Van Tromp, De Ruyter and De Witt, but was later beaten in battle by Van Tromp. In command of a Mediterranean squadron in 1655, he gained a resounding victory over a Moorish fleet, and annihilated a Spanish squadron off Tenerife in 1657. Odham's Encyclopaedia, p.123. For a more detailed discussion of Blake see: J. R. Green, A Short History of the English People, pp.576-96.

and self-satisfied.¹ Mr. Field, the minister, was a man of good character and reasonable scholarship, but he was not a dynamic speaker, and probably held Arian views.² Consequently, it was not uncommon for Mrs. James to take her children to Methodist evening services where the preachers were zealously stirring their simple-hearted hearers.³ It is impossible to say what effect these meetings had on Angell, but it is obvious that the religious influence and example of his mother made indelible impressions on him. In his autobiography he states:

I remember her taking me into her chamber, and pouring her fervent and pious breathings over my infant head. And who can tell how much of all that follows in my history is to be traced up to a mother's prayers.⁴

Young John's education began at a day school in Blandford, but at the early age of eight, his father sent him to a boarding school in a neighbouring village because his son, as it was rumoured, had "contracted some improper associations".⁵ Joseph James selected this school very indiscriminately with the result

¹W. C. Sydney says of this century: "Never has a century risen upon Christian England so void of soul and faith as that which opened with Queen Anne and reached its misty noon beneath the second George....a dewless night succeeded by a sunless dawn. There was no freshness in the past, and no promise in the future". England and the English in the Eighteenth Century, II, p.328.

²R. W. Dale, Ibid., p.22.

³Ibid., p.23.

⁴J. A. James, Works, 17, pp.107-08.

⁵Ibid., p.108.

that Angell was subjected to the supervision of a teacher whose ability limited him to teaching little more than reading and ciphering.¹ He stayed here two years and later regretted that in this school he had made but little progress in learning and in religion.² In his tenth year he was removed to a school at Wareham, kept by the Rev. Robert Kell, the minister of the local non-subscribing Presbyterian church. This was a classical school, and in most respects incomparably superior to the other. He remained at Wareham for two years learning Latin and receiving other general instruction. It was thought advisable, however, for him to return to his former school for a short time to improve his penmanship, and so he left.³ Teacher and pupil, however, were destined to meet again eight years later since Angell James was to become minister of Carrs Lane while Kell was in his third year as

¹With all the opportunities for education available to children now, it is sometimes difficult to realize that even in Britain this has not always been true. For most of Britain's history, only the "upper classes" had the opportunity for a formal education. "The Charity Schools, followed by the Sunday School movement that took on such large proportions after 1780, were indeed the first systematic attempt to give any education to the bulk of the working people, as distinct from selected clever boys to whom the old Grammar Schools had given opportunity to rise out of their class. The new Charity Schools and Sunday Schools had the merit of trying to do something for all, but they had the demerit of too great an anxiety to keep the young scholars in their appointed sphere of life and train up a submissive generation." G. M. Trevelyan, English Social History, p.363.

²"Famous Preachers of Birmingham: Angell James", Birmingham Weekly Post, November 5, 1948.

³In his autobiography he does not explain why he could not remain at Wareham to improve his penmanship.

minister of the Birmingham Old Meeting, from which the Carrs Lane Church had earlier broken away.¹

As a school boy, James was in no way distinguished for his intellectual achievements, but was good at various sports. Dale says that even his mother confessed to a neighbour that her son John was her chief trouble, and deplored that he made little progress at school. Neither was she much consoled by her friend's assurance that since the boy was clever at his play, she need not fear for his future.²

At the age of thirteen, Angell's education was disrupted by his father's decision to apprentice him to a linen draper called Bailey in Poole, and after a trial of one month, he was bound to Mr. Bailey for seven years, a practice quite common among certain trades at this period.³ Poole was a very busy place at this time; its harbour was crowded with ships and its various industries were thriving.⁴ It was not an unfavourable place for gaining commercial

¹Birmingham Weekly Post, November 5, 1948.

²R. W. Dale, op. cit., p.20.

³Our Birmingham, p.22. "For centuries apprenticeship was the school of Englishmen. It was the very practical answer made by our ancestors to the ever present problems of technical education and the difficult 'after-school age'. Apprenticeship continued until, in the nineteenth century, the Industrial Revolution destroyed it." G. M. Trevelyan, English Social History, p.192.

⁴At present, Poole is a borough and contains a seaport and seaplane base. Its population in 1953 was about 83,000. Odhams Encyclopaedia, p.688.

knowledge and James seems to have made good use of his opportunity.¹

The most interesting and significant experiences of his life at Poole, however, were religious influences, for it was here that the fundamental habits and decisions which were to direct his whole life, were made. During the first year of his apprenticeship, there was no explicit evidence that religion might have been becoming vitally important to him, although he perfunctorily attended the Independent Church with his employer and occasionally, it seems, remembered his mother's example and prayers. Indeed, his immediate environment did little to stimulate a deeply religious life, since his employer was but an indifferent Christian and his wife was not even a member of a Church.² The preaching of Mr. Ashburner in the local congregation made little impact upon him, and none of his fellow apprentices were religiously inclined. His indifference, however, was soon to be altered. After this first year, he began to be more thoughtful about religion and prayed more frequently.³ He wanted to be a "true" Christian but felt handicapped by his lack of religious knowledge. "Feeling the difficulties of my situation", he said, "I prayed that the Lord would raise up some one in the house to be my guide".⁴ This

¹J. A. James, Works, 17, p.112.

²Ibid., p.112.

³James gives no explanation in his autobiography for his change of attitude toward religion at this time. Therefore, any explanation of it could only be conjectural.

⁴J. A. James, Works, 17, p.115.

prayer was simply and directly answered. His employer, being in financial need, took another apprentice to obtain the premium. The night of his arrival, the new youth, having been religiously educated, knelt before retiring by his bedside and prayed unashamedly before the other apprentices. James in later years recounts the effect this event had on him:

That scene so unostentatious and yet so unconcealed, roused my slumbering conscience, and sent an arrow to my heart; for though I had been religiously educated, I had restrained prayer, and cast off the fear of God; my conversion to God followed.¹

It was rumoured at his death that his conversion had taken place in Poole, after he and a group of hoodlums had attempted to disturb a prayer meeting and had been impressed by the sincerity of those praying.² This, however, is apocryphal, and is founded on the history of James's grandfather.³ His conversion was not sudden or spectacular, but was a gradual development of knowledge, feeling, conviction and character⁴, but it is likely that if there was any moment when his new and conscious life as a Christian might be said to have begun, it was when he had witnessed the apprentice kneeling in prayer. This same young man⁵, significantly enough, played a

¹J. A. James, Works 13, p.403.

²The Saturday Evening Post, October 8, 1859, p.1.

³R. W. Dale, The Funeral Services, p.33.

⁴J. A. James, Works 17, pp.119-20.

⁵James states in his autobiography that at a later time this young apprentice confessed in a letter to him that during his apprenticeship "he was a stranger to the power of true religion". Works 17, p.122.

further part in James's religious development by unconsciously arousing his curiosity about regular visits which he frequently made after shop hours. James soon found himself accompanying his friend on these visits, which were made to a very religious cobbler and his wife who became to him an "Acquila and Priscilla".

John Poole's interest in his young friend prompted him to introduce him to books which he particularly valued, such as Huntington's Bank of Faith, and Maurice's Social Religion Exemplified. He also encouraged him in the practice of audible prayer, the first experience having occurred in the coal shed of the cobbler's cottage.

The little circle at the shoemaker's enlarged and diminished from time to time, but Angell James remained constant. At one time, however, he aroused his friend's prayerful concern by attending two amusements in Poole, an election ball and a mimic play. At the latter he was sitting under a large beam in the room, and throughout the performance he had great fear lest God should permit it to fall and crush him for his indulgence in worldly pleasures.¹ Such was the sensitiveness of his conscience.

Though he was not invited to become a member, he increasingly took part in the religious services of the Independent

¹R. W. Dale, op. cit., p. 33.

church.¹ A revealing illustration of his zeal is the fact that on one occasion he walked fourteen miles in order to be at the seven o'clock prayer meeting on Sunday morning.² His religion, despite such enthusiasm, was yet imperfect and betrayed a rather unhealthy emotionalism and a slightly distorted imagination. It lacked the stability which a confident faith brings. He encouraged the practice of weeping during sermons, working up emotion and intensity in prayer, and on some occasions prayed in his private devotions so loudly that he exposed himself to ridicule.³ It was his belief in later life that at this point in his religious life he had needed definite guidance from an experienced person, and perhaps this partly accounts for his own intense concern throughout his ministerial career for the minute problems of those interested in the Christian Life. Mr. Durant, at this time the

¹Little events often determine the future destiny of men. Had the circumstances been slightly different, it is probable James would have become a Baptist while he was at Poole. One of his Poole friends, Tilley, changed his views on baptism and informed James of his intention to become a Baptist. On the Sunday morning selected for the baptismal ceremony, James walked with his friend to the road leading to the Baptist Church in a neighbouring village. James had a deep desire to take the same step his friend was taking, but circumstances prohibited it. Looking back on this experience many years later he stated: "Had I been at that time my own master in all respects it is very probable I should have become a Baptist, and thus the whole course of my life would have been naturally changed. I consider it a mercy...that I was not led away by my friend, but continued in the sentiments which subsequent reflection convinced me were true." Works 17, pp.122-23.

²R. W. Dale, Ibid., p.32.

³J. A. James, Works 17, p.120.

minister of the Independent congregation in Poole, unfortunately gave him little attention or encouragement.¹

The desire to be more completely used in the service of God came to James while he was working as a Sunday School teacher. T. S. James says that his father surrendered himself to the ministry "not at the suggestion of any other person, but under the guidance of a consciousness that he could so speak to men as they would willingly hear him".² He undoubtedly discussed the matter with his Christian friends in Poole, and it is known that he often corresponded on religious topics with his sister, Jane. In fact, it was by a breach of confidence on her part that some of his letters were shown to the Rev. James Bennett of Romsey, later the venerable Dr. Bennett of Falcon Square, London.³ Mr. Bennett was impressed with the evidence in the letters of the power and ability of the writer, and accordingly maintained a correspondence with him in an expectant hope that "he might become an efficient minister of Christ".⁴

¹J. A. James, Works 17, p.118.

²Ibid., p.128.

³James Bennett (1774-1862) was a life long friend of Angell James. Ordained an Independent minister in 1797 at Romsey, he remained with the Congregational Church there until 1813, when he accepted a call to a church at Rotherham, where he also acted as tutor in a college. In 1825 he moved to London, where, first in Silver Street and then in Falcon Square, he continued his ministry till 1860. The great missionary David Livingston was at one time a member of his church. As an author, denominationalist, and friend, he followed the career of James all along with considerable interest. See Dictionary of National Biography, Vol.IV, p.242.

⁴R. W. Dale, The Funeral Services, p.35.

It was not an easy decision for James to enter the ministry. He immediately roused the hostility of his father. It was a bad financial loss for Joseph James, since he had already paid a premium for the apprenticeship and would be required to advance still more money to procure his release. Also, the prospect of having to support him even longer, with the frustration arising from the fact that he would not ultimately be coming to help him in his own business, prejudiced him against his son's decision.¹

Undaunted by his father's opposition, James journeyed to Romsey to obtain Mr. Bennett's sanction to his plans. Bennett encouraged the youth and in subsequent days won the consent of James's father as well. Arrangements were made for the young man to leave Poole and go to Gosport to study under Dr. Bogue. Before he left Poole, however, he was seized with a fever for two months, but recovered in time to make his journey to the academy.²

The Gosport Academy had been opened by David Bogue in 1780 to train men to be dissenting ministers.³ The Act of Uniformity (1662) had barred dissenters from the Universities, and thus it was necessary to establish and maintain academies to educate nonconformist

¹J. A. James, Works 17, p.127.

²Ibid., p.128.

³Richard Lovett, The History of the London Missionary Society 1795-1895, Vol. I, pp.66-67.

ministers.¹ Since there were no denominational schemes in those days to support institutions of this type, the income was sought directly from congregations and individual donors. One benefactor of Gosport was Mr. Robert Haldane, who after meeting the Rev. James Bennett, a former student of Bogue's, expressed regret that Dr. Bogue's time was being spent for so few students. He offered to give the academy a hundred pounds a year if its other supporters would raise two hundred pounds a year more, so that ten students could have thirty pounds a year towards their maintenance. The proposal materialised and it was upon this financial basis that James left Blandford at the close of 1802 for Gosport.² At the academy:

There were no imposing buildings, no numerous staff, equipment or resources. The Academy was nothing more nor less than Dr. Bogue's own vestry -- a room measuring 30 feet by 18 feet -- and the enthusiasm and ability of Dr. Bogue.³

Although his course at Gosport was to last but two and a half years, James made good use of his time. He was a diligent student and early acquainted himself with the art of sermon making

¹See Irene Parker, Dissenting Academies in England, p.46. See also a recently published book by J. C. Ashley Smith, The Birth of Modern Education. This work gives an excellent evaluation of the contribution which these academies made to the life of the nation and also contains a survey of each academy's curriculum, Gosport included.

²J. A. James, Works 17, p.128.

³T. W. Rumsby, Carrs Lane Journal, October, 1952.

and the details of a pastor's work. He considered Dr. Bogue to be eminently qualified to teach him these practical subjects.¹ He was not impressed with his teacher's organising ability, but did look upon him as a man of great public spirit in religious matters, and of great weight of character.² As in the case of his earlier education, he later felt the handicap of the lack of preparation he had acquired at Gosport. Dr. Bogue was not a great scholar. His strength lay in the interpretation of the systematic theology of the Puritan School: Owen, Bates, Howe and Baxter³, and evidently Dr. Bogue's explanation of the theology of these men was convincing, since James occasionally used them in later years as examples and sources of authority in his preaching and writing.

¹J. A. James, Works 17, p.137.

²Had Dr. Bogue (1750-1825) done nothing more than participate in the founding of the London Missionary Society, his life would have been a great contribution to the Christian cause. A graduate of the University of Edinburgh, he held teaching positions at the London Edmonton Academy, Hampstead Academy and at Camberwell. He subsequently became minister of the Congregational Chapel at Gosport, in which he began Gosport Academy, with which, next to the London Missionary Society, his name is most closely associated. Dictionary of National Biography, Vol. V, p.303.

³J. A. James, Works 17, p.132. Gosport's curriculum at this time, however, is impressive. It included courses in "Latin, Greek and Hebrew, Geography and Astronomy, English, Jewish Antiquities, Ecclesiastical History and Pastoralia". J. W. A. Smith, The Birth of Modern Education, p.188. However, the Bible was central in Bogue's emphasis: "Every other branch of knowledge should be valued and sought, in proportion as it bears upon theology, and illustrates the sacred Scriptures". David Bogue and James Bennett, History of Dissenters 1689-1808, Vol.3, p.271.

Soon after his arrival at Gosport he was baptised in Dr. Bogue's vestry, and admitted as a full member into the church. He had not been baptised in infancy because of his mother's Baptist beliefs. Within two months, at the age of seventeen and a half, he was placed on the academy's preaching list and conducted his first services at Ryde. Soon after this he gave an address in Dr. Bogue's vestry and afterwards was criticised by his fellows on a few points of theology. For the first year his preaching was largely in country places and to village congregations, and only in his second year did he begin to preach in the larger places in the county. Busy as he was, he did not forget to correspond with his friends at Poole, or they with him. Soon after his arrival at Gosport they wrote to him, stating:

We hope you will excuse a little plain, honest advice; for it is probable you may be called soon to go out into some of the villages round you, to speak to poor dark souls that are sitting in the region of the shadow of death. To such, be very faithful, tender, and compassionate; be sure you don't shoot over their heads, but be concerned that the plain word of truth should get into the hearts of the people.¹

James conscientiously followed this advice throughout his life, and no doubt his rebellion against the reading of sermons and prayers, and the cold scholasticism of his day, can be traced back to just such influences as came from Poole and Gosport. It was always his contention that an audience benefited much more by a prepared, free-delivery style, than by a cold, impersonal, letter-perfect, sermon or prayer.²

¹R. W. Dale, op. cit., p.49.

²J. A. James, Works 17, p.136.

On July 18, 1803, the young preacher appeared at the Winchester Quarter Sessions and took some very serious oaths and renounced some very grievous errors. Among these were the Oaths of Allegiance, Supremacy, and Abjuration, and the errors of Transubstantiation, the Mass, and Invocation and Adoration of the Virgin Mary.¹

It was at Gosport that his lifelong interest in world missions was first inspired. Dr. Bogue, as we have noted, was one of the men instrumental in the founding of the London Missionary Society and a very staunch supporter of it during his whole life.² When John Angell was there, there were six to eight missionary volunteers in Dr. Bogue's academy; among them was Robert Morrison, the first Protestant Missionary to China. In the amicable community life of the Gosport Academy, Morrison and James became good friends and periodically prayed together.³ T. S. James records that Morrison said on one occasion that the friend he desired to see most on his return to England from China was Angell James.⁴ The missionary spirit caught by James at Gosport

¹R. W. Dale, History of English Congregationalism, p.597.

²Herbert S. Skeats and Charles S. Miall, History of the Free Churches of England 1688-1891, p.410.

³Richard Lovett, The History of the London Missionary Society, Vol.2, pp.404-05.

⁴J. A. James, Works 17, p.137.

lived on and inspired him later to exert considerable effort in the cause of world missions. James regretted the academic poverty of the training he received at Gosport, but he was a loyal friend of all connected with it to the end, though he could not conscientiously recommend the academy to others. While there, he won the friendship and esteem of Dr. Bogue and kept in touch with him till his death, and then paid him the last honour by preaching for him, at Carrs Lane, a funeral sermon, which he later published. Though one could wish that the scholastic training at Gosport had been better, it is encouraging to look back now and know that at least:

Many came out of the new academies with so much attachment to divine truth, and such solicitude for the salvation of men, that they proved far greater blessings to the Church than the Arianised or latitudinarian divines who issued from some of the seats of learning.¹

The confidence which the Rev. James Bennett of Romsey had in the youthful Angell James is little less than remarkable, and it proved effective. It was he who persuaded Joseph James to allow his son to enter Gosport, and it was he who was to be instrumental in locating Angell James with the Carrs Lane Congregation. Bennett, having often been heard and appreciated by Mr. Phipson of Carrs Lane, was invited at his request to preach on three Sundays to the pastorless flock meeting there. The outcome of his visits was a unanimous resolution "to invite the Rev. James Bennett of Romsey to

¹David Bogue and James Bennett, History of Dissenters 1689-1808, Vol. 4, pp. 299ff.

the pastoral office over this church".¹ A written invitation was forwarded to him dated December 19, 1803. His reply, declining the invitation, did not arrive till April 28, 1804, and is perhaps a good indication that he had thought about it at length. One can only speculate as to why he refused, but it is quite possible he wanted to remain near his old teacher, Dr. Bogue, because six years later they were to publish their History of Dissenters 1689-1808, and it is probable that at that time they were already engaged upon it.² Also, Carrs Lane congregation was not the most attractive charge, as will be shown later. However, upon being asked if he knew anyone who would suit the people, he mentioned James.

As the academy's midsummer vacation approached in 1804, Dr. Bogue, having been in correspondence with Carrs Lane about their vacancy, proposed that James should preach a few Sundays for them. James consented, and as a youth of nineteen, after only a year and

¹Church Book, December 18, 1803. This is one of the record books of the Carrs Lane Church.

²St. W. Rumsby, Carrs Lane Journal, October, 1952, pp. 3-4. James was also to make a contribution to the historical record of Dissenters by the publication of a little book in 1850, The History of Protestant Nonconformity in Birmingham. This work contains historical sketches of the principal evangelical denominations of the time, an account of the progress of each denomination in Birmingham up to 1850, and a history of the Carrs Lane Church. It was never widely circulated and in fact did not pay for itself, mainly because it had only a local appeal. See Works 16 and 17.

a half's study in the academy, he made his way to Birmingham with little or no thought of being a "candidate".¹ As he entered the city, he was very nervous at the prospect of the experience; also, to make matters worse, he had forgotten to secure the address of his host from Dr. Bogue. This anxiety was short-lived because he was soon accosted by Mr. Phipson and taken to his lodging with Mr. Sargeant Taylor in Great Charles Street.

From the very first service, Mr. Bennett's prediction that James would please Carrs Lane proved correct. His first Sunday morning sermon was preached from I John 3: 1-2, a sermon he had often preached before. "I gained", he later said, "a lodgment in the hearts of the people from that morning".² In the afternoon he preached from John I:14, a sermon which proved him orthodox on Christ's divinity.³ From Sunday to Sunday, his congregation increased. This was due in part to the interest of the Baptists, who were being accommodated by Carrs Lane while their new building was being erected, since it was rumoured among them that the young Gosport student was being considered as a candidate for the vacant pulpit. After the third Sunday, James was requested to stay for the following one, which he consented to do. The young man had

¹J. A. James, Works 17, pp.144-45.

²J. A. James, Ibid., p.145.

³Unitarianism by this time had ceased to be a dynamic threat to Independency, but there still lingered in the minds of many a suspicion of any unknown minister until he was proven "orthodox". See. R. W. Dale, History of English Congregationalism, pp.541-2; 560; 597-98.

good reason to suspect that his congregation was interested in him as a prospective pastor, and his suspicions were in time confirmed by his host. After the afternoon service of his last Sunday, a general church meeting was called, and the following resolution was passed:

That the Rev. J. A. James having preached to this Society four Lord's Days with very great acceptance, Messrs. Rogers, Tutin, Cocks, Taylor and Frears be appointed a deputation to inform him that it is the unanimous wish of this Meeting that he would come as soon as opportunity would allow and exercise his Ministry among us.¹

The deputation conveyed this message to James in the home of Mr. Taylor. James accepted their invitation, but stipulated that the time of his coming must be subject to the approval of Dr. Bogue.²

With this understanding he left Birmingham and went into Dorsetshire for a few days before returning to Gosport.³ Soon after his departure, the Carrs Lane Congregation, in a meeting held September 23, 1804, decided to put their invitation of the 16th into writing and forward it to James, after having heard from their deputation of his willingness to become their pastor. In their letter they told him of their previous prayers for a pastor who

¹Church Book, September 16, 1804. James was called by the men of the congregation as the women were denied the privilege of voting.

²J. A. James, Works 17, p.147.

³Ibid., p.138. It should be pointed out here that this was not the first invitation James had received to become minister of a church, as a deputation had already approached him from Alton in Hampshire. He declined their invitation.

would be used to convert sinners and build up the church, and expressed their conviction that he was God's man for them. They also expressed the wish that he would come as soon as possible and that he could remain with them until he died.

We do therefore most cordially and unanimously request that you will come as soon as you can with propriety, and exercise your ministry among us; and we sincerely hope a connection will be established between us which will never be broken till your great Master shall call you from all your labours to receive your gracious reward.¹

James replied to this overture in a letter to the church, dated October 13, requesting more time before he gave his final answer to their invitation.² Almost three months later he sent them his letter of acceptance, dated January 11, 1805. It was joyfully received by the people, especially since it contained a prayerful hope that the new connection would be one that hundreds would look back upon "with unutterable joy through the revolution of eternal ages!"³ The future pastor revealed his diverse feelings about the new venture in a parallel letter of January 11, to the young people of Carrs Lane, in which he said:

¹Church Book, September 23, 1804. Many of the expressions, overtones and sentiments in letters at this period appear to be sentimental to the twentieth century mind. Though perhaps there are just grounds to criticise some of the shallow "courtesies" of expression, the rapport between James and his people at Carrs Lane almost seems to justify them in his case.

²Ibid., October 13, 1804.

³R. W. Dale, op. cit., p. 74.

I now begin to look forward to the period when I shall come among you; the time hastens on. Oh, could you read the feelings of my heart, and there see the confusion of various passions; the mixture of joy, hope, dread, fear, and comfort, what a scene you would discover! Could I persuade myself that I was fit for such a situation; could I entertain the idea that I could feed such a flock, and lead them to green pastures, where they might lie down beside the still waters, - - with what delightful anticipation should I look forward to the period!¹

Although he had seriously considered further study at the University of Glasgow during the Winter of 1805-06, he decided that the needs of Carrs Lane were the more compelling. He paid his future congregation another visit in the early summer of 1805, then he finished his short course at Gosport, spent about two weeks in Blandford, a week in London to purchase books, and finally settled in Birmingham at the beginning of September, 1805.

Carrs Lane was not a very attractive charge for a young man just out of college.² Although its building, erected in 1802³,

¹R. W. Dale, op. cit., p.75.

²On the national scene religious prospects were not quite as discouraging. The early nineteenth century saw a quickening of religious life all over Europe. In England the evangelical party within the state church reached the apex of its power and influence; and the spirit of the great revival took possession of the older nonconformist bodies. The century of English predominance was to be the century of the "nonconformist conscience". Somervell has pointed out that evangelicalism was the chief ingredient of that state of mind called Victorianism, and Ensor declares that no one can understand Victorian England who does not consider the fact that among highly civilised societies it is one of the most religious that the world has ever seen. D. C. Somervell, English Thought in the Nineteenth Century, p.101; R. C. K. Ensor, England 1870-1914, p.137.

³J. A. James, Works 17, p.21.

would accommodate eight hundred of Birmingham's eighty thousand people, by the time of James's visit the attendance averaged one hundred and fifty, and of these only about fifty were members.¹ Another discouraging fact was that the church had experienced a rather turbulent past. Its very inception had been based upon disagreement. The congregation had come into existence when a moderately Calvinistic section of the Birmingham Old Meeting had determined to organise a new church in protest against the Arianism in the Old.² Its early years had been years of hardship and struggle but they were nothing in comparison to the years just preceding the beginning of James's ministry with them. In 1802 the church passed through what was perhaps its most trying period. The Rev. Jehoida Brewer, then the minister, had led the larger part of the congregation away to form yet another church.³ Apart from a rather unsettled six months' ministry by a Mr. Berry, the congregation had remained without a pastor for three years. It is little less than remarkable that this particular society of Protestant Dissenters survived the interregnum and continued to meet at Carrs Lane.⁴

Soon after the disruption, the people became keenly aware of

¹R. W. Dale, op. cit., pp. 80-81.

²J. A. James, Works 17, p. 21.

³John Sibree and M. Caston, Independency in Warwickshire, p. 178.

⁴R. W. Rumsby, Carrs Lane Journal, December 1952.

the seriousness of their condition and cast themselves upon the mercy of God, as is evidenced in their invitation letter to Mr. Bennett in 1803:

We are so sensible of the importance of divine assistance to make even the labours of a Paul or an Apollos successful that we should dread the thought of a Minister exercising his ministry among us without it.¹

The policy James determined to follow, in the light of his knowledge of the congregation's past, can be seen in a portion of his letter accepting their call:

Pardon me, my brethren, if I suggest a hint, or rather express a wish, that the past unhappy circumstances of the church be so forgotten as not to be the frequent topic of discourse; this would be a stumbling block in the way of your minister's happiness, and would much interrupt that composure of mind which the affairs of the church, the good of your souls, and his own comfort so much require. Let us lose the past in the prospect of the future.²

With the optimism of youth, and following the cloud of Divine Guidance, it was said of him that:

He pitched his tent in Birmingham as little more than a led; and never struck it until his pilgrimage was over, and the tabernacle of the flesh put off, and his work on earth finished!³

His ordination to the ministry took place on May 8, 1806, in Carrs Lane, after he had been with the church eight months.⁴ No

¹Church Book, December 18-19, 1803.

²R. W. Dale, op. cit., p.74.

³John C. Miller, "John Angell James", Exeter Hall Lectures, p.4.

⁴J. A. James, Works 17, pp.148-49.

explanation is given for the delay. The service, to say the least, was a long one. It began at half-past ten o'clock and did not end till half-past three.¹ Among those who participated in it were Dr. Bogue of Gosport, Mr. Williams of Rotherham, Mr. Jay of Bath, Mr. Bennett of Romsey, Mr. Moody of Warwick and Mr. Steill of Kidderminster.² James describes the occasion as "a solemn and delightful day. The Church had gone through much trouble, but now seemed to see brighter and happier days approaching. The old men wept for joy, the young ones rejoiced in hope."³ The day following this service James attended the first meeting held in Birmingham on behalf of the British and Foreign Bible Society, an organisation which from that day on won his interest and support.⁴

Only about two months had passed after his ordination, when another important event occurred in his life: his marriage. When he first went to Birmingham it was arranged that he should stay temporarily with one of the leading families of his church, an American merchant Frears, and his Scottish wife, and so he remained with them for several months until suitable permanent lodgings were found. But by this time, he and the Frears had become so mutually attached that it was decided that he should stay with them until he would establish his own home. The arrangement was

¹R. W. Dale, op. cit., p.87.

²Ibid., p.86.

³J. A. James, Works 17, p.41.

⁴R. W. Dale, Ibid., p.86.

to be a short one, because only two doors below the Frears lived two unmarried sisters in the home left them by their father. It was by means of a Mrs. Walford, who knew and appreciated both James and the Smith girls, that he was introduced to the young ladies and after considerable contact with them, he soon became interested in the younger, Frances Smith. He prayed for God's Guidance as the relationship developed and in time concluded that it was God's will that he should seek the hand of Frances in marriage. On December 2, 1805, he proposed to her, won her consent, and then married her on July 7 of the following year in the parish church of Edgbaston.¹

For the friends of the groom it was a very happy occasion, but those of the bride disapproved her marrying a dissenting minister.² However, the young bride could not have made a better minister's wife if she had been of nonconformist background, since, as James puts it, she had a "character, spirit, and temper which were a combination of matured female excellence".³ Their life together was a happy experience, but the early years were interspersed with tragedy. A child was born prematurely to them at the end of March, 1807, but it was born dead. In the same year the death of James's mother in Blanford further added to the

¹J. A. James, Works 17, p.152.

²R. W. Dale, op. cit., p.91.

³J. A. James, Ibid., p.152.

weight of their sorrow. Their hearts were made glad, however, with the birth in November 1809 of a son, Thomas, but tragedy struck again the following year when a baby daughter died six weeks after its birth. Another daughter, Sarah Ann, came in 1814, but unfortunately throughout most of her life she was an invalid.

James's ministry during the first seven years at Carrs Lane were quiet, comfortable years for the congregation, but not years of noticeable progress. The numerical statistics for these years are all too revealing. At the end of 1805 there were sixty-two members; at the end of 1806, sixty-nine; at the end of 1807, seventy-seven; at the end of 1808, the number was a hundred, but declined the next year to ninety-eight. For several years following 1809 the church record was poorly kept, till for a period it ceased altogether, and consequently the actual statistics are not available.¹ James, however, by his own testimony, has left no doubt that till 1812-13 his congregation continued to be very small.²

This lack of noticeable progress made him often feel discouraged. Had the opportunity arisen to remove to another church, it is quite possible he would have considered it God's will to do so. His pious wife, however, was a stabilising influence, and often

¹Church Book, 1805-13.

²J. A. James, Works 17, p.42.

admonished her husband: "Never leave Birmingham till you see your way out of it as clearly as you did into it."¹

Some of his members were apprehensive lest discouragement tempt their pastor to leave, and when he was invited, about a year before his real success was to begin, to preach in Liverpool to the church built by the recently deceased Dr. Spencer, their fears were strengthened. They were soon relieved, however. One of the members received a letter from his pastor stating that his visit to Liverpool was simply to supply, and that even if he had been prospectively considered, he felt completely inadequate to assume the responsibilities previously filled by the eloquent Spencer. In the same letter he stated:

'Tis true, it would be highly gratifying to the most anxious feeling of my heart, to see a larger congregation surrounding my pulpit; but I shall never quit my post till I am convinced, and others are convinced too, that it is my duty to do it for some more extended sphere of ministerial usefulness.²

It was his desire to be useful in the place God had led him, which was largely responsible for his remaining at Carrs Lane during these difficult years. It was certainly not the salary that detained him, since his beginning stipend was only one hundred and twenty pounds per year.³ Neither was it because his responsibilities were light, as his mind was busily "attended

¹J. A. James, Works 17, p.160.

²R. W. Dale, op. cit., pp.106-07.

³Church Book, August 27, 1805.

with so many new scenes to try, and so many others to perplex the mind, as to leave it no liberty to think of anything but its present engagements."¹ It was his belief that he was doing God's Will that provided the strength and determination to remain with the struggling congregation meeting in Carrs Lane.

The reasons for the congregation's lack of outward growth during the years 1805-12 can generally be traced to James himself, and to conditions over which he had no immediate control. One obstacle to its progress was his youthful inexperience. Though he was intelligent and tactful, one could hardly expect a youth of twenty to have the depth of spirit, keen insight, and qualities of leadership, to lead a congregation composed largely of old people into very many new endeavours. It is to his credit, however, that during this period he did lead the church to erect rooms to be used for educational purposes.² But his inexperience handicapped him most in his failure to prepare adequately for his pulpit work. Recalling the poor attendance during these years, he states in his autobiography:

Yet, after all, the chief cause of its not being better attended was perhaps a want of care on my part in the preparation of my sermons. I have ever felt, and do feel to this day, the want of a more complete education. My composition was loose and unfinished.³

This shortcoming was recognised quite early by the young pastor,

¹R. W. Dale, op. cit., p.101.

²J. A. James, Works 17, p.42.

³Ibid., p.160.

however, and consequently in the latter part of the period under consideration he was diligently endeavouring to make up for his deficient education and pulpit preparation by reading and corresponding on theological matters with his learned friend, Mr. Bennett.¹

Not to be overlooked in this consideration is the poor health which periodically kept James from his pulpit. Month after month in 1806, Dr. Bogue expressed in his letters to James his regret to hear that his young friend was not well. Angell James, in writing to his brother James James on June 24, 1807, also mentions his illness:

Mr. Keynes has been preaching for me three Sabbaths during my illness, which has been pretty severe. Tomorrow I preach three times, which I have not done for eight weeks past. Through Divine goodness I am now tolerably well.²

In considering causes not directly related to the person of the young minister, it should be noted in the beginning that Carrs Lane did not fail to grow because there was a scarcity of people around it. Birmingham was then a city of eighty thousand and Carrs Lane was easily accessible to most of them. Nor were there many evangelical congregations to compete with the one in Carrs Lane. In fact, in addition to Carrs Lane, there were only two dissenting congregations in Birmingham of any importance, the

¹R. W. Dale, op. cit., p.98.

²Ibid., p.105.

Independent one meeting in Livery Street under Mr. Brewer, and the Baptist one that soon moved from Carrs Lane to Cannon Street, under Mr. Morgan.¹ However, T. S. James does say that Brewer's quarrel with Carrs Lane was taken up by the neighbouring ministers to such an extent that for a while they would have nothing to do with it.² J. A. James also attributes the congregation's lack of progress in part to the popular prejudice against Carrs Lane stirred up by Mr. Brewer's followers.

One of the main external causes was the condition and location of the chapel itself. In former years, the street, later designated Carrs Lane, housed the cart that carried various emblems in Roman Catholic Processions, and was called Cart's Lane, but ultimately came to be known as Carr's Lane. At the time of the opening of the Carr's Lane building in 1748, the area around it had more than its share of very poor and small tenement houses which were the source of various noises and ~~another~~ annoyances. During the early years of James's ministry, Carrs Lane was still a dirty back street which housed an unattractive and uncomfortable dissenter meeting house.³ Consequently, those of above average

¹R. W. Dale, op. cit., p.96.

²Ibid., p.584.

³J. A. James, Works 17, pp.22-23. One writer described the area in which Carrs Lane was situated this way: "the centre of Birmingham became filled with narrow, dark, crooked streets, where thieves and criminals abounded; overcrowded houses, shops and factories -- the foundation of the congested slums of today -- sprang up everywhere". Our Birmingham, p.25.

means with a bent toward nonconformity, probably found it distasteful to go there, while the attention of the poorer classes had not been caught by the relatively unknown young preacher from Gosport. It seems probable, then, that the lack of outward growth at Carrs Lane during these seven lean years was due in the main to: the youthful inexperience and lack of pulpit preparation of James; his poor health during part of this period; the unpleasant aftermath of the congregational disruption under Brewer; and the poor condition of the Carrs Lane Chapel.

It would be quite inaccurate to call these years, years of failure. They were in many ways disappointing years to James, but the groundwork was being laid, imperfect though it was, that would make possible his very long and successful pastorate, as well as the continued success of the Carrs Lane Church long after he had passed from the scene. The very fact that this determined young man pitched his tent in the midst of this struggling congregation, and reassured them that unless God led otherwise he would stay on with them, is a point in the later prominence of the congregation that cannot easily be shown to be irrelevant. Mr. T.W. Rumsby, at present a member of Carrs Lane, wrote in 1952:

John Angell James did much to save Carrs Lane Church of 1805 from disintegration and ... was largely responsible for assuring its continuing future. His commonsense pertinacity and tact were some of the slender means which held the church together in the first few years of his ministry, during what was probably the most critical time of its history from the beginning in 1748 to the present day.¹

¹T. W. Rumsby, Carrs Lane Journal, May 1952.

CHAPTER TWO

TRIUMPH AND TRIAL

BULLSTON

EXTRA STRONG

The two decades which followed the seven rather disappointing years of James's early ministry at Carrs Lane were years in which several significant events affecting his life and work were to take place. It was during this period that his reputation as a preacher was to become firmly established, the death of his wife was to occur, and a new chapel at Carrs Lane was to be completed. These years were also to see him marry for the second time, become involved in three religious controversies, and make quite a significant contribution to his contemporaries by his writing, especially in his emphasis upon the Christian home. By considering these events, therefore, perhaps we can grasp the important points affecting his life during this period, and also lay the foundation for much of the material to be considered in subsequent chapters.

Let us begin then by considering the circumstances surrounding the almost radical change of scene which took place at the end of James's seven "lean" years. It almost goes without saying that James had good reason to believe that during these discouraging years God's blessing had been withheld from his work at Carrs Lane but his discouragement, however, was to be turned to praise, as he was soon to find himself in the midst of a "prosperity" which was to continue throughout his life. This welcome change occurred while the Carrs Lane building was being renovated during the latter part of 1812 and the first part of 1813. There had been a growing conviction in the congregation that the building needed attention, and when the decision to remodel was finally reached, the

congregation then decided to accept an invitation to worship at the Old Meetinghouse, which at this time was under the supervision of James's old teacher, Mr. Kell of Wareham. It was here that James's popularity as a preacher greatly increased, and significantly enough, upon the congregation's return to Carrs Lane in 1813 the "chapel was crowded, so that the very table pew was let".¹

An explanation for this radical change of circumstances can only be conjectured, but it is most likely that it was due to the correcting of the conditions which were responsible for the previous years of disappointment. James was now more mature, his health was better, relations with Mr. Brewer's congregation were improved, and the Carrs Lane building was much more comfortable and attractive. The number of invitations which James was receiving to speak and preach at this time suggest, however, that he was well on the way toward success even before the renovation of the Carrs Lane building. In April, 1812, he delivered a speech at the annual meeting of the Birmingham Auxiliary to the British and Foreign Bible Society.² In the same year he was invited to preach at Hoxton Chapel, which in those days was supplied by the most effective provincial preachers

¹J. A. James, Works 17, p.161.

²R. W. Dale, The Life and Letters of John Angell James, pp. 122-23. This address was later printed by the London Committee and circulated by thousands to explain the objects and claims of the society.

of the time.¹ Soon after this he spoke in Silver Street Chapel in London on behalf of the London Missionary Society.² It seems probable, therefore, that by 1812 he was already attracting attention outside Birmingham, and his success at the Old Meeting merely hastened his acclaim by the Birmingham public.

With a growing self-confidence, James made it his policy to accept as many opportunities to speak as possible with the result that his popularity increased and spread. By 1815 an attempt was made to procure him as the first minister of the newly built Paddington Chapel in London, a move which involved a very difficult decision for James. The Carrs Lane Chapel was filled each Sunday with approximately eight hundred people, but Paddington Chapel would give him more prestige, as well as the opportunity of being more intimately associated with the London Missionary Society, an organisation in which he was deeply interested. One can only speculate why he declined the offer, but Dale suggests:

I am inclined to think it was the heart rather than the judgment which determined it; for in 1815 he could hardly have foreseen the great and prolonged success which lay before him at Carrs Lane.³

¹At this time James was quite concerned to make a good impression on his audiences. This concern was both constructive and destructive. It was constructive in that it was an incentive for him to do his best. It was destructive in that it was probably the seed of emotional disturbances which were later to hinder him. This fact is discussed later in the thesis.

²He later designated this event as the commencement of his career as a public speaker. R. W. Dale, *Ibid.*, pp.121-22.

³*Ibid.*, p.130.

After his decision, his pastoral and public activities continued for about two years without anything of unusual significance happening. In 1817, however, his public ministry was interrupted by a fever which paralysed his legs and kept him from his pulpit for nine months. T. S. James says his father always supposed that his illness was occasioned by over exertion during a tour in North Wales on behalf of the Missionary Society.¹ But whatever the cause may have been, when he realised that his illness would make it impossible for him to preach for a long period, he decided to have a break from his duties and go to Malvern to recuperate. There he soon began to regain his health and also reorientated himself spiritually as a result of his illness, though it was not sufficient to exempt him from having to make major adjustments later. Up to this point he had depended too much upon his natural oratorical ability to impress an audience, and had not sufficiently developed a quiet, confident, faith to give strength to his more obvious abilities.

¹One of his engagements on this tour required him to preach to a very large audience in the open air and during this service it is said he "taxed his strength to the uttermost". T. S. James gives the following account of a very interesting incident associated with this meeting: "I have often heard him (James) say that he was assured that a man working his garden at a distance of a quarter of a mile heard sufficient of the text to recognise it as it was given out. He was in the direction of the wind, and there might be some advantages of reverberation both as to speakers and hearers. Still it seems almost incredible, but my father said that the matter was much talked about at the time, and that the particulars which I have related were verified." Works 17, pp.156-57.

I was, I confess, too much taken up with the delight of animal and rational existence, and far too little with my spiritual life I believe my life was spared in answer to prayer. The earnestness of the people in supplication was remarkable. The chief part of my usefulness, both as a preacher and an author, has been since that illness.¹

Soon after he regained his health, another event occurred which increased his spiritual sensitivity. His wife, who had nursed him during his long sickness, took consumption, and after four months, died on January 27th, 1819.² Although this stunned and deeply grieved him, he refused to allow his great loss to cripple his many activities. On May 12, 1819, he delivered the annual sermon on behalf of the London Missionary Society in Surrey Chapel, London.³ From the beginning of his ministry he had manifested a keen interest in foreign missions. With Dr. Bogue for his tutor and friend, and Morrison for his fellow student, it might have been expected that his concern for the millions of pagans of the world would be intense. The fact that the directors of the Missionary Society invited him to preach the annual missionary sermon is a good indication of their esteem for him and of their assurance of his enthusiasm and power to

¹Ibid., pp. 155-56.

²R. W. Dale, op. cit., p. 229.

³Near the end of his life James was of the opinion that he had spoken at the annual meetings of the Missionary Society more often than any other man, having taken part in them at least twelve times. See Dale, Ibid., p. 122.

encourage world missions.

James's reputation as a preacher attracted an enormous congregation on this occasion. Two or three hours before the service began the building was filled to capacity. Seated in the front of the gallery were many prominent ministers who had come to hear the young Demosthenes¹, and among them was Dr. Bogue of Gosport. The sermon was certainly not typical of James's preaching since it lasted for two hours and was delivered from memory, but it is a good example of his early missionary zeal and of his desire to impress his audience. Seated on the platform, with James's manuscript in his hand, was the preacher's brother, ready to mention the forgotten word, but from first to last, James delivered the address exactly as he had written it. After the first hour, he asked permission to pause for a few moments and during the interval the people sang a hymn, after this he continued for another hour, and closed with the reassurance that the time would come when everything created would acknowledge allegiance to God and His Christ:

The ten thousand times ten thousand angels round about the throne shall respond to the shout of the redeemed on earth, 'Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing'; and still the chorus shall swell, and still the strain shall wax louder and louder, 'till every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in

¹Birmingham Weekly Post, Nov. 5, 1948.

the sea, and all that are in them, shall cry, Blessing, honour, glory, and power, be unto to him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever. Amen. Amen.¹

There can be little doubt that the vast majority of the people who heard this sermon went away favourably impressed. A few, however, were disappointed in its style. Although pompous oratory was still very much appreciated at this time, it appeared to some that the central thought of the sermon was obscured by a mass of glittering ornament. Dale mentions that one Welsh preacher remarked: "I believe the cross was there, but it was so heaped up with flowers I could not see it".² Despite the sermon's stylistic faults, however, the audience was deeply moved.³ As a result of the missionary emphasis of men like James in the nineteenth century, "the problem of the non-Christian peoples came home with a new urgency. The nineteenth century was a

¹J. A. James, Works 13, pp.131-32.

²R. W. Dale, Ibid., p.145.

³Perhaps the explanation given by Elliott-Binns of the power of the sermons of the Evangelical preachers in the eighteenth century is also applicable to this sermon: "The sermons which have come down to us from the early Evangelicals, as well as those of the Methodists, in their printed form are by no means impressive... and one wonders why they were so effective. But a printed sermon is one thing, and a sermon as delivered another. 'The bows of eloquence are buried with the archers', someone has said; and what is lacking in the printed page is the personality and living force of the preacher. It was this above all else that told on the hearers." L. E. Elliott-Binns, The Early Evangelicals, p.366.

century of Foreign Missions."¹

Not only did he call for greater efforts to extend the Gospel abroad, but he took the opportunity to reassert his conviction that there was a need for "a lengthened term of education for such of our missionaries as are destined for the East".² This conviction had arisen when the Society had appointed John Smith, a young man from Carrs Lane, to a station soon after he had begun his preparation for the ministry. Dr. Bogue, the youth's tutor, had protested without effect, and ultimately appealed to James to exert his influence to try and prevent the sending abroad of such an inadequately prepared youth. This James did in two letters to the society in 1816, but without results. Although he was disappointed, it was not his principle to abandon a great enterprise because of minor hindrances.

Nor was this the only disagreement in policy he had with the society. He found it difficult to see the wisdom of concentrating so much effort on the scattered populations of Southern Africa and the insignificant islands of the South Pacific, while India and China with their teeming millions were practically ignored.³

¹Hugh Watt, Representative Churchmen of Twenty Centuries, p.244.

²J. A. James, Works 1, p.124.

³R. W. Dale, op. cit., p.142. By a charter of 1813 India had been made readily accessible to the preaching of the Gospel, and though conditions in China were less favourable, both countries were tremendous challenges to the Christian World. Richard Lovett, The History of the London Missionary Society, Vol.2, pp.8-46; 399-428.

Even so, while he censured, he sought to remove the society's defects and continued a staunch, positive supporter of its endeavours till his death.

Another important event in the life and ministry of James during these years was the building of a new chapel at Carrs Lane. Even before 1818 there had been a growing realisation among the leaders at Carrs Lane that more space was needed if the congregation was to cope adequately with the needs confronting it. Various meetings were accordingly held with a view to the erection of a new building, but perhaps the most significant one was held on Christmas day in 1818 to determine how liberally the people would support the project. At this meeting more than four thousand pounds was subscribed¹, and with this encouragement, a definite decision to build was soon reached. Because of the scarcity of space in Carrs Lane there was serious thought of building on a different site, and this notion was stimulated by the offer of a Mr. Robbins to buy the Carrs Lane property. An eminent lawyer expressed his belief, however, that the terms of the deed did not allow the trustees to sell the existing buildings and site,² and upon investigating the matter, the building committee decided on

¹This building was the third place of worship erected by the Carrs Lane Church. The first was completed in 1748 and seated 450 persons. The second was opened in 1802 and had space for 800 people. The third one, opened in 1820, is the one currently used by Carrs Lane. (From a copy of a paper deposited in the corner stone of Carrs Lane on July 30, 1819.)

²T. W. Rumsby, Carrs Lane Journal, January 1953, pp.7-8.

February 23, 1819, "that the intended new building should be erected upon the present site".¹ After the church had given its official sanction, this work immediately began. An architect's plans were soon accepted, a building contract let², and within a short time, the old building had been demolished.

The ceremony of laying the foundation stone of the new building took place on 30th July, 1819, with about a thousand people present.³ With dignity and resolute conviction James defined the purpose of the building's erection: "This house is erected to a Triune God, and to propogate the doctrine of the Cross".⁴ He also reminded his audience that this event was more than the erection of a building, it was a demonstration of religious liberty:

We enjoy complete religious liberty, under that Magna Charta of Religion, the Toleration Act; but for that Act, we should be subject to severe persecution for our present conduct. But the age is now past when we are called upon to sacrifice our lives upon the altar or in the fire for our religious opinions. Thank God! Religious liberty is law.⁵

¹Carrs Lane Building Book. This is the record book kept during the erection of the new building.

²The building contract was for £6,468, but this price would be reduced by £1,000 for the material of the old building. Carrs Lane Building Book.

³Carrs Lane Building Book and T. W. Rumsby, Carrs Lane Journal, March, 1953.

⁴From a paper found at Carrs Lane Library giving a synopsis of events in the corner-stone ceremony.

⁵Ibid.

Often when a congregation is involved in a considerable financial project, it is difficult to avoid dissension, but the erection of the Carrs Lane building occurred without strife in the congregation, and in fact strengthened its unity.¹ The work proceeded according to plan and when the building was nearly completed, arrangements were made to open it for Divine Worship on Wednesday, August 30, 1820. Doctors Collier and Wardlaw were invited as speakers, but circumstances prevented their coming. The Rev. Mr. Bennet of Rotherham College was then invited, and after due consideration he accepted.

The opening of the new church was a day of triumph for the congregation, and though they still owed more than £3,000 for it, they could look with confidence to God and to the pastor He had given them to lead them in the future as they had been led in the past.² The completion of the new chapel also had special significance for James. He felt that the building was a positive and material proof that the cause at Carrs Lane was thriving and

¹J. A. James, Works 17, p.169.

²Most of the capital for the building must have come from the wealthier members of the church as the economic condition of the poorer classes at this time was bad. Wages were miserably low and food prices were relatively high. During the Napoleonic wars and immediately following, many people actually died of starvation. Unemployment was much in evidence, and there was little or no effort on a national scale to solve this problem. An excess of labourers put them at the mercy of ruthless employers. The working man was exploited on every hand. G. M. Trevelyan, English Social History, pp.464-70.

that his own ministry was well established after a discouraging beginning.

Still another event worthy of attention in this period was James's second marriage. About a year and a half after the new chapel was opened and three years after the death of his first wife, he married a widow by the name of Mrs. Benjamin Neale on February 19, 1822, at Christ Church, Blackfriars in London.¹ The second Mrs. James was a woman of goodness and wealth, and in most ways was eminently qualified to be the wife of a Nonconformist minister.² In accordance with the wishes of her deceased husband, she had immediately turned over about £2,500 of her £20,000 to various religious enterprises and had made arrangements for a

¹J. A. James, Works 17, p.158.

²A vicious rumour, which began soon after their marriage and continued for a number of years, occasionally frustrated their happiness. Before her marriage to James, Mrs. Neale had been on the point of marriage to a Mr. John Wilks, then a solicitor in London. After arrangements for the marriage had been made, both concluded that the union was not for the best, and consequently they brought the engagement to an end. It was widely reported shortly after her marriage to James that she had broken off her engagement dishonourably, and had been required to make some payment in atonement. This rumour became particularly rife in a controversy which arose two years later between James and the manager of a theatre in Birmingham. In later years it was coupled with a charge that James drank wine in excess and was published in a small Church of England newspaper called the Age. Believing his character had been unjustly attacked, James sued the paper for £500 and won the verdict. The editor of the Age, being unable to pay, was sent to prison and James accordingly acquired the controlling interest in the paper. Rather than continue its publication, however, he allowed it to die. T. S. James, Memoir of Rev. J. A. James, pp.14-15.

similar amount to be given for religious work upon her death.¹ The remaining part of her wealth she had reserved for her own personal use and benevolent activities which she began quite early. A few days after her marriage the Carrs Lane Building Committee received a letter with one hundred pounds from her, stating:

Deeply sensible of the great responsibility of the situation in which I am placed -- I entreat your prayers that I may be enabled so to act -- that not only the domestic comfort of my dear husband may be promoted -- but that my more public duties may be faithfully discharged.²

Every indication points to the conclusion that her hopes were fulfilled and consequently it can truly be said that she shared in the responsible service which characterised James's ministry.

It was also in this period that James was involved in three controversies. To participate in a dispute was both distasteful to James and inconsistent with his nature, but if circumstances demanded it, he thought it his duty to enter the arena of strife in defence of his principles. With this in mind, therefore, we will now consider his first controversy.

In 1816 he became involved in a dispute now known as the "Wolverhampton Case", which was concerned with the question of the ownership of property originally in the possession of Orthodox Protestants but which had fallen into the hands of Unitarians. The Old Meetinghouse in John Street, Wolverhampton, had been built in

¹R. W. Dale, op. cit., p.161.

²Carrs Lane Building Book

1701 as an endowed chapel, and was occupied by the early Presbyterians. In 1782 it had been forcibly taken by the Unitarian section of the congregation, who held it until 1816, when the minister, the Rev. John Steward, announced his conversion to Trinitarian views. This announcement divided the congregation into two rival sections, one side being led by Mr. Pearson, a Unitarian, and the other by Mr. Mander, a Congregationalist.¹ In the early stages of the quarrel, Mr. Mander consulted James on the case and pointed out that united action would be needed to solve it. James promptly gave his support by inserting an explanation of the problem in the Congregational Magazine, and appealing to the Independent denomination to assist Mr. Mander.² With this move he dropped the issue for a time while the struggle at Wolverhampton continued. The two parties proceeded violently to obtain possession of the building with suits and cross-suits for riot and disorderly conduct, and in this phase Mr. Mander was victorious. In 1817 the case was brought before the Court of Chancery, and, on a suit for an injunction to stop the ejection of Mr. Steward, Lord Eldon decided in favour of Mr. Mander. At the same time he directed an inquiry into the nature of the Lady Hewley's trusts, with which the John Street building was

¹Herbert S. Skeats and Charles S. Miall, History of The Free Churches of England 1688-1891, p.498.

²J. A. James, Works 17, p.197.

involved.¹ Before this inquiry began, Mr. Mander died, but his son, Charles Mander, succeeded to the suit.²

It was in 1818 that James again entered the scene. He and eight other dissenting ministers had signed the Wolverhampton Case, and by so doing had laid themselves open to considerable criticism. A written attack accusing them of seeking to exclude Unitarians from religious liberty was soon forthcoming from the pen of the Rev. James Robertson, an Independent minister. Considering this charge completely false, James and his friends felt compelled to deny it, and consequently they soon published a pamphlet to seek to clarify the issue: "The matter to be settled", they argued, "was a question of property, not of opinion, and though it was property set apart for religious purposes, yet to be decided by precisely the same kind of evidence as a case purely civil".³ A certain part of the public preferred to interpret it

¹Lady Hewley was a very zealous and liberal supporter of the Presbyterian congregations in the North of England during the latter part of the seventeenth and the earlier part of the eighteenth centuries. In 1704 she executed a deed conveying valuable property to trustees for use of "poor godly preachers of Christ's Gospel", for the support of the Gospel in poor places, and for various other religious enterprises. Although she placed no sectarian restrictions on the distribution of her charities, it was generally understood that she meant orthodox Christianity. H. S. Skeats and C. S. Miell, op. cit., pp. 200-01.

²Ibid., p. 498.

³An Appeal to the Public in Answer to the Remarks of the Rev. James Robertson by the Dissenting Ministers Who Originally Signed the Case, p. 29.

differently, however, and hence a pamphlet soon appeared again accusing them of being "the promoters and abettors of religious persecution in the nineteenth century".¹ The overwhelming evidence, however, points to the conclusion that James and his friends were not seeking to deny religious liberty to Unitarians but that they were mainly concerned to procure and protect property for dissenters which they considered to be lawfully theirs, hence their action was a defence of principle. In their reasoning, Lady Hewley had been a Presbyterian, and the Presbyterians of her time were "orthodox", consequently she could not have intended to include Unitarians in her benefits, for Unitarianism at the period was a proscribed faith, and the trusts would therefore have been illegal.

For nineteen years the case stayed in the English Court of Chancery, when it was heard on appeal by Lord Chancellor Cottenham, who postponed his decision until the judgment of the House of Lords in the case of Lady Hewley's charities should be pronounced. The actual litigation involving Lady Hewley's charity was commenced in 1830, at the instance, among others, of Dr. James Bennett, James's friend. The final verdict, after much wrangling, was pronounced in the House of Lords in 1842. Lord Lyndhurst pronounced judgment to the effect that Orthodox dissenters only were entitled to be trustees of the charities, and to participate

¹T. Eyre Lee, Remarks on an Appendix to An Appeal to the Public, p. 3.

in the funds. The Wolverhampton case was decided in accordance with the new law, and its endowments were turned over to Orthodox dissenters. Thus in Wolverhampton, Orthodoxy had won, but with the passing of the Dissenters' Chapels Bill on July 15, 1844, Unitarians and others were protected from future loss if possession of property had been maintained for at least twenty-five years.¹

In 1824, three of James's publications occasioned the second controversy in which he was involved. Like the Puritans before him, James believed that the popular dramatic productions in the theatres were not conducive to the Christian life, therefore ministers should caution the people against them because of their sensuality.² This he attempted to do in a sermon preached in Carrs Lane on January 4, 1824, and later published with the title, Youth Warned, and in a chapter on theatrical amusements in his book published that year, The Christian Father's Present to His Children. With firm conviction he categorically condemned the theatre as:

¹H. S. Skeets and C. S. Miall, Ibid., p.501.

²The Puritan influence on the English attitude toward the theatre was considerable: "Till late in the Nineteenth Century, not a few well brought up young people were never allowed to visit the theatre. And if such stringency was the exception rather than the rule, it is at least true to say that the serious part of the nation would never take the theatre seriously. This misfortune was not a little due to Puritan bigotry and to its outcome in the licentiousness of the early Reformation Drama." G. M. Trevelyan, English Social History, pp.261-62.



that corrupter of public morals; that school where nothing good and everything bad is learnt; that resort of the vicious and seminary of vice; that broad and flowery avenue to the bottomless pit. Here a young man finds no hindrances to sin, no warnings against irreligion, no mementos of judgment to come; but, on the contrary everything to inflame his passions, to excite his criminal desires, and to gratify his appetites for vice. The language, the music, the company, are all adapted to a sensual taste, and calculated to demoralise the mind.¹

Such an attack quickly roused the hostility of the theatrical sympathisers, and it is not surprising that a pamphlet defending the theatre and condemning James soon appeared. Mr. A. Bunn, the manager of the Theatre Royal, Birmingham, in a scathing pamphlet condemned without hesitance James's Youth Warned:

I use not the least hesitation in saying that a greater mass of grossness, scurrility, and ignorance -- of bad grammar -- of bad English, and bad feeling, never came under my perusal before.²

James had based his arguments, in his publications, on scripture and on the testimony of men renowned in history. He reasoned convincingly enough that a Christian needs to guard against harmful influences, but undoubtedly the public found that Bunn's arguments, although rather arrogantly presented, contained overwhelming evidence of history's approval rather than disapproval of the

¹J. A. James, Works 1, p. 357.

²A. Bunn, A Letter to the Rev. J. A. James of Carrs Lane Meeting House, p. 31. Perhaps the most unique insult which Bunn hurled against James was the following: "I use no hesitation in giving my opinion that you are an Angell James, but I am equally of opinion you are a fallen one."

theatre. Bunn summed up his case by saying: "It is evident that the universal sanction of mankind, and the custom of ages, is sufficient refutation of your contemptible, arrogant, and incorrect statement."¹

Though James, himself, did not reply with a pamphlet, an anonymous Churchman called "Mercator" soon published an answer to Bunn. After having criticised the general tone of his pamphlet, he denied that James had intended to condemn everything about the theatre:

It is the general character of the representations usually introduced, of the persons who perform, and the audience who witness them, to which the remarks of the Rev. Gentlemen particularly apply, and which he severely condemns.²

He also spotlighted a point badly needed in the dispute when he said that the issue was whether the stage was favourable to Christianity, not whether it could be justified by testimony from history.³

James soon published another pamphlet entitled The Sin of Scoffing at Religion Exposed which soon aroused new fervour in both parties. In this publication he did not refer to the theatrical controversy then in progress, but its appearance at this moment was quickly interpreted as a rebuff to those defending the theatre, though it was probably not specifically directed at them. However,

¹Ibid., p.30.

²A Letter to Mr. Alfred Bunn, p.6.

³Ibid., p.9.

a pamphlet entitled The Reprover Admonished, written supposedly by an anonymous Churchman, soon appeared, and there is little doubt from its tone, that it was directed against James.

Calling for tolerance in questions of amusement, the writer stated: "These are not true disciples of Christ, who condemn to endless misery all who differ from themselves, and who treat almost every kind of relaxation as sinful."¹

A further charge of plagiarism was made against James. Bunn fearlessly challenged: "Nearly the whole of your book, you have borrowed, word for word, from Doctor Styles."² Another anonymous pamphlet entitled The Plagiary "Warned" also attempted to convince the public of the genuineness of this charge. In this work the author claimed that James had unlawfully transferred material from John Styles' work An Essay on the Character and Influence of the Stage to his chapter on theatrical amusements in The Christian Father's Present to His Children and from Archbishop Tillotson's sermon The Folly of Scoffing at Religion to his sermon The Sin of Scoffing at Religion Exposed. This accusation was clearly a move to undermine public confidence in the integrity of James, in fact the writer of the pamphlet admits it, and no doubt he partly accomplished his goal in certain circles. The writer cites at least fourteen undoubtedly similar passages from James and Styles

¹The Reprover Admonished, p.8.

²A. Bunn, op. cit., p.6.

as proof of his charge, as well as comparisons between James and Tillotson. It seems most probable, however, that James did not plagiarise in the sense of deliberately stealing another man's work, but that he was at times careless in giving credit where it was due. Deliberate deceit is entirely inconsistent with James's character and the most convincing evidence in favour of his innocence is that in both his sermon and the chapter in his book he refers the reader to the works of Tillotson and Styles respectively. It must, in fairness, however, be admitted that James was not in the habit always of citing his source material, but a partial explanation of this is that "he made what he thus borrowed his own by working it up in his peculiar way".¹

Though it cannot actually be said that James participated in this controversy, it must be admitted that he occasioned it. He was often grieved at the ill will it had produced, and according to his son on several occasions expressed his conviction that he had learned from this disturbance that the best means of opposing any "sinful amusement" was to inculcate counteracting principles rather than directly attack it.²

In 1822 James published a very practical book on church membership for members of Congregational Churches called Christian Fellowship which in later years involved him in still another dispute. This time his opponent was an Anglican clergyman and

¹J. A. James, Works 13, p. 218.

²Ibid., Works 1, p. 346.

the issue was whether Congregational or Anglican principles of religion, considered both from the standpoint of Biblical validity and the results which they produced in contemporary practice, were more acceptable. Perhaps a brief general survey, therefore, of Christian Fellowship, which included his principal ideas on the responsibilities and privileges of the members of congregational churches, will place this problem in its proper perspective. However, since this is the first consideration which we have given to any of the major works of James, it might be well first to notice, as a foundation for this survey, a few salient points about his writing in general.

It should be said in the beginning that this motive in writing was to be of service to God and His Kingdom. "His sole object in printing", wrote his son, "was to do good, and trusting to accomplish that he was not to be deterred from the effort by any selfish consideration."¹ In keeping with this he always attempted to make his works thoroughly practical with a view to satisfying particular needs. If their circulation is any indication of the helpfulness they afforded, without doubt he was successful in his goal. Soon after his death it was reported that the "Religious Tract Society alone has circulated within a few copies of three millions of his books and tracts"², a total which Dale confirms.³

¹R. W. Dale, The Life and Letters of John Angell James, p. 592.

²John C. Miller, Dying Pastors and the Undying Priest, p. 11.

³R. W. Dale, The Funeral Services, p. 62.

When this figure is coupled with the fact that many of his works were not printed by the Religious Tract Society, it can easily be seen that he was quite a successful author. A reviewer of his book The Family Monitor suggests what is probably the key to his success:

His works are not designed for the learned, but are admirably adapted to the common understanding. He deals in no subtleties of thought or criticism, but liberally and impartially dispenses wholesome truth. There is a happy mixture of doctrinal sentiment, with practical admonition, pervading all his publications ... He has a fixed opinion upon all points of Christian duty and casuistry; and with a fearlessness and fidelity characteristic of the uncompromising spirit of Christianity, he utters the honest dictates of a warm and sincere heart.¹

Perhaps the last thing which should be noted is that he wrote as a preacher rather than as a speculative theologian. Many of his books are simply compilations of his sermons, and therefore the sincerity, simplicity, and the evangelical emphasis which characterised his preaching and which are considered in detail later on, also characterised his writing. With this in mind then, we will now consider his book Christian Fellowship.

Indispensable to a Biblical interpretation of fellowship among Christians is a consideration of the Church. Consequently it is necessary to understand what James meant by the word "church" if his book Christian Fellowship is to be understood and if his attitudes in this dispute are to be grasped discernibly.

¹The Congregational Magazine, July, 1829, p. 384.

What is a Christian Church? The word church signifies an assembly. In the New Testament it invariably applies to persons, not to places. It means not the building in which the assembly is convened, but the assembly itself. It has in the Word of God an enlarged, and also a more confined signification. In some places it is employed to comprehend the aggregate of believers of every age and nation; hence we read of the 'general assembly and church of the first born', and of the church which 'Christ loved and purchased with his blood'. In its more confined acceptation, it means a congregation of professing Christians, meeting for worship in one place; hence we read of the church at Corinth, of the Thessalonians, of Ephesus, etc. These are the only two senses in which the word is ever employed by the sacred writers; consequently to speak of provincial or national churches, or in other words, to call the people of a province or nation a church of Christ, is a most gross perversion of the term, rendering the kingdom of Jesus a matter more of geography than of religion.¹

As James understood Biblical teaching, the main arena of Christian fellowship is within the local church which should be composed of professing Christians united by voluntary consent to observe the ordinances of Christ, to propagate the Gospel, and to minister to the spiritual, and if necessary, to the physical needs of one another. If the New Testament model for the church is followed, each congregation will select its own deacons and pastor, and will consider itself independent of all religious control other than the authority of Christ expressed in His Word.² When a person identifies himself with a local church, significant implications are at once apparent. His action is a sign of his faith and hope in the Gospel, of his unity of purpose with Christ's disciples, and of his submission to the government and discipline

¹J. A. James, Works 11, pp. 243-44.

²Ibid., pp. 244-50.

of the church.¹ Becoming a churchmember also carries with it the privileges of participating in the observance of the Lord's Supper, of helping to choose a pastor for the church, of benefiting from pastoral care, and of living under the church's watchful concern.² But, on the other hand, an individual also assumes various duties by uniting with a church, and some of them are toward himself. It becomes his duty to learn as much about divine truth as possible, to make certain that he advances in personal religion, to maintain Christian consistency in conduct, and to submit to civil authority.³ Then there are duties which are due to the pastor of the church. The Christian should respond to the one whom God has set over him as his "overseer" by submitting to his authority, by honouring his person and office, by praying for him daily, by faithfully attending services, by co-operating with him in special endeavours, and by liberally supporting the church with his finances.⁴

On a wider scene, the Christian has specific duties which he must perform for his fellow members, and the basic one is to love them. This love should be expressed by visiting the "brethren" in sickness and in health, by helping to bear their burdens, by praying for them, by being patient with them, and by maintaining a spiritual concern for them.⁵ Sufficient attention should also be

¹J. A. James, Works 11, pp.254-63.

²Ibid., pp.265-69.

³Ibid., pp.272-85.

⁴Ibid., pp.287-301

⁵Ibid., pp.305-11.

given to the cultivation of peace and harmony among the members. This will require a humble spirit, a forgiving and sympathetic attitude toward offences, and a vigilance in suppressing gossip, if this task is to be accomplished.¹ But, the duties of a Congregationalist, when considered within the context of the organisation of the local church, extend beyond his own congregation to include churches both of his own and of other denominations. Toward people of other denominations care should be exerted to avoid bigotry and controversy, while love and friendship should be manifested. Where a compromise of principle is not involved, there should be co-operation in religious endeavours.² Toward churches of the same denomination there should be mutual respect and confidence in the exchange of members, co-operation in religious work, in the giving and receiving of advice, and in the manifestation of interest in each other's material and spiritual welfare.³

Since the harmony and progress of the church depends so much upon the conduct of each individual within the congregation, it should behove each member to exert his best in life and work for Christ and His Church. Because some people within the churches have not done their best, congregations are occasionally disturbed by schisms:

¹J. A. James, Works 11, pp. 313-28.

²Ibid., pp. 332-35.

³Ibid., pp. 335-42.

How many of our churches present at this moment the sad spectacle of a 'house divided against itself'. Such scenes, however, ought not to surprise us, though we cannot but lament them. They are evils necessarily growing out of the present imperfect state of humanity. They existed in apostolic times, and grew up in the garden of the Lord, while the sacred enclosure was yet under the culture of the holy and inspired individuals by whom it was planted. These things therefore do not necessarily disprove the scriptural origin of the system with which they are connected.¹

In some instances perhaps a minister, through a defective education, or a lack of diligence, or imprudence, or a bad temper, conducts himself in such a manner that he causes a dispute which divides a congregation, but more often the fault lies with the people. The liberty within the church which God has given to the individual must not be abused. In the choice of a minister, in the proceedings of business meetings, in personal relations within the church, the Will of Christ, as it is understood by the majority, must be given pre-eminence and those desires and actions which are not in accord with it must be set aside if the welfare of the church is to be promoted.

Soon after the publication of Christian Fellowship, it was bitterly attacked in an article by a Church of England periodical, The British Review. Briefly stated, the writer affirmed that the principles of Dissent resulted in all types of discord within the churches which proved that Independent principles were not valid. Although James thought at the time that the critique should

¹J. A. James, Works 11, p.425.

be answered, because of his numerous and extensive engagements, and because the paper had a very small circulation, he let it pass.¹ His patience was to be tried again, however, because in 1829 two thousand copies of the article were printed for gratuitous distribution, and in the following year, a revised and enlarged edition in pamphlet form was published under the title, The Church of England and Dissent, by John Cawood of Oxford.² With this challenge, he felt constrained to break his silence as "quiescence would now be construed into defeat or cowardice".³ Consequently in the latter part of 1830 he published Dissent and The Church of England to correct the very perverted picture of dissent which he thought his opponent had presented.⁴ In The Church of England and Dissent Cawood had sought to expose dissent by examining its principles as James had defined them, by showing from contemporary practice and from admissions by James some of its inconsistencies, and to strengthen the Church of England by answering James's objections against it in Christian Fellowship. The nonconformist principles which James had included in Christian Fellowship and which Cawood considered were:

¹J. A. James, Works 14, pp.9-10.

²John Cawood, The Church of England and Dissent, p.iii.

³J. A. James, Works 14, p.10.

⁴Ibid., p.193.

(1) The all sufficiency and exclusive authority of the Scriptures, as a rule of faith and practice; (2) The consequent denial of the right of legislatures, and ecclesiastical conventions to impose any rites, ceremonies, observances, or interpretations of the Word of God upon belief and practice; (3) The unlimited and inalienable right of every man to expound the Word of God for himself, and to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience; (4) The utter impropriety of any alliance or incorporation of the Church of Christ with the governments or the kingdoms of this world; (5) The duty of every Christian to oppose the authority which would attempt to fetter his conscience with obligations to religious observances not enjoined by Christ.¹

In evaluating these principles Cawood affirmed that the first and third were held by the Church of England, and that the other three resolved themselves into one: "All national establishments of religion whatever are unlawful."² He endeavoured to prove, consequently, that an established religion was justifiable by citing several arguments, the principal one being that the religio-political status of Israel "proves the lawfulness, expediency, and advantages of a religious establishment".³

James rebutted with four arguments: the Jewish nation was not a mere union of Church and State but an amalgamation of the

¹John Cawood, op. cit., pp.22-23.

²Ibid., p.23. Evidently this distinction impressed James, because in his Dissent and the Church of England he included only the first three principles of his original five, and by 1834 in his A Pastor's Address to His People on the Principles of Dissent he included only the first and third which from the very beginning had been the foundation of the other three. See Works 14, pp.225-26.

³John Cawood, Ibid., p.24.

two, and the Church of England was not; the Jewish Theocracy was not a spiritual structure founded upon a human basis of legislation, whereas the Church of England was all too dependent upon human authority; the Theocracy of Israel had Jehovah as its political Head and not a fallible monarchy; the Jewish Theocracy was but a preparation for a truly spiritual kingdom.¹

It was the purpose of Cawood not only to examine the principles of Dissent which James had listed, but also to show dissent's inconsistency with its own principles. James, in his book, had given him fertile ground on which to work since he had made "very liberal concessions of some practical evils incidental to the working of the Congregational system of church-polity".² These were carefully selected and arranged by Cawood and then presented to the public as the "fruit" of nonconformity. The inconsistencies which he cited were mainly related to Congregational disturbances which occasionally arose in the choice of a minister, in the election and function of the officers of a church, in the reception of communicants at the Communion, and in the church meetings.³ Cawood preferred to interpret the inconsistencies as the norm of Independency, while James maintained that they were the exception and that he had recorded them only in order that Congregationalists

¹J. A. James, Works 14, pp. 37-48.

²J. A. James, Works 17, p. 172.

³John Cawood, op. cit., pp. 35-45.

in general might profit from them, but, as will be shown shortly, Cawood's accusations were to be further answered.

The teaching in the Church of England Book of Common Prayer was another point of contention in this controversy. The issues involving it were first discussed by James in Christian Fellowship, and then by Cawood in his pamphlet, and then re-discussed by James in Dissent and The Church of England. The assertions which James made were that the Church of England identified baptism with regeneration, credited her bishops with the power of conferring the Holy Spirit in the "sacraments" of ordination and confirmation, affirmed that her priests were invested with power to forgive sins, taught that everyone at death goes immediately to heaven whatever his character on earth, and used liturgical forms which abound with vain repetitions. He also claimed that she had multiplied offices in her communion beyond all scripture precedent until she had quite secularised her nature and appearance, that by her system of patronage she had deprived the people of their right to elect their own ministers and thus lessened the chance of preserving a faithful and holy ministry and that she corrupted her communion by too indiscriminate admission of persons of all characters to the Lord's table.¹

¹J. A. James, Works 14, pp. 92-106, and John Cawood, op. cit., pp. 6-22. These are essentially the same objections to Church of England doctrine and practice which he discusses in A Pastor's Address to His People on the Principles of Dissent and the Duties of Dissenters. But perhaps a quotation by Grant points to the basic objection he and other nonconformists had against the Church of England all along: "Whatever formlessness may be charged against the Nonconformist Churches today, the ground of their original separation was their belief that the Church of England in their time drew too thin a line between the Church and the world." John W. Grant, Free Churchmanship in England (1870-1940), p. 1.

Cawood simply denied the first four of these assertions. His reply to the fifth was that "form" was condoned in the Bible and that the repetitions in the Services were designed "to excite attention, to interest the affections, to promote devotion".¹ On the question of Church Officers, he affirmed that in Scripture every bishop was a presbyter, but that not every presbyter was a bishop. He reasoned that if the contrary were true it would prove that all presbyters were apostles, since John called himself a presbyter in 2 John 1, hence the Scriptures did allow distinctions among the clergy. Concerning patronage, he stated that it was bad both in the Establishment and in Nonconformity, and that if the Church of England did not possess the means to preserve a holy ministry, James in his book had shown that "those means were not to be found among the Independents".² On the question of the indiscriminate admission of persons to the Lord's Supper, he questioned whether James at the time of his charge had "read the rubrics prefixed to her communion service".³

Turning now more specifically to Dissent and The Church of England, it was the purpose of James in this work to re-affirm his faith in the broad principles of Nonconformity, to answer the charges of inconsistency in dissent by Cawood, and to reconsider the objections he had previously expressed against the Church of

¹John Cawood, Ibid., p.15.

²Ibid., p.21.

³Ibid.

England.

The reasoning of Cawood on the scriptural sanction of an established religion was not convincing to James. To hold this principle appeared to him to negate the authority of the Scriptures and the right of private interpretation:

By leaving out the second principle which I have stated, and not claiming it for his church, he tacitly confesses that she has a right to impose rites, ceremonies, and observances If the church has a power to decree ceremonies, this is an authority distinct from, and added to, the Word of God, and obedience must be due to it, under the threat of some punishment for non-compliance.¹

It is likely, however, that this was no more convincing to Cawood than the argument for Establishments on the basis of the Jewish Theocracy was convincing to James.

Perhaps the point more than any other which prompted James to write this pamphlet was the perverted picture of dissent he thought Cawood had presented. It was his belief that the charge of widespread inconsistency was not well founded, but rested on a "misconception, perversion, or forgetfulness of our avowed sentiments".² Even if the charge were in some cases true, it only proved that particular congregations needed to be called back from their deviations to cleave more closely to the Bible.³ He contended that the evils he had admitted regarding Congregationalism in Christian Fellowship were due to the frailties of humanity and

¹J. A. James, Works 14, p.19.

²Ibid., p.23.

³Ibid., p.22.

not to the system itself, but that the very opposite was true with the Church of England.¹ False principles were responsible, as he saw it, for what he considered to be false formularies within the Established Church. It is understandable, then, that in Dissent and The Church of England he again expressed his objections to the doctrines he had attacked in Christien Fellowship, except one. He had charged that the Church of England taught that her bishops had the power of conferring the Holy Spirit in the confirmation of the young, but concluded that this "was most certainly an inadvertency and I retract it".²

Another interesting point about Dissent and The Church of England is that James devoted a whole chapter to the acknowledged weaknesses and inconsistencies within the Church of England as described in the newer works of contemporary evangelical Churchmen. Hence, Cawood's stratagem was turned against him, but in a much more effective manner.

The importance of this controversy for the study of this dissertation is that it shows that James was a nonconformist by conviction and exemplifies the extent to which he was willing to go in defence of principles he held to be true. Even though it resulted in his occasionally being designated a political dissenter³,

¹J. A. James, Works 14, p.142.

²Ibid., p.97.

³James reports that on one occasion he was called the "Chief Mufti" of the dissenters by Bishop C. J. Blomfield of London (1825-55). See John Hunt, Religious Thought in England in the Nineteenth Century, p.398; J. A. James, Works 2, p.271.

he believed it was his duty to speak the truth as he understood it, therefore he considered his action justified. Many of his closest friends were within the Established Church, and he could reflect with joy on the profitable hours of fellowship he had enjoyed with them, but in matters of ecclesiastical principle:

He was a thorough-going Voluntary, believing that Establishments necessarily annihilate the distinction between the church and the world, and render good men less useful than they would have been in other circumstances. But he held these views in love.¹

There is no reason to suppose that James altered his basic opinions. They were not prompted by bigotry, but were founded as he supposed on Scripture, and since they had not been proved wanting, he was content to hold them until he could be shown a better way.

Our survey of these controversies has made it obvious that the pen of James was very active at this time, but the list of his works which we have noted in this period is by no means complete. In addition to his books Christian Fellowship and Dissent and The Church of England, he published several pamphlets, sermons, and addresses, and four other books: The Sunday School Teacher's Guide in 1816, The Christian Father's Present to His Children in 1824, Christian Charity Explained and The Family Monitor in 1828. James was such a prolific writer throughout his life that it seems best, in most instances, to consider his principal works in groups, arranged according to themes, rather than to examine each work

¹R. W. Dale, op. cit., p.585.

separately in chronological order. In accordance with this, therefore, The Sunday School Teacher's Guide and Christian Charity will be dealt with later in the thesis and The Christian Father's Present to His Children and The Family Monitor will be considered in the remaining part of this chapter.

One of the basic problems facing the Christian Church today is the detrimental influence of materialism and secularism upon the home. Interestingly enough, this was one of the problems which confronted James during his ministry and which challenged him to use his pen to contribute to its solution by the publication of the two books just mentioned.¹ The world in James's time was in a stage of radical change and the nation's home life was naturally affected. The generation of Englishmen between 1815 and 1850 suffered from the combined aftermath of two great social and political revolutions, the American and the French; of two great social and economic upheavals, the agrarian and the industrial; of two great foreign wars, the French Revolutionary and the Napoleonic (1793-1815). The American and French Revolutions set in motion a whole tide of new forces and ideas in politics which seeped gradually into British national life after 1815. The agrarian and industrial revolutions, already well advanced before 1815 transformed the face and life of the nation and brought immense

¹For a brief popular survey of the main characteristics of Victorian family life, see an article by H. L. Besles in the book Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians, pp. 343-50.

prosperity and misery combined. The French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars cut right across the effects of both these other events speeding industrialisation but retarding social and political reforms.¹ Most Englishmen in 1815 still worked on the land or in trades connected with agriculture, though within the next generation the majority became townsmen engaged in industry. Less than twenty years after Waterloo probably half the population lived under urban conditions.²

In the midst of such gigantic changes, James soon recognised the general need for "practical" instruction on family life, consequently he frequently preached at Carrs Lane on various subjects related to the family. His book The Family Monitor best exemplifies his emphases on this subject and accordingly deserves special notice.

One part of the problem with which he early dealt in this work was the formation of the marriage union. Marriages formed on emotional impulses and without proper consideration of other relevant factors seemed to him to be one of the major causes of marital disturbances:

It is obvious that no decision during our whole earthly existence requires more of the exercise of a calm judgment than this; and yet observation proves how rarely the

¹L. E. Elliott-Binns, Religion in The Victorian Era, pp.11-35; and John Richard Green, A Short History of The English People, pp.806-72.

²David Thomson, England in the Nineteenth Century, p.11.

judgment is allowed to give counsel, and how generally the imagination and the passions settle the business. A very great portion of the misery and crime with which society is depraved and afflicted is the result of ill-formed marriages. If mere passion without prudence, or covetousness without love, be allowed to guide the choice, no wonder that it is improperly done, or that it is highly disastrous in its consequences. And how often are passion and covetousness alone consulted.¹

To help correct this faulty approach he set forth some very practical advice as an alternative, advice which sounds quite similar to what one would expect from a modern marriage counsellor. Two people contemplating marriage should pause to reflect seriously on the grave consequences of a bad decision. It is because of the seriousness of the choice that guidance in most instances should be sought from the parents, especially in the case of young people "under age". This is not to say that parents should select life companions for their children, but by reason of their experience, they can give them a more realistic interpretation of the problems, joys and responsibilities of marriage. Parental approval, however, valuable as it is, cannot be the foundation of marriage. Marriage is a relationship between two persons and therefore it must be based upon personal attachment:

¹J. A. James, Works 12, pp. 85-86. Sherrill has designated the present day counterpart of this exaggerated emphasis upon emotional attraction as "romanticism" and gives the following criticism of it: "Romanticism carries its own peculiar threat to happiness, by taking the experience of falling in love as the sole basis for marriage Somewhere romanticism believes there is an 'affinity' and he or she will be recognised at first sight. How will this 'soul mate' be recognised? No one ever quite knows, so romanticism leaves its devotees prey to the quick imperious whims of passion, which are taken to mean that the affinity has been found The newspapers gloat over it, the movies exalt it, fiction revels in it down to the last dreg of detail. A folk ideal is hard at work." L. J. Sherrill, Family and Church, p. 33.

There ought to be personal attachment. If there be any thing, even in the outward appearance, that excites disgust, the bans are forbidden by the voice of nature. I do not say that beauty of countenance, or elegance of form, is necessary; by no means: a pure and strong attachment has often existed in the absence of these All I contend for is, that to proceed to marriage against absolute dislike and revulsion, is irrational, base and sinful. But love should respect the mind as well as the body; for to be attached to an individual simply on the ground of beauty, is to fall in love with a doll, a statue, or a picture; such an attachment is lust or fancy, certainly not rational affection.¹

Marriages formed to achieve pecuniary or social gain were also heartily discouraged by James. Although the so-called "marriage bargains" of the upper and middle classes of the eighteenth century were not prevalent in the nineteenth century², it was not necessarily uncommon at this time for ambitious parents selfishly to promote marriages designed to achieve financial or social advantages for their children. But James retorts to such reasoning:

How cruel a part do those parents act, who for the sake of an advantageous settlement, urge their daughters into a union from which their hearts revolt; or persuade their sons, merely for the sake of money, to marry women towards whom they feel no affection. Unnatural fathers and mothers! Is it thus ye would lead your children decorated as sacrifices to the shrine of Mammon, and act the part of priests and priestesses yourselves, in the immolation of these hapless victims?³

¹J. A. James, Works 12, pp.88-89. Love between a man and a woman cannot be at its richest unless it goes beyond mere emotional fixation. As Lippmann put it: "Lovers who have nothing to do but love each other are not really to be envied; love and nothing else very soon is nothing else. The emotion of love, in spite of the romantics, is not self-sustaining; it endures only when the lovers love many things together, and not merely each other." Walter Lippmann, A Preface to Morals, p.308.

²R. M. Trevelyan, English Social History, p.313.

³J. A. James, Works 12, pp.90-91.

Equality in rank and near equality in age should certainly be taken into account in the choice of a life companion, but vastly more important are religious considerations. Both scripture and reason show the "folly" of Christians marrying non-Christians. Nor is it advisable for persons of different denominations to marry unless one agrees to change.¹ A marriage between persons who differ on so vital and all pervading a matter as religion can only with the greatest difficulty result in that union and harmony which ought to exist between husband and wife. Therefore very careful thought should be given to religion in the choice of a companion if the blessing of God is to rest on the marriage.²

The preservation of a satisfactory marital relationship was another part of the problem which presented a challenge to James. As he saw it, the basic essential to a happy marriage is love, but a love which goes deeper than physical attraction.³ It must include consideration for mental, emotional, physical and spiritual factors of the relationship as well. To love one's companion means that the distinctions "mine" and "thine" will become less and less apparent and that the emphasis will come to be placed upon "ours". Perhaps the best evidence of this unity is that both persons will

¹J. A. James, Works 12, pp.95-104.

²Ibid.

³Emil Brunner says that the stability of marriage is based "not on love but on fidelity. Fidelity is the ethical element which enhances natural love." Emil Brunner, The Divine Imperative, p.357.

more and more appreciate the company of each other and will not require outside "aids" to make their relationship satisfactory. As James puts it, "there must be something wrong in domestic life, when they (the couple) need the aid of balls, routs, plays, and parties, to relieve them from tedium produced by their home pursuits".¹ But if in the daily routine of life this harmony is not attained, then indifference and selfishness will be manifested:

My heart has ached to learn the slavery of some devoted, hard-working and ill-used wives: who after labouring all day amidst the ceaseless toils of a young and numerous family, have had to pass the hours of evening in solitude, while their husbands, instead of coming home to cheer them by their society, or to relieve them for only half an hour from their fatigue, have been either at a party or a sermon.²

To James a successful marriage in large measure depended upon the behaviour of the husband³, and therefore he was eager to emphasise the teaching of the Bible on the husband's responsibilities. In his opinion the best advice was given in Ephesians, Chapter Five, where a man's love for his wife was likened to that for himself, and compared ideally with Christ's love for the church, a love which was sincere, uniform, and what is perhaps most important of all, durable:

¹J. A. James, Works 12, p. 32.

²Ibid., p. 37.

³In this opinion he was in accord with the early Puritans: "Puritanism tended to bolster up the power of the individual husband. The ideology of Milton and Knox was patriarchal. Knox once said, "An empire of women is the most detestable and damned amongst all enormities that this day abound upon the face of the whole earth!" Joseph Kirk Folsom, The Family and Democratic Society, p. 93.

'Having loved his own, he loved them to the end' so ought men to love their wives, not only at the beginning, but to the end of their union; when the charms of beauty have fled before the withering influence of disease; when the vigorous and sprightly frame has lost its elasticity, and the step has become slow and faltering; when the wrinkles of age have succeeded to the bloom of youth, and the whole person seems rather the monument than the resemblance of what it once was The woman is not what she was, but the wife, the mother, the Christian, are better than they were.¹

The wife should respond to such Christlike love by "subjecting" herself to her husband, since God has endowed man with a superior authority, an authority which is in accord with the idea of companionship.² Unequivocally he says of the man's position: "In all matters touching the little world in the house, he is to direct, not indeed without taking counsel with his wife, but in case of discordant views, he, unless he choose to waive his right, is to decide; and the wife should yield to his decision with grace and cheerfulness".³ If the wife is reverent and meek, there

¹J. A. James, Works 12, p.57.

²Perhaps this is the best place to mention a little book which James published in 1841 for widows called The Widow Directed to the Widow's God. Designed especially to help widows during the early part of their sorrow, considerable emphasis is placed upon the widow's need to interpret the death of her husband as an act of God's wise love and to grasp the consequent lesson that only God is the source of lasting happiness. He goes on to emphasize that the worldly consolations which remain, as beneficial and as comforting as they are, must not be allowed to deter the widow from an increasing confidence in and love for God, and a determined will to benefit religiously from her "afflictions". He also stresses that the example of the widows in the Bible should give every widow new courage to face life with a confident faith in the God who will never forsake those who put their trust in Him. By 1871, 16,000 copies of this work had been issued. See Works 12.

³J. A. James, Ibid., p.63.

will be few quarrels, both will be happy, and the home will prosper. These qualities will also guard against the "fashionable follies" of the times and contribute toward the placing of proper emphasis upon the cultivation of other mental and spiritual "graces". Extravagance in dress and living will therefore be kept in harmony with Christian character and intelligent economy.

There is in this age a manifest disposition in all classes of society to come as closely as possible to the habits of those above them. The poor are imitating the middling classes, and they are copying the upper ranks. A showy, luxurious, and expensive mode of living is pursued almost universally, and is displayed in innumerable instances, without means to support it. A large house, a country residence, splendid furniture, a carriage, a retinue of servants, and large parties, are the ambition of many, and their creditors pay for it Now a wife has a great influence in checking or promoting all this let her consider how little all this has to do with the happiness of her family¹

As an alternative to this very warped sense of values, James encouraged wives to substitute a spiritual approach to life; "Let knowledge, piety, good sense, well-formed habits, harmony, mutual love, be the sources of your domestic pleasures: what is

¹J. A. James, Works 12, pp.74-75. With the prosperity which the Agrarian and Industrial Revolutions brought, England found herself in the process of becoming the mistress of the world's finances. Although her population was widely divided by rank and wealth, by 1815 there was considerable "fashion" consciousness. It was the "age of the 'dandies' and their feminine counterparts the 'dandizettes' with their exaggeratedly foppish costumes and habits; of Beau Brummell and the popularity of Brighton; of dignified gentlemen flying along the roads on their hobby-horses - a new craze which was a cross between a scooter and a bicycle, propelled by the feet on the ground." David Thomson, England in The Nineteenth Century, p.19. It could hardly be expected that a man of James's outlook would be sympathetic to an atmosphere of this type.

splendour of furniture, or dress, or entertainments, to these?"¹

In addition to the general lack of serious thought and planning in the formation and preservation of marriages, there also seemed to be, in the opinion of James, a dearth of parental concern for the spiritual welfare of children, and to a lesser extent for their temporal needs. As he saw it, the task of rearing a family is a responsibility so awesome that careful parental planning and supervision is essential if the children's good is to be promoted. It is necessary for parents to recognise that theirs is a position of stewardship and that they must give an account to God for their actions, therefore every parent should familiarise himself with his duties so that he can better accomplish his task.

One responsibility of parents is to give due emphasis to the scholastic training of their children. As adequate an education as circumstances will permit should be the parental gift to every child. Many parents must be content to send their children to the Sunday or Charity schools², while others can afford better institutions. In the case of the latter group, a school should not be chosen for its prestige or classical curriculum only, but due forethought must be given to religion as well. But whatever type of education is possible, it should be given, and to "grudge

¹J. A. James, Works 12, p.75.

²See G. M. Trevelyan, English Social History, p.52.

money spent in this way is a cruel and detestable niggardliness".¹

In addition to the purely "academic" instruction which should be provided, sufficient attention should be given to other aspects of the child's development. It is the duty of parents to instill correct principles and habits in the child's mind and character. Little emphasis should be placed upon the importance of riches and worldly success, but great stress should be placed upon the fact that a good man is reputable in any circumstances and a bad man in none. Industrious habits, economy in living, prudence, and generosity should zealously be taught the children by parental example and encouragement. Ample consideration should also be given by the parents to their children's vocations, with due regard to the physical strength, mental capacity and personal ambitions of the child.² The choice of a particular vocation merely to elevate the family's social reputation should be avoided. "What subject

¹J. A. James, Works 12, pp.114-16.

²Children of the poorer classes at this time were usually started on their vocations quite early. Without doubt one of the worst effects of the new industrialisation of England was the exploitation of children by parents and employers. In 1802 parliamentary legislation had limited child labour to twelve hours a day in the cotton mills, and it was not until after 1813 that the number of hours which a child could work was reduced to forty-eight per week. Hence it hardly needs to be said that many parents needed to give serious thought to the problems of their children's employment. Unfortunately the poorer classes, who had the greatest need, were the most indifferent. G. M. Trevelyan, English Social History, pp.322, 483, 548; David Thomson, England in the Nineteenth Century, p.47.

folly it is for a man to turn away the attention of his children from any good and honourable business, which he has followed with success merely because it is not genteel!"¹

As important as the foregoing points are, however, they are of little significance in comparison with the greater parental task of preparing the children to dwell eternally with God. Generally it is the father who should take the initiative:

Every family, when directed as it should be, has a sacred character, inasmuch as the head of it acts the part of both the prophet and the priest of his household, by instructing them in the knowledge, and leading them in the worship of God; and, at the same time, he discharges the duty of a king, by supporting a system or order, subordination and discipline.²

Parental instruction on Christian doctrine is an obligation that Christian parents must assume if they have the ultimate good of their children at heart. The children must be indoctrinated as early as possible on the Biblical presentation of the Character of God, the spirituality of his law, the fall of man, the evil of sin, the person and work of Christ, the need of repentance, the justification of the soul by faith, the nature and necessity of regeneration, obedience to the laws of Christ, the solemnities of judgment, the immortality of the soul, the punishment of the wicked, and the happiness of the righteous. The use of catechisms can be helpful, but care should be taken that the Bible is the

¹J. A. James, Works 12, p.119.

²Ibid., p.17.

basis of teaching and that the presentation of the truth is appealing and sympathetic:

An angry and scolding father, with a catechism in one hand, and a rod in the other, railing at a stubborn child for not learning his lesson, is not a scene calculated to invest religion with an air of loveliness and a power of attraction for young minds.¹

Persuasion, encouragement, and warning of the folly of rejecting religion, should also be used, but always with discretion. A parent can easily be too zealous in this respect and accordingly do more harm than good. Discipline, on the other hand, is essential if the child's religious well-being is to be assured. Parents are invested by God with an almost absolute authority over their children: "The first thing a child should be made to understand is, that he is to do, not what he likes, but what he is commended: that he is not to govern, but to be governed."² When a child disobeys, he must be corrected, but a stern and

¹J. A. James, Works 12, pp.128-29. "The old system of Biblical and doctrinal instruction ... while its pedagogical method was crude and unattractive and its subject matter ill adapted to the child's mind, was based upon sound philosophy. ... It used clumsy and often harsh technique. It knew no better than to unload the full weight of adult ideas upon the young child's mind. But with all its faults of method it had the right idea. That idea was to equip the growing child with the language of religion, to impregnate his mind with the lore of the Christian cultus, to put him in possession of his rich heritage as a member of the continuing community of those who serve and worship God." Charles Clayton Morrison, The Social Gospel and the Christian Cultus, pp.76-77.

²J. A. James, Works 12, p.132. James further states concerning the role of the parents: "You must be the sovereigns of your houses, allowing no interference from without, no resistance from within."

rigid severity should not be the norm of parental conduct, since the first object of every parent should be to make punishment generally unnecessary. This can best be accomplished through guidance rather than by force.¹

Parental example is another necessary factor for parents continually to remember in the religious education of their children. As James puts it: "Without example, everything else that we do, is most lamentably deficient: as has been often said, it is only pointing them the way to heaven, but leading them in the way to hell."² Diligent inspection of the children's progress will also have to be maintained. This is necessary if corrective measures are to be taken for their good.³

Prayer, however, must be the crowning feature of all. Parents should begin to pray for the child even before it is born and continue to pray till their deaths. They should not only pray for their children, however, but pray with them. Family prayer should be regularly offered both in the morning and in the evening, and to ensure that it becomes a family habit, a set time should be agreed upon when every member of the family can be present and at a time when the worship is least likely to be disturbed by visitors. An Old Testament passage should be read for one part of the day and

¹J. A. James, Works 12, pp.133ff.

²Ibid., pp.142ff.

³Ibid., p.142.

a New Testament one for the other. Where possible, hymns should be a part of the service. The family prayer should generally be offered by the father and should be rather brief but vital: "A few petitions breathed forth with a fervour that kindles the fire of devotion in all around are far better than half-an-hour's talking about religion to God."¹ The needs of the children, of the servants, and of the household in general should be expressed audibly so that the service may be most meaningful to all who participate. Thus if a family devotional period is consistently maintained, the children will learn through participation the value of family religion and the Kingdom of God will be strengthened. Furthermore, if parental instruction, encouragement and warning, discipline and example, and above all, family worship, are given due emphasis, then parents can rest assured that theirs is a noble work which will not go unrewarded.

The need for youth to respond submissively to Christian influence is perhaps the simplest way to state the general emphasis of James's The Christian Father's Present to His Children. Written four years earlier than The Family Monitor, this book was designed to appeal to young people of fourteen years and older, whereas The Family Monitor was written for adults. In both works the general evangelical themes, and much of the material, overlap, consequently only a brief consideration of the work seems necessary.

¹J. A. James, Works 12, pp.148-49.

To James an obedient faith in Christ must be the foundation of one's whole life if the highest good in life is to be assured. A youth who has had the privilege of religious training and influence in the home is very fortunate, but it is important that he recognises that he must respond in his own life by faith and action. An awareness of his parents' concern for his spiritual well-being should intensify his desire to embrace religion, and if it does, he should remember before action is taken that the only acceptable religion is "Bible" religion and that if reason contradicts the Bible, then reason must bow to revelation:

There can be no contradictions in the Word of God; the thing is impossible no difficulty in the way of understanding its meaning, no seeming mystery in its nature, should lead us to reject it; we must receive it, and wait for further light to understand it. Revelation is the sun, reason the eye which receives its beams: and it can no more be said that revelation destroys or degrades reason, by guiding it, than it can be said that the solar orb renders the faculty of vision useless.¹

True religion then is a religion of revelation which requires human submission. Consequently every young person would do well to recall and heed the teaching and admonitions he received from his parents since the privilege of a religious education carries with it a greater responsibility. Obstacles to an acceptance of this divine religion, such as intellectual pride, worldly pleasure, sinful companions, or any other harmful thing, must be set aside if salvation is to be obtained. This will require persistent acts

¹J. A. James, Works 13, pp. 32-33.

of the will and the aid of the Holy Spirit. Emotional experiences, religious knowledge, or church affiliation must not be confused with the very essence of true religion: nothing short of a change of allegiance from Satan to Christ is satisfactory. If motives are needed to encourage an acceptance of Christ, one need only think of the pleasures and advantages of a religious life. Religion brings peace, faith, hope, and salvation, and also prevents numerous "miseries". Because God in His wisdom has provided it for man's good, every youth should early seek its blessings.¹

To become a Christian, however, means that constant vigilance will have to be maintained to improve one's character, and to accomplish this all decisions affecting every area of life must be carefully made. The choice of friends should be particularly guarded. If it is seen that a relationship will be detrimental to religious character, it should be ended. Nor will a Christian's reading material be haphazardly selected. Above all, religious books, and particularly the Bible, will come to be the centre of a Christian's reading. In the choice of non-religious books careful discrimination should be practised. Books on history are particularly valuable; biography is constructive; poetry is less edifying:

It refines our sensibilities, and polishes our taste;
but adds little to our information ... I need not recommend

¹J. A. James, Works 13, p.123ff. More will be said about "conversion" in the next chapter.

Milton: I will not recommend Byron. Walter Scott, Southey, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Campbell, Tennyson, Longfellow, all have charms: but if you would have poetry and piety united, read Cowper, Montgomery, Pollock, Mrs. Hemans, Jane Taylor.¹

Likewise most novels are unprofitable for Christian reading:

As to that class of books denominated novels, I join with every other moral and religious writer in condemning, as vile trash, a very large portion of the productions which under this name, have carried a turbid stream of morbid sentimentalism, impure feeling, and perverted action, into the hearts and lives of multitudes.²

The Christian will also have to be discreet in choosing wholesome recreations and amusements to refresh the body and mind.

Theatrical amusements will therefore be avoided and the so-called "field-sports" should be positively shunned:

Shooting, coursing, hunting, angling, are all cruel. What agony is inflicted in hooking a worm or a fish; in maiming a bird; in chasing a hare. To find sport in doing this, is inhuman and unchristian ... I am not contending against killing them or eating them, but against the act of killing them for sport.³

¹J. A. James, Works 13, p.192.

²Scott, Bulwer, Dickens and Thackeray are listed as authors whose works contained acceptable moral content, but even of them he commented: "Whatever may be said of their morals they have no sympathy with the piety of God's holy word." J. A. James, Works 13, p.194.

³J. A. James, Works 13, p.202. This, in some respect, is suggestive of the "reverence for life" principle of Albert Schweitzer: "The man who has become a thinking being feels a compulsion to give to every will-to-live the same reverence for life that he gives to his own. He experiences that other life in his own. He accepts as being good: to preserve life, to promote life, to raise to its highest value life which is capable of development; and as being evil: to destroy life, to injure life, to repress life which is capable of development. This is the absolute fundamental principle of the moral, and it is a necessity of thought." Albert Schweitzer, Out of My Life and Thought, p.126.

Sufficient emphasis will also have to be given to the proper use of God's gift of time, to Christian liberality, and to the fellowship and work of the Christian Church. As to the latter, it should ever be remembered that religion is both personal and social, hence church membership is for man's spiritual good:

Religion, though personal in its nature, is social in its tendency and exercises; it is superinduced on a being formed for society, and carrying this propensity of his heart into every situation. Hence his piety leads him to seek the companionship of men of 'like precious faith'.¹

But the basic question confronting every youth who has been religiously educated is this: What is the great end of life? If a youth answers by pursuing riches, pleasure, fame, knowledge, or marital happiness, to the exclusion of personal religion, it would be better for him had he never been born. If he responds by seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, then he need not fear for his temporal needs and can confidently rest assured that at the end of his earthly existence God will receive him into His Presence where he can continually praise Him through eternal ages for His marvellous salvation and for Christian parents who contributed to his acceptance of it.

Such was the emphasis of James upon the home. Undoubtedly, the preaching and writing of men like him, before and during Queen Victoria's reign, played a great part in making religion vital in the homes of the nation and surely theirs was a significant

¹J. A. James, Works 13, p.291.

contribution. In fact, the Victorian era cannot be evaluated properly without considering the influence of evangelicals upon the home. One authority on Victorianism, Canon Charles Smyth, recently put it thus:

Puritanism ... was the religion of the state: Methodism the religion of the heart: the Oxford Movement the religion of the Church: but Evangelicalism was the religion of the home.¹

¹Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians, pp.103-04.

CHAPTER THREE

THE EXPERIENCE OF SALVATION

It is amazing how deceptive appearances can be. For thirty or forty years before his death, James had the appearance of a man accustomed to pure air and constant exercise. In the pulpit and on the platform he seemed to be completely at ease and there was not the slightest evidence in his public appearances which suggested anything but health, stability and peace of mind. Yet for many years there was a mind underneath this veneer which was tormented with uncontrollable fears. It would take a psychologist to analyse and present a scientific explanation of the working of his mind, but there are circumstances surrounding his condition which help to interpret it without delving into its deepest psychological troubles.

We have already noted in the previous chapter that James rarely refused to accept an invitation to speak in the years immediately following 1813 and that these constant engagements possibly contributed to his physical illness in 1817. We have also noted that during this sickness, he made a slight spiritual adjustment. The impression one gets, however, is that it had little effect upon his life, so that for many years after it he continued to accept speaking engagements without possessing the very stability really essential to them. It is not surprising, therefore, to find a crippling nervous malady gradually emerging. As early as 1829 he stated in a letter to Dr. Patton of New York that he was "the subject of frequent attacks of nervous irritability"¹.

¹R. W. Dale, The Life and Letters of John Angell James, p. 254.

As late as 1845 James described his symptoms as follows:

I find it difficult to explain the idiosyncrasy under which I labour. It is something like this: I make a promise to preach -- after a while I am somewhat poorly -- I wake in the night -- the promise comes up like a spectre before me -- it is a trifling concern, it is future -- I cannot sleep. I rise uncomfortable, and continue so through the day. I go to bed dreading I shall not sleep -- the prediction verifies itself. Then I calculate there are so many weeks to intervene, and that I shall not sleep comfortable till it is over -- and how can I endure broken rest so long? By this time the matter has got hold of me, and neither reason nor religion can throw it off.¹

Even the prospect of his own pulpit disturbed him to the point of his scarcely ever sleeping on Saturday nights for many years. "I have myself seen him", Dale recalled, "manifest extraordinary nervous excitement in the vestry just before entering his own pulpit."² In the earlier years of this trouble, his anxiety left him as soon as he faced his congregation, but his previous anticipations had so depleted his energy that an unnatural consumption of strength was demanded in his preaching. As time passed his constitution became so weakened that almost unbearable dread came over him at the prospect of taking any special engagement.³ It became necessary, therefore, for him to localise his ministry in Birmingham as much as possible. The itinerant, changeable experiences of a public speaker were exchanged for the quieter

¹R. W. Dale, The Life and Letters of John Angell James, p. 285.

²Ibid., p. 275.

³Ibid., p. 276.

life of a settled minister, and for several years he seldom preached outside Birmingham. T. S. James has pointed out that if James did accept an engagement to speak, he would often cancel the appointment, and then his conscience would eventually compel him to send a letter telling of his decision to come after all.¹ Perhaps the latest example of this was in 1849 when his health prompted him to cancel an engagement to preach at Surrey Chapel in connection with the jubilee of the London Missionary Society.²

It is natural that his friends viewed the lessening of his more public engagements with dismay. Dr. Redford of Worcester wrote him on July 5, 1837, strongly urging him not to localise his ministry:

You have hitherto lived and preached, not for Birmingham alone, but for England; and do you think we can now spare you from the wider sphere? No, my brother; you must think again, and make another vigorous effort to conquer this painful feeling.³

This plea was sympathetically received, but the situation was much more complex than Dr. Redford realised. As James saw it, it was

¹Ibid., pp.593-95.

²Ibid., p.365.

³Ibid., p.278. Dr. Redford (1785-1860) was one of James's closest friends. Educated at Glasgow University, he was minister of Uxbridge for fourteen years and ultimately became prominent in Congregational circles as one of the editors of the Congregational Magazine. From 1826 onward, till ill-health compelled his retirement, he lived and worked in Worcester. Upon his retirement he went to Birmingham "to be near his friend, the Rev. John Angell James". Dictionary of National Biography, Vol.47, p.377; The Congregational Magazine, June 1832, p.381; John Stoughton, Reminiscences of Congregationalism, pp.48-49.

expedient to cut down the number of his public engagements.

The causes of this nervousness, no doubt, were many, but it seems that his spiritual instability was perhaps the basic one. Dr. Redford suggested that the feeling might owe its origins to too many engagements in the past, the cunning device of the devil, or to a turbulent anxiety to maintain the high standard expected of him by the public.¹ A very significant suggestion was made by Dale when he said: "I am inclined to think it was God's wise love, not the cunning of the devil, which temporarily interrupted Mr. James's public activity."² This opinion was accepted by James, because in a letter to the Rev. James Parson of York, dated December 24, 1836, he stated: "Unless my heart greatly deceives me, I can say without a moment's doubt or hesitation, 'It is good for me that I am afflicted'."³

The latter years of his ministry at Carrs Lane clearly reveal that this affliction resulted in a deepening of the spiritual life of James and his congregation, but this spiritual progress did not come easily. Dale discovered several loose memoranda, written by James during the years of his disturbance, which are very important in disclosing his effort to achieve a spiritual adjustment. Written at various dates from the last week of February 1840 to the end of the following year, they deal with several subjects regarding his work, but for the present they will be considered

¹Ibid., pp. 276-78.

²Ibid., pp. 279-80.

³Ibid., p. 282.

only as they relate to his inner spirit. In the first paper he listed several spiritual goals toward which he intended to strive in his personal habits:

Learn to think of death not only with composure, but even something of desire; overcome dread of death and love of life. Subdue besetting sins, and become indifferent to the objects of them Rise earlier -- more meditation -- prayer -- devotional reading. In family prayer more devout. Learning Scripture memoriter. Consider the propriety of monthly fast.¹

About a week after he wrote this paper, on Sunday afternoon, March 8, 1840, he penned another paper which was exclusively concerned with his spiritual condition. Considering his mental state a chastisement from God, he endeavoured in the paper to inquire into the reason and design of the conflicts. He listed the following points as possible explanations for his illness:

(1) It is certain that one end is to humble me ... My mind is even liable to a degree of nervousness which approaches to insanity. O Lord, uphold me; I am bowed down with a sense of my pitiable impotency (2) Perhaps it is designed especially to keep me humble under the constant and accumulating proofs of my usefulness by the 'Anxious Inquirer', which flow to me from all quarters, and the estimation in which I seem now to be held by my own people and others, as a man of growing sanctity of character and conduct (3) Perhaps it is to increase my usefulness in the way of comforting and edifying God's people, by speaking to them more experimentally of His power to support and comfort them (4) Perhaps it is to prepare me to give up my ministry and go and dwell with my divine Lord (5) Perhaps it is to abate in me the love of life and dread of death (6) Perhaps it is to prepare me for the removal of my dear and beloved wife, whose health has been long declining.... (7) Perhaps it is to prepare me to be still tenderer and more sympathising to that dear object...

¹R. W. Dale, Ibid., pp. 331-32.

(8) Perhaps it is to settle and increase my confidence in God (9) Perhaps it is to make me more spiritual, inasmuch as I am sure I need it (10) Perhaps it is to make me more watchful, circumspect, and cautious in all things¹

Both of these papers are good examples of the spiritual self-scrutiny to which James subjected himself during this period and show his intense concern to utilise spiritual means to remedy the condition.²

His inner state was not the only cause for his alarm during this period, because in a letter to the Rev. James Parsons of York, dated December 24, 1836, he said: "My affliction is relative as well as personal; my wife will never be well again and my daughter gets worse."³ Practically all of his letters at this time show his anxious concern about his wife's health. Writing in December, 1839, to Dr. Sprague of America, he stated that his wife's health was "seriously impaired and would never

¹R. W. Dale, Ibid., pp. 332-33.

²This spiritual emphasis is reflected in his pastoral addresses during this struggle. The Religious Tract Society published an annual series of them for the years 1840, 1841 and 1842. They were with few exceptions delivered as sermons on Sunday mornings at Carrs Lane and according to T. S. James, they may be taken as a "very correct idea of his preaching". They were very devotional in content (See Works 15) and are a good commentary upon the devotional bent of James's mind at this period. According to Dale the total circulation of James's pastoral addresses throughout his life amounted to more than a million copies. Works 15, p. 5.; R. W. Dale, The Funeral Services, p. 62.

³R. W. Dale, Ibid., p. 282.

be good again".¹ On February 8, 1841, he wrote to the Rev. William Jay of Bath on the occasion of his jubilee: "My dear, my invaluable wife is wasting away under the consuming power of an incurable disease."² In a letter of sympathy to Mrs. Gregory upon the death of Dr. Gregory, dated February 16, 1841, he said: "I am expecting the trial which you are experiencing. May God prepare us for the cup which He is preparing for us."³ The dreaded moment soon came. Mrs. James died on June 3, 1841.⁴

From a purely human standpoint this event could not have happened at a more difficult time for James. The sufferings of his daughter, an invalid almost from childhood, had greatly increased from 1834 onwards. In addition to this, his mental condition was aggravated by the appearance in 1840 of symptoms of a disease which threatened him with great physical pain, and with the death of his wife he lost the one "whose energy and wisdom had been his strength and support through these troubles".⁵ His sorrow, however, was not uncontrolled. The previous efforts he had made to re-orientate himself spiritually, imperfect though they were, had prepared him to submit more peaceably to the will of God. In a pastoral address to his people immediately after his wife's death, he described his attitude toward his bereavement:

¹R. W. Dale, op. cit., p. 357.

²Ibid., p. 358.

³Ibid., p. 321.

⁴Ibid., p. 333.

⁵Ibid., p. 318.

When a holy and beloved object of our affection is removed by death, we ought to sorrow; humanity demands it, and Christianity in the person of the weeping Jesus allows it: and the man without a tear is a savage or a stoic, but not a Christian. God intends, when he bestows His gifts, that they should be received with smiles of gratitude; and when He recalls them, that they should be surrendered with 'drops of sacred grief'. Sorrow is an affection implanted by the Creator in the soul for wise and beneficent purposes; and it ought not to be ruthlessly torn up by the roots, but directed in its exercise by reason and religion. The work of grace, though it is above nature, is not against it ... But then, though we mourn, we must not murmur. We may sorrow, but not with the passionate and uncontrolled grief of the heathen, who have no hope. Our sorrow must flow, deep as we like, but noiseless and still, in the channels of submission.¹

As painful as his loss was, he determined to make the most of it spiritually. On June 3, 1841, he wrote in a personal paper:

I desire, through Divine grace to turn this painful dispensation to some valuable purpose connected with my own salvation as a Christian, and my usefulness as a Christian minister....I desire to renew the consecration of myself - - my body, soul, talents, influence - - everything I am and have, and can do, to the eternal God.²

With this desire firmly embedded in his heart, his attention naturally turned toward his church. The death of Mrs. James had been a great loss to his congregation. In her labours she had impressed them with her piety, perception, judgment, tact and energy.³ She had devoted a great part of her time to the visitation of the sick and poor. She had given generously of her wealth in relief work. Consequently, all who knew her

¹R. W. Dale, *Ibid.*, pp. 326-27.

²*Ibid.*, p. 334.

³*Ibid.*, p. 600.

revered her.¹ In a letter to Dr. Sprague on July 31, 1841, James stated that he was determined to remain with his people and do them good by taking advantage of the spiritual sensitivity of his own mind and the sympathetic concern of his congregation.² An incident that occurred on the Saturday after his wife's death is perhaps a sign that he was becoming more eminently qualified to do so. It was a family custom to read the 103rd Psalm on Saturday evenings at family prayer. With the open Bible in his hand, he paused a moment, and then said: "Notwithstanding what has happened this week, I see no reason for departing from our usual custom of reading the 103rd Psalm: 'Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name'."³

The religious orientation James made at this period, though it did not immediately relieve his nervous tension, paved the way for a complete recovery. Early in 1842 he further strengthened his position by a searching inquiry into his obligations as a Christian and a minister. The first section of the paper was entitled "Directions for my Spiritual Conduct". The following are the goals he set for himself:

- (1) More time for prayer -- reading -- meditation.
- (2) Cultivate more spirituality. (3) Seek to have the graces of faith and trust much strengthened. Cheerfully

¹R. W. Dale, Ibid., p. 319.

²Ibid., p. 359.

³Ibid., p. 326.

trust God (4) Consider self now as having done with even much worldly enjoyment. Set apart for God. (5) Realise the approach of death - - eternity.¹

James's long and faithful ministry after this period of spiritual adjustment makes it evident that the victory he won here contributed greatly to the sacrificial service which was so characteristic of his latter years.² Though his inner life in the latter part of his ministry was stable and relatively free from unnatural tension, it is perhaps true to say that as a person he was more content than happy. The loss of his wife, the suffering of his invalid daughter, the deaths of his son's wife in 1847 and his brother James James in 1852, undoubtedly hurt him deeply. Furthermore, he was also disturbed from time to time by his physical health, which began to decline noticeably in 1853, and by a rather morbid conviction, which asserted itself at different periods, that he was soon to die. But in and through it all the basic adjustment which he achieved in this period and which he strengthened in the years that followed prepared him to bear these burdens as a Christian and to be a more useful servant in the Kingdom of God.

¹R. W. Dale, Ibid., p.517.

²The pastoral ministry of James will be dealt with later in the thesis, but perhaps it will be well simply to mention here that these years of James's inner conflict and stabilisation were also years of advance at Carrs Lane. The membership increased from 500 in 1834 to 850 in 1841. This increase was undoubtedly due in the main to the fact that James cut down his more public duties and concentrated his attention on Carrs Lane.

Closely related to James's interest in the deepening of his own spiritual life was his concern to see a revival of religion in Britain. Recently there has been a resurgence of interest in evangelism of various types in Britain and in America. Perhaps this can be attributed to the instability of the times, the challenge of materialism, the new appreciation of the Bible, or simply to a special movement of God's Spirit. It is an interesting fact, however, that almost every great evangelistic movement in America has generally tended to affect Britain's interest in evangelism, and vice versa. The prevalent concern today is no exception. By the exchange of information and ministers throughout the years, each country has benefited from the experience and inspiration of the other.¹ During the life time of James this reciprocal concern was clearly displayed and he himself played a vital part in it. His theology was conducive to his co-operation in and promotion of any movement calculated to win men to Christ. "His sole wish", wrote S. C. Kent of Australia, "was to snatch sinners as brands from burning, to save souls from death."²

It is quite probable that the impetus to promote revival came to James through contact with American ministers. In his biography Dale includes letters mentioning revival dated as early

¹Whitfield (1714-70), Finney (1792-75), Moody (1827-1899), and more recently Brian Green of Birmingham and Billy Graham of North Carolina, may be cited as notable examples.

²S. C. Kent, op. cit., p.12.

as 1827-28 to Drs. Patton and Sprague, both of New York. These and subsequent letters, coupled with his published works, reveal his deep longing for a spiritual awakening in Britain, and are the primary sources of information about his efforts toward it. In a very real sense James's interest in revival was a natural outgrowth of the emphasis upon the Bible as the Word of God in the nineteenth century, and the historical kinship of the Evangelicals of that century to the revival movements which preceded them. From one standpoint it can be said that all revivals are related to the first Christian revival which occurred on the Day of Pentecost through the preaching of Peter, and then spread around the Mediterranean. But revivalism has taken various forms through the centuries. Moravianism, Pietism and Cocceianism can be cited as examples. The two movements, however, which affected James most were the Evangelical Revival of Britain and the Great Awakening in America.

The Evangelical Revival is linked inseparably with the early activities of Evangelicals within the Church of England. One of the preparatory phases of the movement was the "Holy Club" started by Charles Wesley at Oxford and presided over by John Wesley upon his return from Epworth to Oxford in 1729.¹ It was only after John Wesley's experience of disillusionment and failure as a missionary and parish priest in Georgia, and after his return to

¹G. R. Balleine, A History of The Evangelical Party in The Church of England, pp.1-11.

England in 1738, that Evangelicalism emerged with a saving doctrine of justification by faith alone and a consciously felt experience of God's saving power. The media here were the writings of Luther and the example and personal direction of the Moravians.¹

Whitfield's partly independent experience of the new birth and discovery of power in preaching deserve mention as a distinct factor in the total complex of the Revival. Likewise his Calvinism exerted a strong influence upon the so-called Anglican Evangelicals. The doctrine of the Wesleys in contrast remained definitely Arminian.²

The Evangelical Revival was eminently a preaching revival. This preaching, which was primarily of the Gospel of God's saving grace and power against a background of his judgment upon all sin and unrighteousness, was of three kinds: parochial, field, and society. Parochial preaching met opposition but continued and developed into what may be called Anglican Evangelicalism. Whitfield was the pioneer and great exemplar of field preaching, in which, however, the Wesleys soon joined him.³ It was in the meetings of the religious societies, a well established institution of the Church of England of which Samuel Wesley of Epworth had been

¹Ibid., pp. 22-24, and J. H. Overton, The Evangelical Revival in the Eighteenth Century, p. 15.

²L. E. Elliott Binns, The Early Evangelicals, pp. 117-27.

³Balleine, Ibid., pp. 27-28, and Leonard Elliott Binns, The Evangelical Movement in the English Church, p. 11.

a patron and advocate, that the marked conversion phenomena of the Revival were first manifest. The Revival spread rapidly, meeting an astonishing response in the hearts and lives of the masses of the British people¹, and is sometimes credited by historians as having averted a counterpart to the French Revolution.

The Great Awakening², which is the term now used to designate the revival which swept the American Colonies from 1725 to the opening of the War for Independence, also contributed to the historical setting into which James's attitude and effort toward revival must be placed. The movement had various geographical phases³, but the one in New England is perhaps the better known. It was largely Congregational and began in Jonathan Edwards'

¹W. H. Lecky says of the movement's influence: "The doctrines the Methodist teacher taught, the theory of life he enforced, proved themselves capable of arousing in great masses of men an enthusiasm of piety which was hardly surpassed in the first days of Christianity, of eradicating inveterate vice, of fixing and directing impulsive and tempestuous natures that were rapidly hastening towards the abyss. Methodism planted a fervid and enduring religious sentiment in the midst of the most brutal and neglected portions of the population." W. H. Lecky, History of England in the Eighteenth Century, Vol. 2, p.600.

²One of the standard works on this movement is Tracy's The Great Awakening. Although it is perhaps too detailed at points, nonetheless it is of great value in giving a comprehensive view of the revival.

³Sweet states that American Colonial revivalism began in the Middle Colonies where German pietism had prepared the way by its emphasis upon inner, personal religions, and then spread to other parts of the country. William Warren Sweet, Religion in Colonial America, p.274.

Church at Northampton, Massachusetts in 1734, exercising its chief influence in Central and Western Massachusetts and in Connecticut.¹ Though representing several distinct phases, the Great Awakening was in a real sense a single movement, in which the emphasis was everywhere upon inner, personal religion. George Whitefield, who made seven journeys to America between 1738 and 1770, co-operated with all the several phases of the revival and was one of its principal unifying influences.² Intense as was the Great Awakening, and permanent as was its moulding effect upon American religious conceptions, its active period was brief. American minds were turned from strenuous interest in religion by a long series of military and political events of absorbing concern, terminating in the establishment of government under the American Constitution. For more than a generation men's thoughts were absorbed in these questions and religion in America was at low ebb. The last decade of the eighteenth century saw a rebirth of interest in religion in America. This interest grew without the aid of any single outstanding personality, like that of Whitefield in the Great Awakening.³ The movement was noticeable in New England by 1792, and within the next four years it was strongly manifested in

¹Ibid., pp. 282-85.

²Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Religious Revival", Vol. 19, pp. 240-41.

³L. W. Bacon, A History of American Christianity, p. 242.

the Middle States, whence it swept through the South, and by the dawn of the nineteenth century was in triumphant progress in the New West beyond the Alleghenies. In Kentucky it was felt with peculiar power. There the camp-meeting began in 1800, and there the revival was often accompanied, as had been the Great Awakening, by outcries and bodily manifestations.¹ Walker states that:

The new religious interest was long continued and transforming. Indeed the revivals may be said to have continued, with less frequency and diminishing intensity till 1858, as the predominant feature of American life.²

Before 1830 news of the American revivals began to attract attention in Britain. Information was received from American publications and through personal contact between ministers of the two countries which greatly stimulated evangelical interest in the movement.³ James's friend, Dr. Patton, was one of the American ministers who helped to promote this concern by a visit to Britain in 1827.⁴ It is probable that his glowing reports of

¹Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Religious Revival", Vol. 19, p.241. L. W. Bacon has a very revealing description of the response many people made to "camp-meeting preaching": "Sudden outcries, hysteric weeping and laughter, faintings, catalepsies, trances were customary concomitants of the revival preaching. Multitudes fell prostrate on the ground, 'spiritually slain', as it was said Some beat the floor with their heads. Some, shrieking in agony, bounded about, it is said, like a live fish out of water. Many lay down and rolled over and over for hours at a time. Others rushed wildly over the stumps and benches, and then plunged, shouting 'Lost! Lost!' into the forest." A History of American Christianity, p.239.

²Williston Walker, A History of The Christian Church, p.578.

³John Stoughton, Religion in England from 1800 to 1850, p.83.

⁴R. V. Dale, op. cit., p.247.

the work of the Spirit in America fired the imagination of James and inaugurated his efforts to bring revival.

About a week after Patton left Birmingham, James attended a conference on revival at Worcester, convened by his friend, Dr. Redford. At the meeting he was requested to speak on the information he had received in private conversation with Dr. Patton during his visit. He complied with the request and in his address suggested the possibility of an exchange of deputations with America as a further move to quicken revival interest. The subject was referred to the Congregational Board for consideration. At their next meeting the Board decided against the proposal but did take steps to begin correspondence with the General Assembly of the American Presbyterian body.¹ Though James was disappointed that his original suggestion had not materialised, he took pride in the move which had been taken:

I feel not a little gratified and honoured in having been, in connection with our mutual friend, Redford, the occasion of this auspicious commencement of our associated intercourse with American Churches.²

He realised, however, that contact with American Christians could supply information and probably inspiration, but only God could grant a revival. As an Independent he knew that if revival came it would have to begin within the ministers and congregations of the denomination. W. Gordon Robinson has recently restated the

¹John Stoughton, Ibid., p. 83.

²R. W. Dale, Ibid., p. 256.

strong emphasis upon the local church which Congregationalists have always stressed:

Independency lays its first stress upon the particular church; it believes that the spiritual strength of the local church is of incalculable importance and that no denominational organisation can either buttress or ignore the weakness of any individual cause. It is from the local church that revival begins and is sustained.¹

Holding this traditional view, James began to interpret the need for a local and national revival to his own congregation. In a letter to Dr. Patton on December 13, 1828, he stated that he had recently led his congregation through a season of humiliation and prayer of a "very solemn character", and had arranged to have a monthly congregational prayer service to plead for the influence of the Holy Spirit upon them. He also expressed his disappointment with the poor attendance of the last meeting and his fear that the general habits of his people were "not friendly to the revival or cultivation of a devotional spirit".² Disconcerted with his congregation's response, on December 15, 1828, he sent them a pastoral letter to enliven their interest further. He was particularly anxious that every objection to revival should be removed.³ This was especially true in reference to his own congregation. In his letter he pointed out that he was not suggesting the type of revival some advocates in the country

¹W. Gordon Robinson, William Roby 1760-1830, p.151.

²R. W. Dale, Ibid., p.248.

³Ibid., p.251.

supported. He decried the irregularities and misrepresentations of many sincere but ignorant exponents of it.

By a revival of religion ... I mean a greater increase of true piety in those who are already sincere Christians, and a larger addition to the number of those who are truly converted to God, than we have been accustomed to witness.¹

Soon after this letter was written², the Independent churches in London decided to spend Good Friday as a day of humiliation and prayer and recommended that the churches in the counties also participate in preparatory steps toward spiritual awakening. Large numbers of nonconformist churches co-operated.³ This united action may perhaps be taken as a sign that the subject of revival was very prominent among certain circles at this time. James, however, was not too optimistic about the prospects of an immediate change in conditions. The frustrating response he had received from his own congregation had a sobering influence upon him as the following excerpt from a letter in 1829 shows:

The subject of revivals still continues to occupy the public attention. The greater number of our ministers have preached upon it, and many have printed tracts, treatises or sermons My expectations, I confess, are not sanguine as to the results. Our professors are so entangled with the world in various ways, that I do not look at present for any great increase of their spirituality of mind or their devotional habits. My chief hope rests upon the ministers, who will, I think, be stirred up to a greater devotedness

¹J. A. James, Works 9, p.452.

²The letter was ultimately addressed to the Congregationalists of England.

³R. W. Dale, Ibid., p.253.

to the duties of their office, and a more intense earnestness after the conversion of sinners.¹

It would have been out of keeping with James's religious policy, however, for him merely to have hoped the ministers would become interested in revival; his hope was expressed in action by a Letter to Ministers on Personal Religion inserted in the Evangelical Magazine for 1829. In the letter he suggested that each minister should seriously scrutinise his personal religious life, his spiritual relationship with his family and friends, the devotional quality of the service he conducted, and the possibility of his general conduct not appearing pious.² Nor was his concern limited to the settled ministers, he was interested in the young men preparing to be ministers as well. In the same year there appeared in the Evangelical Magazine his Address to Those Who Are Engaged in Preparatory Studies for the Work of the Ministry, on Personal Religion. The letter is a kind, fatherly admonition to piety.

Receive then, my dear young brethren, the advice of one, who is most tenderly concerned for your welfare, and the welfare of the churches of Christ which are soon to be entrusted to your care; of one who, after twenty-four years' labour in no contracted sphere of ministerial exertion, can testify that while he has felt and deplored his deficiencies in many things, he has felt and deplored most of all his deficiency in personal religion.³

¹R. W. Dale, Ibid., p.253. According to Elliott-Binns "Revivals on a small scale and affecting only a limited area seem to have been comparatively frequent in the early years of the nineteenth century; they were a kind of continuation of the Methodist Revival and were largely carried on by the followers of Wesley." Religion in The Victorian Era, p.215.

²J. A. James, Works 8, pp.453-64.

³Ibid., p.479.

His efforts, sincere and zealous as they were, soon proved more than discouraging to him. By September 14, 1829, he realistically admits in a letter to Dr. Sprague that the movement was declining.

I am sorry to say that I think the stir about revivals begins to abate in this kingdom. We have taught, preached, printed, and prayed about it; but somehow or other it is, I fear, slipping from the public mind.¹

Two years later, with a sense of pathos, in a letter to Dr. Patton he said:

Alas! for England, on the subject of revivals. No symptoms of an encouraging nature appear in our churches; no certain signs of renewed vigour; no unambiguous tokens of the descending shower are to be discerned. The little stir that was made about two years ago has nearly all died away; and though it has left in some few instances a happy result in renewed ministerial exertion, it has not been followed by any visible general result.²

It is quite wrong, however, to assume that James thought "pious religion" on the whole was decreasing during this period. On the contrary, in writing a preface in 1832 to the English Edition of Dr. Sprague's Letters on Revivals of Religion, he stated:

Revival is a comparative term Comparing the state of religion in this country with what it was, it is flourishing; compared with what it should be, considering our means and privileges, or with what it is on the other side of the Atlantic, it is low indeed.³

He also noted an increase in the number of evangelical clergymen

¹R. W. Dale, Ibid., p. 257.

²Ibid., p. 261.

³J. A. James, Works 9, p. 494.

within the Church of England. Writing to Dr. Patton on March 14, 1834, he said: "I cannot interpret this circumstance; a vast nucleus of piety has been forming in the midst of surrounding evils of an enormous character."¹ But despite the progress of religion James longed to see a religious awakening in Britain similar to the one parts of America had experienced. It must have been painful for him to write Dr. Patton in 1834 that "all hopes of a revival of religion are at present checked".² Undaunted by poor prospects of immediate revival, he continued to work and pray for it for the next few years. His pen was particularly active in the year 1839 and in this year he wrote a preface to the English reprint of Edwards' treatise on revivals of religion stating in it:

¹R. W. Dale, Ibid., p.339. In the early part of the century the clergy of the established church were particularly vulnerable to attack by nonconformists. Many of the Anglican clergy were guilty of the joint evils of plurality and non-residence -- by which a parson held a variety of benefices at the same time and handed over the care of most, if not all, of them to poorly paid curates. The country clergy who formed the vast majority -- we have a not unkindly picture of them in The Vicar of Wakefield and the novels of Jane Austin -- were not vicious or corrupt, far from it. They were kind-hearted, careful of the bodily needs of their parishioners, but with an inadequate concern for their spiritual welfare. L. E. Elliott-Binns, Religion in The Victorian Era, pp.39-40.

²R. W. Dale, Ibid., p.339. At this time optimism about the future prospects of revival in America was high. Calvin Colton, writing in 1832, stated: "The present probabilities of the future uninterrupted increase and triumphant march of American revivals from this time, amount to a moral certainty." Calvin Colton, History and Character of American Revivals of Religion, pp.62-63.

May the circulation of this admirable work accompanied as it is to be, by notes by my very esteemed friend the Rev. W. Patton, D.D. of New York, be the means under the influence of the Holy Spirit, of stimulating and guiding that zeal in the cause of Revivals of religion, which¹ already begins so happily to prevail in this country.

He also wrote a preface to an English edition of Charles Finney's Lectures on Revivals of Religion. This edition had been prepared by Dr. Patton during his stay in Britain, and at his request James wrote the preface. In it he pointed out that the work was perhaps better adapted to some parts of America than Britain, but despite this it was "calculated to be eminently useful wherever the English language is spoken, and the gospel of Christ is preached."² The work went through thirteen editions in a short time.³ More indirectly related to revival was a letter he sent to the editor of The New York Evangelist in this year. The letter recounts the good effect Dr. Patton and Mr. Kirk of New York had on the British evangelicals during their visit to Britain. It also expressed the hope that America would soon abolish slavery and advocated more communication between Christians of the two countries.⁴

From about 1837 to 1840 there were some indications that a great movement of the Spirit might be imminent. James optimistically

¹Jonathan Edwards, Edwards on Revivals, p.4.

²J. A. James, Works 9, p.528.

³John Stoughton, op. cit., p.85.

⁴J. A. James, Ibid., pp.603-11.

reported to Dr. Sprague on July 22, 1839:

I am happy to say that our churches are beginning to enter with considerable spirit into the subject of revivals. Protracted meetings are now becoming very common. Dr. Redford about two years ago set the example, and has been followed by many of his brethren, with considerable success. Finney's Lectures has been very extensively read, and will be more so by our ministers, and has helped on the movement Mr. Kirk, and Dr. Patton of New York, have also been very useful in assisting at our meetings. Both of them have been in Birmingham, and have produced considerable impression.¹

Stoughton said of this period that:

Undulations on the surface, caused by revivalistic instrumentalities, were prolonged and repeated for a time, and visits of Americans deepened the effects. President Finney of Oberlin College, an eminent revivalist, visited this country more than once, and by his preaching and addresses gave additional force to waves of spiritual² emotion, rolling through several Congregational Churches.

Finney's first visit to Britain was in 1849 and during his stay he spent three months in Birmingham conducting evangelistic meetings. James briefly summarised his impressions of Finney's Birmingham ministry in a letter to Dr. Sprague on September 18, 1851:

He excited some considerable attention, but did not succeed to the extent of his expectations. Most of our ministers stood aloof from him. This I could not bring myself to do. He preached five

¹R. W. Dale, op. cit., p. 355.

²John Stoughton, op. cit., p. 85.

or six times for me, and sometimes with great power.¹

There were many features of Finney's ministry which James did not appreciate. It could hardly be expected that he would be receptive to some of his methods and phrases which would almost be considered "vulgar" by many solemn nonconformists of the nineteenth century. "Yet, after all", he said, "there is so much deadness prevailing that one would welcome any instrumentality that is likely to infuse a little more life, provided it be not the life of a lunatic or a maniac."²

¹R. W. Dale, Ibid., p.546. Soon after Finney arrived in Birmingham James invited the Independent ministers of the city to a breakfast at his house and requested Finney to attend. Finney gives the following account of the occasion: "After breakfast, he said to his brethren that he had been impressed that they were falling greatly short of accomplishing the end of their ministry; that they were too well satisfied to have the people attend meeting, pay the minister's salary, keep up the Sabbath school, and move on with an outward prosperity; while the conversions were few, and, after all, the people were going to destruction he expressed himself very warmly, and said that something must be done." The outcome of this meeting was an agreement to permit Finney to conduct meetings in the Independent churches in succession, which he accordingly did. Charles G. Finney, Charles G. Finney: An Autobiography p.324.

²R. W. Dale, op. cit., p.546. During Finney's ministry in Birmingham James began to receive letters both from America and from Britain warning him against the influence of Finney's labours. James quite frankly told Finney about them, but assured him that he had found little doctrinal objection to his preaching. But out of respect to his friends who had sent the letters and upon Finney's suggestion, he read Finney's manuscript on systematic theology prepared for his students at Oberlin College and called in his friend Dr. Redford for consultation, because, as Finney put it, James "had more confidence in Dr. Redford's theological acumen, than he had in his own." As it turned out, Finney, Redford and James conferred together and discovered that their theological beliefs were so nearly identical that there was no cause for suspicion. Charles G. Finney, Charles G. Finney: An Autobiography, pp.325-27.

After Finney's visit James said comparatively little about revival for a number of years. This is not to say his interest in the subject waned, because his character, theology and preaching were directed toward piety, and an increase of piety meant revival to him. It was in a New Year's pastoral address in 1854 that he again called his people to a consideration of the subject. He pointed out that the number of people added to Carrs Lane for 1853 had been below the previous years, although the attendance at services had never been larger.¹ He attributed this to a lack of prevailing prayer and accordingly called for a renewed effort to be constant in prayer in the new year.²

His next effort toward revival had its setting in a meeting of the Congregational Union on May 14, 1858. It had long been his contention that inspiration could be gained through knowledge of the Holy Spirit's working in others. Consequently he read a paper on the American Revivals which was so gratefully received that it was recommended for "immediate publication".³

In 1859 the North of Ireland began to experience a religious revival similar to the ones which had been occurring in America.⁴

¹J. A. James, Works 15, p.544.

²Ibid., p.550.

³The Congregational Year Book, 1859, p.33.

⁴Two books published in 1860 which give a good summary of the first year of the revival are: The Year of Grace by William Gibson and The Ulster Awakening by John Weir. Perhaps the chief criticism of both works is that they were written too near the time of the revival to present an objective interpretation of it.

A writer in The Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics states that the Irish revival "was an importation from the United States, where it had been prevalent for two years previously".¹ There can be little doubt that the information communicated to the nation on the American revivals over the years contributed in part to this revival.² James gives his evaluation of the movement in its early stages in a letter to Dr. Patton on June 25, 1859:

You have perhaps read, or will have read before this reaches you, the account of the awakening in Ireland. It is in some respects more remarkable than anything which you have witnessed in the United States The means of producing this blessed change are similar to your own -- the power of prayer The bodily contortions and swoonings, which, in by-gone times, were known in America, are now common in Ireland. I

¹The Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol. 10, p.756. The American revival began in 1857 and continued through 1858. As the immediate result of the revival it has been estimated that one million of members were added to the fellowship of the churches. It was the introduction to a new era of the nation's spiritual life, and was the training-school for a force of lay evangelists for future work, eminent among whom is the name of D. L. Moody. L. W. Bacon, A History of American Christianity, p.344.

²A good example of the hunger of many British Christians for information on the American revival during this period can be seen in the account Gibson gives of the various activities of a deputation which visited America from the Presbyterian Church of Ireland: "a deputation, consisting of two ministers, was appointed to visit the affiliated churches in British North America; and as the delegates, after discharging their proper mission had opportunities of witnessing to some extent the work then going forward in the United States, their statements in regard to it, on their return were anxiously sought for, and their experiences were rehearsed in various districts of the north of Ireland". William Gibson, The Year of Grace: A History of the Ulster Revival of 1859, p.16.

cannot but regret this, as it will beget some incredulity about the spiritual nature of the work. Still, it is a wonderful work of God.¹

Inspired by the Irish revival he published in tract form a compilation of his letters on revival written to the Editor of the British Standard Newspaper. It was entitled Revival of Religion: Its Principles, Necessity, and Effects. Parts of America, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland were experiencing spiritual refreshing, but England appeared to be unmoved. He pointedly asked his readers: "Why should not we be revived? Do we not need it? Look into the moral and spiritual condition of our country. Contemplate the masses of the population."² As James saw it the need was phenomenal. In London there was space in the churches for only twenty-nine per cent of the people, and in Birmingham only about twenty or thirty thousand people of the city's two hundred and seventy thousand were under the influence of the Gospel.³ Revival was a necessity. Unfortunately James's death was to occur before the full impact of the revival which had swept through Northern Ireland was to sweep through Scotland, Wales and

¹R. W. Dale, *Ibid.*, p.566. Despite the revival's abuses, it was generally acknowledged by Independents to be a work of the Spirit. It was reported in The Congregational Year Book that: "The year 1859 will be ever memorable in the history of the Church of Christ by the remarkable revival of religion which has taken place in the North of Ireland. Over that entire region, amongst all evangelical denominations, and almost in every congregation the Spirit of God has been poured out." The Congregational Year Book 1860, p.303.

²J. A. James, Works 9, p.574.

³Ibid., p.575.

England¹, but his efforts to promote an "Awakening" in England were persistent to the very last.

Shortly before his death he began to take steps to begin a series of prayer meetings on an interdenominational basis to ask God to grant the spiritual refreshing for which he had laboured so long. He left the following note on September 15, 1859, in the rectory of his Anglican friend, the Rev. John C. Miller:

I called at the Rectory this morning but was not fortunate enough to find you at home. The object of my visit was to confer with you on the desirableness of a future united prayer meeting in reference to this marvellous work of God which is now going on, not only in Ireland but in Scotland and Wales. The shower seems coming on but has not dropped its treasures yet on England. Why not? Is it not because we ask not?²

These proposed prayer meetings were perhaps his last effort to promote revival. In the last week of his life the sister of his daughter-in-law expressed her conviction to him that he would live to see a revival of religion in Britain and a new work begun in China. His reply was: "I shall see them there."³

Perhaps the most significant contribution which James made to his time was his book The Anxious Inquirer After Salvation Directed and Encouraged, published in 1834. Since it was so widely circulated and so generally used in the last century, it deserves special consideration.

¹For a very interesting and revealing account of the nature and scope of this revival consult the unpublished thesis of Oscar Bussey in the Edinburgh University Library entitled The Religious Awakening of 1858-60 in Great Britain and Ireland.

²John C. Miller, Dying Pastors and the Undying Priest, p.15.

³R. W. Dale, op. cit., p.525.

The specific circumstances which occasioned the book are inseparably linked to an evangelistic endeavour held in Birmingham about the year 1831. Upon the completion of this series of meetings, a large number of people, whose interest in personal religion had been sufficiently stimulated, came to James and other pastors of the city for instruction. As was his custom, James talked to each one individually and suggested appropriate books to meet each need. The book most consistently recommended was Doddridge's Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul¹, but out of his experience with inquirers he had learned quite early in his ministry that the book had its disadvantages. It was far too long and included too much irrelevant material to meet their needs adequately. With a conviction that the problem needed attention, he began to write a work more adapted to the needs of those interested in becoming Christians.² His motive was completely unselfish:

I believe I was animated by a pure desire to glorify God in the salvation of souls. Perhaps there was less admixture of self-seeking and vain-glory in the writing of this book than in any other of my works. I wanted to lead the anxious into peace and the joy of believing.³

Upon the book's publication, it met with immediate approval. The

¹Alleine's Alarm to Sinners and Baxter's Call to the Unconverted were also books of the same general type with which James was familiar, but like Doddridge's Rise and Progress they were not sufficiently appropriate to satisfy his demands.

²J. A. James, Works 17, p.181.

³Ibid.

first two editions, which were published by James himself, sold very rapidly and soon aroused the interest of the Religious Tract Society. A proposal from that organisation to purchase the copyright was soon forthcoming; James carefully considered the offer and soon consented to sell. In later years, he was quite happy about this decision as the society did more to circulate the book than he could possibly have done.¹

If the significance of the work is to be appropriately evaluated, it will be necessary to grasp some idea of the scope of its circulation, as this is perhaps the best indication of its contemporary importance. The records of the Religious Tract Society would have afforded accurate information on the total number of volumes issued, but unfortunately they were destroyed in the last war. The information which is available makes it quite clear, however, that it had a circulation which exceeded the most hopeful expectations of James. The first two editions of two thousand copies each were printed in Birmingham in 1834.² In this same year James sent part of the manuscript to his friend Dr. Patton of New York with a view to its publication in America. In a letter which accompanied the manuscript, he said:

I have taken your advice, and have herewith sent you about half of a little thing I have prepared for inquirers.

¹J. A. James, Works 17, p.181.

²The Original Copy of the Carrs Lane Tribute to James at His Jubilee in 1855.

I do not know that it is of sufficient magnitude or value to sell for anything in your literary market, but if it be ever so small a sum, it will be a drop in the stream of holy liberty, and may serve by that drop to water the parched places of the earth. If you can obtain anything for it you may appropriate it to your education Society.¹

Largely through Dr. Patton's efforts, the book was published in America and began to sell rapidly. Its record in Britain was similarly phenomenal. By 1835, only a year after its publication, it had reached a sixth edition, and by 1839 the Religious Tract Society had issued two hundred thousand copies.² By the time of James's Jubilee in 1855, its circulation was more than half a million in Britain and perhaps more in America³, truly a remarkable record. After James's death, the Religious Tract Society continued to issue editions of the work until 1889. Estimates at best are conjectural, but it is more than probable that the book's total circulation was considerably over a million copies.

The number of languages into which the work was translated is another sign of the book's extensive reception. By 1855, there were editions in twelve different tongues, both European

¹From 1833 to 1838 Dr. Patton was secretary of the Central American Education Society. His function was to recruit young men for the ministry and to raise money for their education. R. W. Dale, op. cit., pp. 316-17.

²Ibid., p. 288.

³I. S. Spenser, A Pastor's Sketches, p. 27. Dale stated that the circulation in Britain alone had reached 586,443 copies by 1859. R. W. Dale, The Funeral Service, p. 62.

and Asiatic.¹ It was published in Gaelic, Welsh, French, German, Italian, Dutch and into Asiatic dialects as well.² Its vast circulation and numerous translations were so impressive by 1859 that it could be legitimately classified as one of the most popular religious books in existence up to that time:

The publications which issued from his pen are very numerous, but none of them is so well or more universally known than his 'Anxious Inquirer', which next perhaps to the Bible and 'The Pilgrim's Progress', has been more extensively read than any other work. Countless editions of it in the English language have been issued; into all the continental tongues it has been translated, and thousands of copies sent out every year speak of the lasting and living interest in a very remarkable work.³

The numerical and linguistic scope of the book is impressive, but the religious benefit it yielded is more momentous. Ernest A. Payne lists it as one of the books generally read by Baptists in the early nineteenth century⁴, and this is perhaps characteristic, in the light of the work's vast circulation, of the other evangelical nonconformist denominations of the time. It was also quite popular among evangelicals in the Church of England. As James described it:

¹The Original Copy of the Carrs Lane Tribute to James at His Jubilee. S. C. Kent notes that the work had been issued "in the languages of Europe, India, and the South Seas". S. C. Kent, op. cit., p.8.

²J. A. James, Works 17, p.182.

³The Saturday Evening Post, October 8, 1859, p.1.

⁴Ernest A. Payne, The Fellowship of Believers, p.110.

Clergymen of the Established Church have not scrupled to use it, though penned by a Dissenter. They thought it to be an instrument adapted to their purpose, and have manifested as much zeal in its distribution as any of the ministers or members of my own denomination.¹

A few specific instances of its influence can perhaps be taken as an indication of its general helpfulness. In one of the more isolated communities in America, where there was no resident minister, James was informed that twenty-seven conversions had occurred largely through the book's influence.² On the continent of Europe, it seems to have been equally influential. Dr. Beets of Holland, who translated the work into Dutch, stated before a meeting of the Congregational Union in London that he knew twelve Dutch students for the ministry who had been converted through the guidance the book afforded.³ Even Socinians were converted to evangelicalism through its influence. A Dutchman, by the name of De Leifde, greatly impressed a group of ministers at a dinner meeting of the Congregational Union Assembly, by stating that he had previously been a Socinian, but that through the help he had received in The Anxious Inquirer, he had undergone a conversion experience.

But it was in Britain that the book attained its greatest usefulness. At the time Dale was writing his biography of James, he received news that eight or nine friends in the North of England were conversing about their religious history and discovered that

¹J. A. James, Works 17, p.183.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., pp.183-84.

The Anxious Inquirer had played a part in each of their conversions.¹ Undoubtedly the book helped multitudes to an experience of personal religion. The most renowned person influenced by it was perhaps C. H. Spurgeon, probably the greatest evangelical of the past century. In the days before his "conversion", the first thing he did after waking in the morning was to read either Alleine, Baxter, Doddridge or James's The Anxious Inquirer, and about them all he says, "It was like sitting at the foot of Sinai."² Dale, in his early religious life, was similarly swayed by the book, and his experience is perhaps typical of countless others. "Night after night", he says, "I waited with eager impatience for the house to become still, that in undisturbed solitude I might agonise over the book which had taught so many to trust in God."³

If we are to understand the phenomenal circulation and widespread influence which the book had, it will be necessary to consider it against the religious background of the times in which it is set. English religious life in the opening years of the nineteenth century was dominated by the spiritual awakening of

¹R. W. Dale, op. cit., p. 309.

²W. Y. Fullerton, C. H. Spurgeon, p. 32.

³A. W. W. Dale, Life of R. W. Dale, p. 16. One minister writing in 1912, however, recalled that in his youth the book had been completely useless in leading him to God and commented on it: "To me now it seems that Mr. James's book should have been entitled 'The Anxious Enquirer after Personal Safety Driven to Despair'". R. M. Theobald, Passages From The Autobiography of a Shakespeare Student, p. 17.

the great Methodist revival of the eighteenth century.¹ This movement's influence upon the older nonconformist bodies and upon the Church of England was both stimulating and prolonged. The condition of nonconformity in the first half of the eighteenth century had been one of decay.² Their leaders looked askance at Wesley and Whitfield at first, but as the revival continued the younger men caught its zeal. This was especially the case among the Congregationalists, who profited most of all. Their preaching was quickened, their zeal revived, their numbers rapidly increased until by 1800 they emerged stronger than they had ever been before.³ The Particular and General Baptists also profited by the revival, but the Presbyterians and Quakers benefited little from it. Taking all into consideration, nonconformity in the main entered the nineteenth century with evangelicalism as its basic theological pattern.

In the Church of England the revival's influence was represented by the evangelical or low-church party. Wesley had won many sympathisers in the establishment. These men were generally in agreement with his religious emphases on conversion, a confident faith, and a religious life manifested in active work for others.

¹Henry Offley Wakeman, An Introduction To The History of The Church of England, p.446.

²J. H. Overton, The Evangelical Revival, pp.1-9.

³R. W. Dale, History of English Congregationalism, pp.591-92.

On the other hand, they adapted few of his peculiar methods, and in general were marked theologically by an extremely moderate Calvinism rather than by his aggressive Arminianism.¹ With the rise of the Anglo-Catholic party under men like Froude, Newman, Keble and others, the low church party was compelled to struggle eventually against superior odds, but it maintained its witness then and has continued to do so until now, though all along it has been a numerical minority.²

On the whole, British theology at this time was looked upon in a rather rationalistic manner, either as a system of intellectual demonstration, or of authoritative revelation, or a combination of both. The stirrings of new intellectual forces were being felt, however. English poetry flowered into splendid blossoming with the opening years of the century. Romanticism, as powerfully as in Germany, was beginning to produce an intellectual atmosphere wholly unlike that of the preceding age. The novels of Sir Walter Scott are familiar illustrations of this new outlook. A new humanitarianism, largely due to the Methodist revival was developing

¹G. R. Balleine, A History of The Evangelical Party in The Church of England, p.135.

²F. Warre Cornish, A History of The English Church in The Nineteenth Century, Part 1, pp.32-33. The general consensus of opinion now is that "the high church revival was not the antagonist but the supplement of the evangelical revival which preceded it. It has been remarked as a strange thing that so many who fell under the spell of the Oxford movement had been brought up under evangelical influences. But there was really nothing strange about it It was merely a passage from the subjective to the objective, from individualism to collectivism ..." J. H. Overton, The Anglican Revival, p.15.

and was to be manifested multitudinously in reformatory movements. All the tendencies were sure to affect theological thinking and religious ideals. But the thorough-going evangelicals, though they willingly co-operated in social reform¹, were the most reluctant to let any new thought patterns deflect them from the main evangelical tenets they had inherited from the Evangelical Revival. It is, therefore, against the background of evangelicalism that an understanding of the wide circulation and the apparent usefulness of The Anxious Inquirer must be sought.

But the question arises, what particular need did the book meet in evangelicalism during the nineteenth century? Broadly speaking, it afforded practical direction to scores on the means of attaining salvation. To the evangelicals of both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, salvation could only come through conversion. The rather spectacular conversion experiences of early evangelicals like Wesley and Whitfield left their marks on evangelicals who came after them², so that during the life-time of James conversion was

¹Through the efforts of evangelicals came many reforms in prison conditions and in the penal code. Together with Benthamites they helped to secure the abolition of the whipping of women (1820): the partial abolition of the pillory: the protection of animals (1822): the abolition of State lotteries (1820-27) and the prohibition of spring guns (1827). From the same impulse came enactments for the protection of children, such as forbidding their employment as chimney sweeps. The Health and Morals Act of 1802 was still another example of evangelical influence in legislation. Maldwyn Edwards, After Wesley, p.120.

²J. H. Overton, The Evangelical Revival, pp.188-89.

still looked upon as an experience that occurred at a particular moment in time. Conversion, in other words, had to be instantaneous. Multitudes under evangelical influence all over the nation constantly heard themes relating to conversion from their ministers, and it is only as we understand the theological viewpoints on conversion held by evangelicals during this period that the heart of The Anxious Inquirer can be grasped.

The very foundation of all evangelical preaching on conversion at this time rested in the evangelical interpretation of the nature of scripture. For the evangelicals the Bible was the supreme test of any doctrine and was to be accepted unconditionally.¹ They believed in what is called "verbal inspiration", and in practice this meant the Authorised Version of 1611, a very imperfect translation in some passages of the original.² Conversion, to the evangelical, was a necessity because of the extreme holiness of God and the exceeding sinfulness of men. Taking the Bible as their guide, they believed that the whole world lay in darkness, even much of it which was professedly Christian. Man, by his disobedience to God and His Law had disrupted his fellowship with a Holy God, and

¹L. E. Elliott-Binns, The Early Evangelicals, p.385.

²Perhaps the most misleading instances are in connection with "conversion", which the Greek makes to be the work of men, but the Authorised Version, like the Vulgate before it, perverts into something done in him. See: Matt.13:15, 18:3; Mark 4:12; Luke 22:32; Acts 3:19.

in his depravity had brought numerous ills upon himself.¹ James in The Anxious Inquirer describes what he calls the "evil of sin" as follows:

Men think little of sin: but does God? What turned Adam and Eve out of paradise? Sin. What drowned the old world in the flood? Sin. What destroyed God's own city, and scattered his chosen people as vagrants over the face of the earth? Sin. What brought disease, accidents, toil, care, war, pestilence, and famine into the world? Sin. What has converted the world into one great burying-place of its inhabitants? Sin. What lighted the flames of hell? Sin. What then must sin be? Who but God, and what but his infinite mind, can conceive of its evil nature? Did you ever consider that it was only one sin that brought death and all our woes into the world? Do you not tremble, then, at the thought that this evil is in you?²

In evangelical thinking, sin was not only harmful to society in general and to individuals in particular, but it incurred the penalty of a just God upon sinful men who had transgressed His Law. Coupled with the presentation of a wrathful and yet just God was the emphasis they placed upon a merciful God in providing a Saviour from sin. Consequently, man could avoid the wrath of God only by accepting Christ as his personal Saviour. The method of bringing men to decision was to confront them with the last judgment, when, unless they had repented, they would be consigned to the flames of a material hell.³ Though James generally

¹J. H. Overton, The Evangelical Revival, pp.189-90 and G. R. Balleine, A History of The Evangelical Party, pp.37-38.

²J. A. James, Works 10, p.71.

³L. E. Elliott-Binns, The Early Evangelicals, pp.386-87 and G. R. Balleine, A History of The Evangelical Party, p.135.

placed more emphasis upon the spiritual torture of hell than upon its physical agonies, nonetheless the presentation of the judgment of God upon sin was an integral part of his effort to lead men into salvation. There is an unwavering conviction in his words as he pleads with his readers to avoid the judgment of God:

And except you repent, my reader, you will perish; perish body and soul in the bottomless pit, and perish everlastingly. There is a world of misery in that word, perish; it is as deep as hell, broad as infinity, and long as eternity. None can comprehend its meaning but lost souls; and they are ever discovering in it some new mystery of torment. This misery will be yours, unless you repent. Tremble at the thought, and pray to Him who was exalted 'to give repentance' as well as 'remission of sins', that he would confer this grace upon you.¹

If the wrath of God was to be avoided, repentance was a necessity for everyone. There could be no exceptions. The theological means regarded as necessary to arrive at repentance, however, depended upon whether one was an Arminian or a Calvinistic evangelical. James always considered himself a moderate Calvinist² and in his position held that repentance was ultimately a result of

¹J. A. James, Works 10, p.87.

²Dale presents an interesting viewpoint on the "Moderate Calvinism" of Independents after the Evangelical Revival: "it became common to believe that in a sense Christ died for all men, though it was God's eternal purpose that only the elect should be actually redeemed by His death; and Independents began to describe themselves as "Moderate Calvinists". They thought that while preserving the strong foundation of the Calvinistic theology and its method, they could modify some of the Calvinist doctrines, which in their rigid form had become incredible to them. But they were attempting an impossible task, and doing injustice to the constructive genius of their great master. They had not learnt that theologians who begin with Calvin must end with Calvin." R. W. Dale, History of English Congregationalism, p.588.

God's initiative:

Repentance ... signifies an entire change of men's views, disposition, and conduct, with respect to sin. It is equivalent in meaning to regeneration. The new birth means a change of heart, and repentance is that same change viewed in reference to sin. The author of repentance is the Holy Ghost; it is the effect of Divine grace working in the heart of man.¹

To James it was not enough to be convicted of sin or to be sorry for sin, but sin must be forsaken with a determination not to repeat it. It is more than evident from the tone of his writings, that though he placed the main emphasis upon God's initiative in repentance, not for a moment did he minimise man's part in it. Man had to respond to the work of the Spirit in his heart, but man himself did the repenting, not the Spirit. Perhaps a phrase which summarises his position best is one used by Paul: "the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance".²

Inseparably joined with repentance was the evangelical emphasis upon saving faith. In their understanding of conversion men received salvation through faith alone; good works could not avail because man at his best was destitute of righteousness before God. The satisfaction which God accepted for sin was not the sinner's repentance and faith, but the offering of the Son of Man on the cross.³ His blood, vicariously offered, was a complete

¹J. A. James, Works 10, p. 88.

²Romans 2:4.

³L. E. Elliott-Binns, The Early Evangelicals, p. 389.

atonement for the sins of those who took refuge in Him.¹ James viewed faith, not so much as an act, as an entrance into and continuance of a state of mind. He cautioned his readers:

Fix it deeply in your mind, therefore, that faith ... is the state of mind with which salvation is connected; being brought into this state, you would be saved though you died the next hour; and without it you would not be saved, even had you been for years under the deepest concern.²

It is on the point of faith, surprisingly enough, that Dale brought his chief criticism against the book. In the chapter on faith he said that it was quite possible for the average reader to confuse scriptural faith as a trust with a mere intellectual faith, and that at points faith almost became its own object.³ T. S. James, in an editorial comment in the Collected Works, strongly questioned Dale's charges. To the first charge on the confusion of faith as trust with intellectual assent, he denied that his father's writings allowed the possibility. To the second charge on faith as its own object, he stated:

¹This emphasis upon the atonement, rather than the incarnation, was good Calvinist teaching, for Calvinism "makes the fall of man the central point of its divinity; it treats the incarnation, and all the facts which manifest the Son of God to men, as merely growing out of this, and necessary in consequence of it". F. D. Maurice, The Kingdom of Christ, 2, p.288 (Everyman's Library).

²J. A. James, Works 10, p.101. Continuance and growth in faith is always considered as "sanctification" in the writings of James.

³R. W. Dale, op. cit., pp.299-302.

The anxiety of Mr. James to guard his readers from being satisfied with anything short of this trust occasioned his exhortations to self-examination, which Mr. Dale, in a subsequent page, characterises as detaining the reader from Christ to study his own faith.¹

It is quite plain from the following statement what James's definition of saving faith really was: "It is a belief that Christ really died for sinners; that all who depend upon him alone shall be saved; and a trust in him for salvation."² After considering the question in the light of the general teaching of James, it would seem that Dale's objection, mild in tone though it was, arose out of a mind more accustomed and better trained to theological precision than James manifested in preaching and in writing. It also appears that Dale should have understood this fact and refrained from pressing the point. That the language of James at times allows for implications unacceptable to him and vulnerable to attack, is not denied. That gross theological error is set forth, seems to be unfounded.

One other essential underlined by evangelicals, in a sinner's quest after salvation, was prayer. Their aim, like the Evangelicals of the eighteenth century, was "to bring their hearers into a state of earnest expectant prayer for that gift of faith, that sure trust and confidence in God and in the victory of Christ, which should kill the evil in them, and save them from

¹J. A. James, Works 17, p.193.

²J. A. James, Works 10, p.104.

their sins."¹ Prayer was the beginning, the centre, and the end of the Christian life in the thinking of James. Therefore, in the introduction to his book, he admonished:

Read it with earnest prayer. It can do you no good, without God's blessing: nothing short of Divine grace can render it the means of instructing your mind, or impressing your heart. It will convey no experimental knowledge, relieve no anxiety, dissipate no doubts, and afford neither peace nor sanctification, if God do not give his Holy Spirit: and if you would have the Spirit, you must ask for his influence.²

Such is the theological background and doctrinal approach usually taken by evangelicals at this period toward conversion³, and The Anxious Inquirer, rather than deviating from this approach, represents it.

But the question now arises, why was The Anxious Inquirer so widely received in the nineteenth century? One answer to this question is that the book appeared before the public at a very opportune time. Occasioned, as it was, by a local need, it was destined to satisfy a national one. The objections James had to books currently used for inquirers, such as Doddridge's Rise and Progress, were more than likely shared by other evangelicals. As

¹G. R. Balleine, A History of The Evangelical Party, p. 38.

²J. A. James, Works 10, p. 37.

³Newton H. Marshall in his book Conversion has given a very fresh interpretation to this debatable subject. Although he recognises that all conversions are not instantaneous, throughout his book he insists that conversion is a necessity and opposes the idea that conversion is simply a long process of cultivating Christian character. Divine intervention is a necessity!

the number of inquirers coming to ministers over the country increased, the demand for an appropriate book to be placed in their hands became more pressing. Consequently, with the appearance of The Anxious Inquirer in 1834, the book received immediate approval.

Another reason why the book was widely used was its religious identity with the evangelical theology of the times. Dale said the book exemplified the practical religious instruction usually given by evangelicals of the nineteenth century, and related it to the Evangelical Revival as "a complete and permanent expression of the genius and principles of the whole movement".¹ Consequently, the doctrines taught in The Anxious Inquirer were substantially the same as those ordinarily taught by Congregationalists of the period.² The principal advantage of the book's doctrinal similarity to evangelical theology was that it was not faced with a doctrinal barrier to overcome. The basic unanimity of opinion on conversion

¹R. W. Dale, op. cit., p.288.

²When John Stoughton, at the Jubilee meeting of the Congregational Union of England and Wales in 1881, looked back on the preaching of half a century before, he recalled the doctrines which used to hold the foremost place in the pulpits of Independents. A comparison of James's summary of the main doctrines in The Anxious Inquirer (Works 17, pp.187-88) with the following summary of Stoughton will reveal their virtual identity: "the depravity of men in general, the doctrine of conversion as expounded by early revivalists, justification by faith according to the Puritan intercession of the Redeemer in heaven, the sovereignty of grace in connection with the equity of Divine government, the perseverance of the saints, the privilege of adoption, and the electing love of God, according to Calvinistic systems of divinity." John Stoughton, Reminiscences of Congregationalism Fifty Years Ago, p.76.

among evangelicals, who differed on points such as church government, baptism and establishments, gave it an acceptance that a more narrowly denominational approach would have prohibited.

Not to be minimised is the part the Religious Tract Society played in the book's success. This organisation, in all probability, was the best agency in Britain at the time to give the work a wide circulation among evangelicals. It had originated in 1799 at the suggestion of George Burder, a Congregational minister of Coventry, who had circulated religious tracts in large numbers in his own district and who desired to "see the work extended to cover the whole country".¹ It was established to circulate "small religious books and treatises in foreign countries, as well as throughout the British dominions".² Under this organisation's sponsorship, the book had the advantages of the society's publicity and sanction as well as its international scope and experience. There is little reason to suppose that the work would have been so extensively circulated had James refused to turn it over to the Religious Tract Society.

The theological simplicity of the book is another cause of its popularity. Being, as it was, the product of a preacher and pastor, rather than a speculative theologian, it is not concerned

¹Henry C. Clark, History of English Nonconformity, p. 319.

²The Congregational Year Book, 1850, p. 224.

with subtle questions or minute theological points.¹ The fact that James wrote for living persons disturbed by the same problems and questions with which he had dealt in his inquirers class, enabled him to produce a practical book to satisfy human need.² The main emphasis of the book is not upon complicated theology, but upon persons and their relation to God. Theological points are raised and dealt with only to the extent that they facilitate the main task of leading the person into a conversion experience. For instance, in the seventh chapter on "Perplexities often felt by Inquirers" he discusses the subjects of election, the unpardonable sin against the Holy Spirit, and the possibility of an unbeliever praying, solely for the purpose of helping any reader who might be troubled by such involved subjects. Although there is a didactic emphasis on the major evangelical tenets throughout the book, James's primary concern is to make certain that his readers become reconciled to God, and hence, theology is only a tool not an end. This, no doubt, in part explains the book's

¹The following comment on the evangelicals of the eighteenth century is applicable to James and The Anxious Inquirer: "To theological studies as a whole the evangelicals made but a meagre contribution. They were content to stand in the old paths and would have regarded any indulgence in novel speculations as a profitless or even a dangerous undertaking. Hence their theological writings were confined to exposition on conservative lines." L. E. Elliott-Binns, The Early Evangelicals, p.405.

²R. W. Dale, op. cit., p.292.

theological simplicity.¹

The brevity of the work is another of its merits. It was large enough to include sufficient data for all types of inquirers, and yet not too ponderous to discourage the average person from studying it.² Its brevity, however, was not without its complications and the third chapter on scriptural knowledge was particularly open to criticism. In about twenty pages James attempts to instruct the reader on the moral character of God, the law, sin, inherent depravity, Christ's mediatorial office and work, justification and the work of the Holy Spirit. It was in all probability this chapter to which a young friend of Dale's particularly referred when he told him that The Anxious Inquirer had suggested more difficulties than it had removed.³

¹The criticism of The Anxious Inquirer by the great English man of letters, John Ruskin (1819-1900), appears to suggest that the intelligentsia of the period looked upon the work as somewhat simple. In an article on Logical Education Ruskin briefly criticised only one sentence of the work. He objected to James's use of the words "objective" and "subjective" in reference to experiential religion as an example of a poor choice of words. "The only fact of any notability deducible from the sentence is", he states, "that the writer desired to say something profound, and had nothing profound to say." E. T. Cook and Alexander Waddernburn, The Works of John Ruskin, Vol.6, p.482.

²The book contained on the average about 190 pages with approximately 235 words to the page.

³Cuthbert Lennox gives us an insight into Henry Drummond's attitude toward The Anxious Inquirer in the following incident which he relates in his book: "In one of Moody's after-meetings in London he (Drummond) had said to a girl, 'You must give up reading James's Anxious Inquirer'. She wondered how he had guessed she was reading it. But said he, 'A fortnight of the Testament put her right'. Another inquirer had said to him, too, 'It's not so simple as that in James's Anxious Inquirer'." Henry Drummond, p.6.

It is more than apparent that in this chapter James was confronted with the task of adequately explaining too many involved subjects in too brief a manner.¹ However, when one considers that the literate of the period would probably have some theological knowledge, it is possible that enough was said to afford practical guidance to them. Had there been more, it might have stimulated a purely speculative activity not conducive to the primary purpose of leading the inquirer to God. Looking at the book as a whole, it would seem that its brevity, perhaps vulnerable to criticism in the third chapter, was one of its strong points. In an age when evangelicals all too frequently produced massive volumes on all kinds of subjects, its very conciseness must have commended it to people interested in a book of its type.

Another aspect of the book's design which contributed to its popular reception was its subservience to and reliance upon the Bible. In the instructions for reading the book in the introduction, James admonished:

Read this book with the Bible at your elbow, and do not think much of the trouble of turning to the passages quoted. If, unhappily, you should consider me, or my little volume, as a substitute for the Bible, instead of a guide to it, I shall have done you an injury.²

¹R. W. Dale, op. cit., p. 295. Dale objected to the lack of clear distinction between justification and pardon in the chapter. The issue, however, is not of sufficient importance to merit a discussion of it.

²J. A. James, Works 10, p. 39.

His acceptance of the indisputable authority of the Bible gave the book a firm foundation for the beliefs set forth and certainly saved the readers from much uncertainty. The belief that a document is verbally inspired often reduces it to a kind of legal code, and consequently, in The Anxious Inquirer, single texts are often appealed to by way of proof. This approach, though it had much against it, did take advantage of the popular belief in the "infallibility" of the Bible and gave the book an authority it could not have had in the public mind without it.

The sincere and intense interest of James in his reader's spiritual welfare, as it is sensed in the work, is another reason for its wide acceptance. From beginning to end the book is very personal, calling into being an emotional response, not to a book, but to a man and his convictions. James firmly believed that he was writing for souls standing at the point of decision, and consequently his task was one of sincerely entreating men to turn to Christ and thus avoid the judgment to come:

Reader, whosoever thou art, it is not presumptuous thought of the author to believe that thou wilt remember the contents of this small treatise, either with pleasure and gratitude in heaven, or with remorse and despair in hell.¹

The intense concern which James had for his readers burns and glows in his heart till the last sentence of the last chapter is written. Such earnestness commands the confidence of the

¹J. A. James, Works 10, p. 35.

reader and must have helped to sustain the inquirer's anxiety to find Christ. The teaching, perhaps, is in some places deficient in clarity, but the fervour never cools. The following quotation on the influence of the Holy Spirit and prayer in retaining and deepening religious impressions is a typical example of James's religious fervour in the work:

It is of infinite consequence that you should, at this stage of your religious history, deeply ponder the great truth, that all true piety in the heart of man is the work of God's Spirit. Do not read another line till you have well weighed that sentiment, and have so wrought it into your heart, as to make it with you a principle of action, and a rule of conduct. Every conviction will be extinguished, every impression will be effaced unless God himself, by his own sovereign and efficacious grace, render them permanent. If God do not put forth his power, you will as certainly lose every pious emotion as you now possess any. You may as rationally expect light without the sun, as piety without God. Not a single really holy feeling will ever come into the mind, or be kept there, but by God. Hence, the object and use of prayer are to obtain this gracious influence. Prayer is the first step in the divine life, prayer is the second, prayer is the third; and indeed it is necessary through the whole Christian course. Awakened sinner, you must pray. You must find opportunity to be alone; you must cry mightily unto God; you must implore his aid; you must give up a portion of your sleep, if you can command no time in the day for prayer.¹

It was this personal approach which greatly enhanced the book's effectiveness. The reader soon comes to believe that James really is interested in his spiritual condition and that the book is tangible proof of his concern. The fact that scores sent him personal letters telling of their spiritual experiences seems to be

¹J. A. James, Works 10, pp.50-51.

proof that the reader sensed James's interest in their relation to God.¹

Finally, the book's success is probably due more to the blessing of God upon it than to any thing else. Although the foregoing reasons must be taken into account in seeking an explanation of its success, if God's sanction of it is ignored the book's vast circulation and extensive influence is unexplainable. As James puts it:

Let any critic, or other person of sound judgment, examine the book itself. He will find no literary talent, no philosophical research, no profound theology, no novelties of sentiment, no pretension to logic, rhetoric, or poetry; nothing but one of the simplest and most elementary treatises in the English language; a book which contains nothing that can puff up its author with pride; a book which any one of the thousands of evangelical ministers of all denominations would have written, had he sat down with such a purpose; the mere alphabet of the Christian religion, which, whatever cause its success might occasion to its author for adoring gratitude, can certainly yield no materials to feed his pride. Yet this elementary, this simple, this humble, this comparatively insignificant little book, has been honoured of God to do a mighty work in the earth in the way of converting souls.²

With the influence of the Holy Spirit upon it, the book was instrumental in blessing thousands. One cannot but feel that if his only labour had been to write The Anxious Inquirer he would have existed for a most momentous purpose. As a writer put

¹He states in his autobiography: "Had I preserved all the letters I have received, both from other countries and my own, of its usefulness, they would have formed a Book." Works 17, p.183.

²Ibid., p.187.

it in 1859:

The publication which had most success, and by which he will be best known to posterity, is his 'Anxious Inquirer'.¹

¹Evangelical Christendom, November, 1859, Vol.13, p.407.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE STRENGTH OF UNION

BOSTON

EMMA STRONG

11

James always placed a striking emphasis upon the value of Christian fellowship in worship and work. On the denominational level this was most notably expressed in his contribution to the formation of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, and on the interdenominational plane, it is best exemplified in his effort to promote Christian unity through the formation of the Evangelical Alliance, and by his co-operation in an international scheme to send a million New Testaments to China. Perhaps therefore we can better understand the breadth and scope of his Christianity in considering his labour for these special endeavours.

From the very earliest days, Independent Churches have been faced with the problem of how to retain the independence they cherish and at the same time achieve effective unity in work and fellowship with each other. It was in the movement which finally resulted in the formation of a denominational union in England and Wales that this problem was in some measure resolved by men like James who were willing to advocate and demonstrate a confidence in their fellow Congregationalists which alone could make the union possible. "Whatever importance attaches to the Congregational Union", James wrote in his autobiography, "I was one of its original projectors. When some of my seniors felt grave objections to this confederation as containing a germ of mischief in the way of an organised controlling body, I thought their fears groundless, and went into the association with my whole heart."¹

¹J. A. James, Works 17, p. 214.

The move toward a denominational union was neither an easy nor a hasty venture for Congregationalists, and therefore a brief survey of their earlier efforts will afford a good introduction to James's own contribution. Some intercourse between ministers and congregations had of course existed from the first, but it was in 1658 that the first united action of any significance was taken, in the publication of the Savoy Declaration¹, the preface of which aptly reveals both their unity in spirit and their lack of associated life.² In 1691 they joined with the Presbyterians in a well-intentioned but brief "Happy Union"³, one of the objects of which was to locate and help financially the ministers, students for the ministry, and congregations affected by the Act of Uniformity in 1662.⁴ When this venture proved discouraging, eleven London congregations formed the Congregational Fund Board in 1695 with similar plans to assist poorer ministers and students for the ministry by an annual collection. Then in 1727 the London Board of Congregational Ministers was organised and three years later

¹R. W. Dale, History of English Congregationalism, p.383.

²Williston Walker, The Creeds and Platforms of Congregationalism, pp.354-67.

³This merger of Independents and Presbyterians never had the approval of the churches. It was a movement of less than a hundred ministers, and without lay support it could not be expected to have succeeded. R. W. Dale, History of English Congregationalism, pp.474-84.

⁴Albert Peel, These Hundred Years, p.5. This is a history of the Congregational Union of England and Wales from 1831 through 1931.

the "Monthly Exercise of Congregational Ministers and Churches in the Metropolis" was started.¹

But it was not until the second half of the eighteenth century that Congregationalists unintentionally laid the basic foundation for a larger union by the organisation in large numbers of County or District Associations. Some of these consisted of ministers only, others contained both ministers and churches, while occasionally a ministerial society existed parallel with an association of churches. Peel states that the names of most of the associations suggest that their general aim was that of Evangelism,² but whatever their purpose may have been, the fact that they had been organised and had successfully functioned was a practical demonstration which was to make the future task of organising a more extensive union less formidable.³

The Evangelical Revival considerably inspired all Christians, including Independents, with the goal of world evangelisation, and this undoubtedly intensified the desire for union.³

¹Albert Peel, Ibid., p.6.

²Ibid., pp.7-8.

³By 1808 Bogue and Bennett stated that there was "scarcely a county" in southern England in which associations were not vigorously at work. Also Stoughton states that the first of the modern Congregational Associations of ministers and churches was formed in Devonshire in 1785 and the second in Kent in 1792. See Bogue and Bennett, History of Dissenters (1833 ed.), Vol.2, p.565; Stoughton, Religion in England under Queen Anne and the Georges, (London 1875), p.272.

⁴Dale in fact attributed the organisation of the Congregational Union in England and Wales to the fervour of this movement: "Among the many schemes originated by the fervour of the Evangelical Revival was one for the promotion of a general union of Congregational Churches" History of English Congregationalism, p.686.

Furthermore the participation of Congregationalists in the formation of the Evangelical Magazine in 1793 and the London Missionary Society in 1794-95 also must have contributed toward it.

The first significant step, however, was made in 1806 by the London Board of Congregational ministers, who passed a resolution approving a union, and appointed a committee to draw up a scheme defining its constitution and objects. Within a short time an organisation was actually established, but the time was not yet quite favourable for it to receive popular acceptance.¹ However, before 1810 it had begun to function, but its tactless beginning was to make its existence quite brief. This was a time of chapel building without a denominational scheme to aid the weaker churches erect buildings.² It was the custom, therefore, for ministers in

¹John Stoughton, Religion in England from 1800 to 1850, 2, p.104.

²Both Elliott-Binns and Albert Peel give James credit for helping to promote chapel building in the first half of the century. With the challenge which the new aggressiveness of Anglo-Catholicism presented, James gave a clarion call to dissenters in 1839 to check the advance of Anglicanism by erecting more houses of worship: "Let us build more places of worship. It seems to be the present policy of the Church of England to build us down and build us out. Its members suppose that our congregations continue with us, only because there are no Episcopalian places to receive them; and acting upon this mistake, they are multiplying chapels and churches, many of which are erected in the immediate vicinity of ours, for the purpose of drawing into them the people we have gathered. To prevent this we must keep pace with them in this blessed spirit of building. Enlargements, re-erectments, and new erections must go on amongst us, according to our ability, and with an energy in some measure resembling the Church of England We must catch the building spirit of the age. We must build, build, build We cannot multiply our persons, unless we multiply our places." Albert Peel, These Hundred Years, p.149; Elliott-Binns, Religion in the Victorian Era, p.77.

the provinces to go to London to request money from the wealthier congregations for their buildings and this haphazard system led to all kinds of abuses. In January, 1809, the Committee of the Union recommended that congregations desiring sanction for particular appeals should write for its approval before sending their ministers to the metropolis. This action doubtless led many to the conclusion that the new organisation was unduly interfering and contributed along with other factors to its early death.

In spite of failures, however, the impulse to union remained and grew. In 1816, the ministers and other members of the Independent churches in the counties of Nottingham, Leicester, and Derby, prepared and sent to the Evangelical Magazine a plan for a "General Union of Independent Churches", and though it did not materialise, it did serve as another reminder of the need.¹

Peel commends the role of James's Christian Fellowship in contributing to the public's awareness of this need.² The main argument for union which James used in this work was that in union there is strength:

Many objects, of vast importance to the spread of the gospel in the world, can be accomplished by the union of churches, which cannot be effected without it. Union is power. Places of worship may be opened, the faithful ministry of the word introduced, and churches planted in dark benighted villeges; while all the grand and noble institutions which are organised to save a perishing world may by this means receive additional support. United fires brighten each other's blaze, and increase

¹Albert Peel, Ibid., pp. 37-38.

²Ibid., p. 40.

each other's intensity; and thus the association of churches enkindles each other's zeal, and provokes one another to love and to good works.¹

In 1826 still another step toward a general union was taken in the formation of the London Congregational Union.² In this venture the ministers who initiated it were careful to say that it was not intended to be an organisation of a national character, probably because they remembered all too well the failure of the previous general union in aiming at too much and achieving too little.³ Experience soon altered their views. In May, 1830, a meeting of ministers and laymen from different parts of the country widened their vision to include a national union, and consequently a provisional committee was formed.⁴ After several private meetings of representatives from London and the provinces, a circular letter was composed in London's Poultry Chapel on 28th June, 1830, and extensively distributed. It informed the public that the proposed

¹J. A. James, Works 11, p. 339.

²Albert Peel, Ibid., p. 42.

³The great care which was taken to avoid any suspicion that the union would in any way violate the local church's autonomy can be seen in the following quotation: "The Independency of each church it most distinctly recognises as an essential principle in the constitution of the union itself; and to guard against the possibility of misconception, or the suspicion of its being a ministerial union, that might lead to synodical jurisdiction, it proposes that double the number of those who are not ministers shall constitute the general body to which the Committee shall be responsible". Albert Peel, Ibid., p. 43.

⁴Ibid., p. 45.

union would consist of the District associations, would be unauthoritative over the churches, and recommended that it have an annual general assembly. Ministers and members of the churches were requested to send their suggestions to the Congregational Magazine so that a definite plan could be presented to the County Associations in the Spring of 1831. These were speedily forthcoming, and among those who replied was James, who wrote for the ministers of his district generally approving the procedure.¹

A meeting to consider the proposed union assembled in the Congregational Library on Tuesday morning, 10 May, 1831, with one hundred and one people present. Each Association had been invited to send at least two delegates, a minister and a layman, and it is not surprising that James was chosen to accompany two laymen as the Birmingham area representatives.² After the necessary preliminaries and some discussion, James, the leading provincial minister in the country at the time according to Peel³, moved the following motion:

That it is highly desirable and important to establish a Union of Congregational Churches throughout England and Wales, founded on the broadest recognition of their own distinctive principle, namely, the independence in the government and administration of its own particular affairs.⁴

¹Albert Peel, Ibid., pp.48-49.

²R. W. Dale, History of English Congregationalism, p.692.

³Albert Peel, op. cit., p.62.

⁴Ibid., pp.62-63.

After considerable discussion, and another motion to the effect that the Union should consist of County and District Associations, a large committee was then appointed to draw up a plan for the formation of the Union, and on the following Friday a tentative plan was submitted and approved for circulation among the Associations for consideration.¹ There was now a definite scheme for the churches and Associations to discuss, and discussed it was, officially in the Associations and unofficially in the Congregational Magazine and elsewhere. Undoubtedly, Congregation-
alists were more receptive to the plan when they remembered that it was composed and recommended by convinced Independents, and perhaps the identification of James with it had considerable sway in allaying suspicion of it, since his name had come, through the many editions of his book Christian Fellowship, to be popularly associated with the traditional interpretation of Congregational

¹At this meeting the following points concerning the "object" of the proposed Union were accepted: "That its object is to promote Evangelical religion in connection with the Congregational Denomination: To cultivate brotherly affection and sincere co-operation in every thing relating to the interests of the associated churches: To establish fraternal correspondence with Congregational churches, and other bodies of Christians throughout the world: To address an annual or occasional letter to the associated churches, accompanied with such information as may be deemed necessary: To obtain accurate statistical information relative to the Congregational Churches throughout the kingdom and the world at large: To inquire into the present methods of collecting funds for the erection of places of worship, and to consider the practicability of introducing any improved plan: To assist in maintaining and enlarging the civil rights of Protestant Dissenters." Evangelical Magazine, June, 1831, Vol. 10, pp. 370-373.

polity. But irrespective of the various influences which determined the decision, the welcome news of the denomination's acceptance of the proposal was received at a meeting in the Congregational Library on 11 May, 1832. The committee reported that of the thirty-four English Counties having associations, twenty-six were favourable to the plan, four had declined a decision at the time, and four had not replied. With this report, James then moved, and John Burnett seconded, that the committee's report be approved¹, and then a motion was moved and seconded that "the union be now formed".² Thus a long, arduous struggle was beginning to be rewarded.

Considerable time in this assembly was devoted to the discussion of a Declaration of Faith and Order. It was James who introduced the subject by submitting a paper containing a "Declaration of the Principles of Faith and Order of the Congregational Body", cautiously stating that it had been drawn up by an "individual" (George Redord) at the request of several brethren. The meeting listened to it with attention, and after a two-days' interval, it was discussed and an agreement was reached to submit the Declaration to the churches for comment. At the first meeting of the Union on May 7, 1833, it was reported that the Declaration had met with general acceptance. The Draft of the document was

¹R. W. Dale, History of English Congregationalism, p.694.

²Albert Peel, Ibid., p.66.

referred to a subcommittee for final revision, and on May 7, 1833, it was unanimously accepted by the Union. The final form of the declaration consisted of seven Preliminary Notes, twenty Doctrinal Propositions described as "Principles of Church Order and Discipline".¹

It is remarkable that a document which interpreted so many controversial subjects should have gained the approval of the churches so quickly, but perhaps a partial explanation is that it was not designed to be a creed, but merely a statement for "general information" on the principal tenets of Congregationalism. A comparison of this document with the Savoy Declaration of 1658 will quickly reveal that it lacks the theological precision so characteristic of the seventeenth century ministers, being more the product of preachers than theologians:

The men who met in the Congregational Library, though there were scholars and theologians among them, were for the most part popular preachers, children of the Revival; the early education of some of them had been imperfect; very few of them had the leisure for deep research; very few of them had been disciplined to severe accuracy of thought. They cared very little for subtleties and refinements which had divided Protestant theologians. They were anxious about the substance of Christian truth: they were indifferent - perhaps too indifferent - to the intellectual forms in which it was expressed.²

Although this Declaration is attributed to the pen of George Redford, there is good evidence that the influence of James was

¹R. W. Dale, History of English Congregationalism, pp. 700-701.

²Ibid., pp. 703-04.

strong in its formation. The Congregational Year Book, dated 1861, states that a few emendations to the work were made by James¹, and T. S. James points out that his father and Redford "conferred anxiously and frequently respecting it".² It is quite probable that in these conferences James's opinion was far more influential than appears from explicit data, and although the extent of this influence cannot be defined, he was obviously in agreement with the general contents of the Declaration, otherwise he would not have introduced it. As further evidence of this fact, Dale refers to the Declaration "as illustrating Mr. James's theological and ecclesiastical opinions"³ and T. S. James says that it may be taken as "precisely indicating" his father's views.⁴ It seems reasonable, therefore, to conclude that the 1833 Declaration is a good commentary on the theological and ecclesiastical views of James and that it is representative of the usual Congregational interpretation of religion at the time. It is unfortunate that one cannot accurately estimate James's contribution, but precise information is lacking, and therefore all that is certain is that he did co-operate with Dr. Redford in composing it.

¹The Congregational Year Book, 1861, pp.230-33.

²J. A. James, Works 17, p.216.

³R. W. Dale, op. cit., p.203. It was thought advisable, therefore, to include the 1833 Declaration in the Appendix, since it will be impossible to consider in detail the various theological and ecclesiastical opinions of James in a paper of so wide a scope as this.

⁴R. W. Dale, Ibid.

From the Union's beginning until his death, James ardently supported its work. As far as his health and pastoral responsibilities would allow, he attended its various meetings and participated freely and constructively in its important discussions. He early distinguished himself as a tactful and respected leader and perhaps the most notable illustration of the confidence the Union placed in his "tactful leadership" was his appointment to deliver an address in 1857 at Cheltenham to lessen the tensions, within the denomination, occasioned by the Rivulet Controversy. Circumstances which developed made it necessary for the Union to cancel the meeting, but James refused to remain silent on the issue and accordingly published the address he would have given under the title The Rivulet Controversy¹ in which he called for peace.

James also takes credit for having been the first to propose

¹The occasion of this controversy was the publication in 1855 of a hymn book by T. T. Lynch of London called Hymns for Heart and Voice: The Rivulet. This publication was immediately attacked by certain Evangelicals as being devoid of evangelical religion and even Deistic. None were more vociferous in their denunciations than Dr. Campbell, the editor of the Union's official periodicals, and his action so divided the denomination that a strong movement was started to disassociate the papers from the Union. A special conference was called for September 23, 1856, to attempt to settle the dispute and it was at this meeting that James moved: "That this conference venture respectively, earnestly, to entreat, that by such mutual concession and agreement as may be necessary, this controversy may at once be brought to an end." Unfortunately, it lingered on and resulted ultimately in Dr. Campbell's resignation, but the actions of James in it leave no doubt that he attempted to lead the Union in a better way, the way of love. The Congregational Year Book, 1857, pp.46-48; Albert Peel, Ibid., pp.221ff.; H. S. Skeets and C. S. Miall, op. cit., pp.547-52.

two of the Union's earliest periodicals. Speaking of the good things which the Union had contributed to Congregationalism, he stated:

The 'Christian Witness' and the 'Church Member's Penny Magazine' are also among its fruits, which have not only given out much useful religious knowledge and edification, but have raised a fund for the relief of our aged ministers. I claim to have been the proposers of these works, or rather of one of them, for it was intended originally to have been but one.¹

Peel does not state who proposed the beginning of these periodicals but he does leave the impression that the suggestion of Algernon Wells in 1842 that the denomination should be publishing more inexpensive periodicals was largely responsible for their existence.² Since information on the matter is lacking, we must be content to let the problem stand as it is.³

The honours which the Union bestowed upon James are perhaps indicative of the respect which he commanded in the denomination. He was elected chairman of the Union for the year 1838, and was chosen to be its Autumnal preacher on two occasions, the first being the meeting at Bradford in 1842, and the second that at Cheltenham in 1857, the latter having been cancelled because of

¹J. A. James, Works 17, p. 215.

²Albert Peel, op. cit., pp. 125ff.; Both the Christian Witness (1844-71) and The Christian's Penny Magazine (1845-81) were official periodicals of the Union until 1857. See Albert Peel, Ibid., p. 413.

³Efforts to gain further information from the available early numbers of these magazines were unrewarding.

the Rivulet Controversy. But the honours which he received are also indicative of his great labour for the Union, and thus he can rightfully claim a prominent place as one of the Union's founders and most faithful supporters during its early years of struggle. "I shall ever consider it an honour", James wrote in his autobiography shortly before his death, "to have done what I did in common with others, for thus gathering together into a body the disjecta membra of our denomination."¹

Had James restricted his interest in union to his own denomination, then it could legitimately be said that he was sectarian in his religion, but his life and work show that "he loved the universal church better than any part of it"² and that there was no subject nearer to his heart, none with which his name was more closely identified during the latter part of his life, than that of Christian union.

Towards the end of the first half of the last century the churches of the various denominations in Great Britain were largely separated in life and work, but the need for unity was making itself felt and finding expression in many quarters even in the face of increasing divisions. On the national scene stirring events were taking place in the field of religion. The Disruption of 1843 had drawn from the Church of Scotland a band of men and women, led

¹J. A. James, Works 17, p. 215.

²R. W. Dale, The Life and Letters of John Angell James, p. 396.

by Thomas Chalmers, to form a Free Church of Scotland,¹ and in England in 1845 the Oxford Movement had resulted in part in the secession from the Church of England to the Roman Church of a group of High Churchmen, headed by John Henry Newman.² Undoubtedly this event, emphasising the tenets and proving the power of the Roman Church, made the Protestants increasingly alive to the danger of its encroachment and to the need for Protestants to draw more closely together for the strength that comes from unity.

But it was the scandal of division and its distortion of relations between Christians of different denominations which distressed James most and which undoubtedly gave him the necessary incentive to do something positive to correct it. "No thoughtful Christian", he wrote in his autobiography, "can be otherwise than afflicted by the multiplied sects, divisions, strifes, and controversies of Christendom. Strange and mournful it is that the prayer of our Lord for the visible unity of His people should not yet have been answered in any considerable measure."³

Intensely concerned with the challenge of the problem, he frequently prayed about it and once, while he was doing so, concluded that he should do something positive, at least in England, toward

¹Williston Walker, A History of the Christian Church, pp.554-55.

²Ibid., pp.547-49; H. O. Wakeman, History of the Church of England, pp.448-84.

³J. A. James, Works 17, p.218.

solving it.¹ He rose from his knees, sketched out a plan for a federation of Christians, and at the annual meeting of the Congregational Union in May, 1842, presented it to his brethren during a speech in which he was seconding a resolution welcoming foreign visitors to the assembly:

Though pressed for time, I cannot sit down without disburdening my heart on a subject which has induced me to leave the privacy from which I rarely emerge, and perhaps shall emerge more rarely still. It is this -- the Union has done much, but it may do more, in my opinion, notwithstanding the divided and distracted state of the Protestant Evangelical body. There is, in spite of the bigotry, prejudice, virulence, and hostility which is manifested in every direction, an undercurrent flowing, a yearning for more extensive union And is it not in the power of this Union to bring about, by God's blessing, a Protestant Evangelical Union of the whole body of Christ's faithful followers, who have, at any rate, adopted the Voluntary Principle? In my judgment, the time is come when such a union may be attempted; and I know of no body that could attempt it with more rational hopes of success than that which is now assembled. Is it not the reproach of Christianity, of Protestantism, and of our own body in connection with other sections of the Christian Church, that we are so divided, that there is no recognition of one another as Christian brethren? It appears to me that we have it in our power to raise up a defence against Infidelity, Popery, Puseyism, and Plymouth-brethrenism, by bringing about a union of all Protestant bodies of Christians holding

¹Ibid. James evidently had been influenced considerably on the subject by his friends: "My esteemed friend, Dr. Fletcher, had the thought in his mind before it came to me. I take no credit to myself, either for desiring union, or for sagacity in discerning the best means of promoting it. Should it be, however, that through my humble instrumentality, any progress should be made towards an object, the consummation of which we all so devoutly wish, I shall be thankful to God." The Congregational Magazine, November, 1842, p.907.

the Voluntary principle. How many are there who would unite, if for nothing else, upon the basis of a simple mutual recognition.¹

In concluding his speech he encouraged the members of the Union to think seriously about the problem and recommended that it be a subject for consideration at the Union's next autumnal meeting in Liverpool.²

After the meeting James was encouraged by a fellow minister to present the proposal to the public, which he accordingly did in a letter inserted in the Congregational Magazine in July 1842. Believing that his plan could best be accomplished by working through denominational channels, he chose to address his plea for unity to the secretaries of the Congregational Union, with a hope that they would take the initiative in the movement. Containing a plan for a General Protestant Union, this letter was undoubtedly a significant step toward the formation of the Evangelical Alliance and consequently affords a good insight into the extent of his influence in the movement.

In the first place it makes it clear that James was seeking unity among Christians rather than a superficial organic union of the denominations. He desired to see a visible demonstration of the real unity which was already in existence within the hearts of all true Christians but which had little outlet of expression because of the exaggerated sectarianism within the denominations. As he

¹R. W. Dale, op. cit., pp. 397-98.

²Ibid., p. 398.

saw it, if Christians of the various religious bodies could not be one in mind on all points, at least they could demonstrate to the unbelieving world that their hearts were one and thus in some measure reveal the oneness of all true disciples of Christ.¹ For this, however, some organisation was necessary and therefore he suggested that the committee should take steps to form a "Protestant Evangelical Union" to be composed of the various evangelical denominations. There would of necessity have to be a doctrinal basis for such an organisation and consequently he suggested the following principles:

1. General and protestant principles: The inspiration of the scriptures of the Old and New Testament; The holy scriptures the sole and sufficient rule of faith in matters of religion, whether in relation to doctrine, morals, or worship; The indefeasible right and incumbent duty of every man to read the scriptures and to judge of their meaning, to the exclusion of all authoritative traditional interpretation of them whatever.
2. Theological principles: The Trinity of co-equal persons in the Godhead; The atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ by his sacrificial death; The doctrine of salvation by grace; The justification of the sinner by faith alone; The indispensable necessity of regeneration by the work of the Holy Spirit.²

¹J. A. James, Works 14, p. 538.

²J. A. James, Works 14, pp. 539-40. A comparison of these principles with the following adopted by the Alliance at London in 1846 will reveal their similarity: "(1) The divine inspiration, authority, and sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures. (2) The right and duty of private judgment in the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures. (3) The unity of the Godhead, and the Trinity of the Persons therein. (4) The utter depravity of human nature in consequence of the Fall. (5) The incarnation of the Son of God, His work of atonement for the sins of mankind, and His mediatorial intercession and reign. (6) The justification of the sinner by faith alone. (7) The work of the Holy Spirit in the conversion, and sanctification of the sinner. (8) The immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, the judgment of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, with eternal blessedness of the righteous and the eternal punishment of the wicked. The divine institution of the Christian ministry and the obligation and perpetuity of the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper." Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, VI, p. 601.

The main function of the proposed union, as James had envisaged it, should be to further the mutual recognition as "brethren in Christ" of all who were in agreement with the foregoing principles and as "ministers of Christ" all ordained men who preached them irrespective of the denomination in which they had been ordained. Later on, perhaps, other functions could be added, but to facilitate the achievement of the principal one, two or three yearly meetings "of a devotional character" could be held in London's Exeter Hall for the purpose of promoting and demonstrating fellowship. Such convocations would intensify the spirit of love, present a united front against the enemies of evangelical Christianity and might result ultimately in bringing Christians to a closer agreement on those points which separate them. Then there was the possibility that the Union could become a world-wide organisation: "Might it not be hoped, or is it calculating too largely upon the charity of the present age and anticipating too speedily the glories of the coming ones, to expect that Christians of other countries, to earth's remotest bounds, would solicit to be admitted into 'the holy league'?"¹ But whether its influence was world-wide or restricted to Britain, if it could in some measure break down the barriers erected by sectarianism between Christians, it would be a triumph of paramount significance. He therefore concluded his letter by urging the leaders of the

¹J. A. James, Works 14, pp. 542-43.

Congregational Union to give the proposal immediate attention:

I propose it to you, my beloved brethren, to commence this work of faith, this labour of love; and may you not only enter upon it, but go through with the patience of hope Confer, then, my brethren, upon the scheme, or any other and better one of a similar kind, for I am zealous only about the general principle, not about the details.¹

In addition to sending the letter to the secretaries of the Congregational Union, he also sent copies to many of the evangelical ministers within the various denominations, including the Church of England. Attracting considerable attention, the proposal met with general approval² and was one of the main topics of discussion at the next meeting in October, 1842, of the Congregational Union at Liverpool.³ At this meeting, there was general agreement that the need of a demonstration of unity was pressing, but the consensus of opinion appeared to be that more time should be allowed for discussion in the churches before anything tangible should be attempted. Therefore a resolution was passed recommending that it be seriously considered by the churches with the

¹J. A. James, Works 14, pp.543-44.

²For example, a Mr. J. Leifchild wrote concerning the letter: "I have been greatly delighted, in common with many others, at the proposal suggested by our friend and brother, the Rev. J. A. James, of Birmingham, in a letter addressed to the Secretaries of the Congregational body, and published in your last number, relative to a 'General Protestant Evangelical Union'. It is a proposal which does equal honour to the head and heart of its author." The Evangelical Magazine, September, 1842, Vol.20, p.423.

³The Congregational Magazine, November, 1842, Vol.6, p.786.

view to their giving their support to any practical proposal that might be suggested at a later date. Speaking in support of this resolution, James again summarised the main points he had included in his letter to the secretaries of the Union, and subsequently moved:

That in order to carry the foregoing resolution into effect, this meeting urgently recommends the Committee of the Union without delay to correspond with various religious bodies and churches in the United Kingdom and elsewhere, in order to ascertain their views of the desirableness and practicability of obtaining a general, united, manifestation of attachment to the general principles of Protestantism.¹

The Committee immediately began to work on the project, but before an interdenominational assembly to consider the proposal could be arranged, a Dr. Leifchild, who had been greatly impressed by James's proposal², convened a meeting on Christian Union in London's Craven Chapel on January 2, 1843, but unfortunately its accomplishments were negligible since it did little more than to keep the subject before the public.³ However, a very successful meeting was held on February 20th of the same year in London's Centenary Hall where James and others presented their views and suggestions on the subject.⁴ Assembled by the Union's Committee,

¹R. W. Dale, op. cit., p.407.

²J. W. Massie, The Evangelical Alliance: Its Origin and Development, p.89.

³The Congregational Magazine, February, 1843, p.140.

⁴Ibid., March, 1843, p.231.

it was interdenominational in scope, and was extensive in its influence in that a provisional committee was appointed to convene another and a larger meeting¹, since it was now felt that the time had come to bring the matter before the public in a more spectacular way. Consequently, a meeting was arranged in London's Exeter Hall, Strand, for June 1, 1843. The response of the public was overwhelming! Such was the demand for tickets that eleven thousand were issued, three times the number of persons the hall would hold. Long before the hour the great building was thronged and crowds went away unable to gain entrance. Among the speakers at this memorable gathering were Dr. James Hamilton, Presbyterian, the Hon. and Rev. Baptist Noel, Episcopalian, and John Angell James. During the course of James's address, after having recounted how he had received the idea while praying that he should suggest a demonstration of Christian unity, he jubilantly stated:

Look around, and see how the public mind has received it, and how that one simple thought, so struck out and so given to the world, is working its way; and who can tell what, where, and when the last operation of that thought will be?²

The speakers, however, did not have the task of convincing the audience, but simply to guide and direct their enthusiasm. It was made clear that night that the movement towards unity had the

¹The Congregational Magazine, March, 1843, p. 231.

²Ibid., July, 1843, p. 543.

support, not only of Christian leaders, but of the rank and file of evangelical Christians. Although no organisation was formed at this meeting, resolutions were passed approving Christian union and therefore a significant step had been taken in that a large and representative group had publicly sanctioned it.

The next important move toward a Protestant Union originated in Scotland. In 1843 the bicentenary of the Westminster Assembly was being celebrated in that country and Dr. Balmer of Berwick pleaded for a closer unity among Christians. His plea deeply impressed John Henderson, a wealthy merchant of Park, near Glasgow, and he resolved to do something to help. With a view to this, he asked a number of leading ministers of different denominations who were known to favour unity to write essays on the subject for publication. All those invited consented to write, among them being Drs. Chalmers and Candlish of the Free Church of Scotland, Henderson's own pastor, Dr. King, and James.¹ The book, published in 1845, was entitled Essays on Christian Union and undoubtedly helped to stimulate British opinion in favour of union. James's essay was on "Union Among Christians Viewed in Relation to the Present State of Parties in England"² and according to Dr. King it "proved more important than any of the rest in respect to its issues".³ Also it was all the more significant in that James

¹J. A. James, Works 17, p. 226.

²Loc. cit.

³R. W. Dale, op. cit., p. 411.

appended to it extracts of a letter from Dr. Patton of New York suggesting that a world conference of delegates from different denominations should be convened in London to set forth the truths on which they were agreed.¹

This suggestion caught James's imagination and it is not surprising that at the autumnal meeting of the Congregational Union at Leeds in October, 1843, he moved a resolution, which the Union approved, expressing the desirability of a meeting of Christian delegates from all parts of the world.² It appears that the Union did nothing more than this, but James was determined not to be passive on the matter and accordingly corresponded with his friends on the best means of accomplishing it. Dr. King of Scotland suggested that a smaller preparatory conference would be advisable before a great convention of world Protestantism should take place and in further correspondence both King and James agreed

¹In discussing the influence of Americans in the formation of the Evangelical Alliance, L. W. Bacon makes it clear that Patton did not originate the suggestion for a world Protestant Organisation: "The first proposal for such an Assembly seems to be contained in an article by L. Bacon in "The New Englander" for April, 1844. 'Why might there not be, ere long, some general conference in which various evangelical bodies of this country and Great Britain and of the continent of Europe should be in some way represented, and in which the great cause of reformed and spiritual Christianity throughout the world should be made the subject of detailed and deliberate consideration, with prayer and praise? That would be an 'ecumenical council' such as never yet assembled since the apostles parted from each other at Jerusalem - a council not for legislation and division, but for union and communion and for the extension of the saving knowledge of Christ.'" A History of American Christianity, p.408.

²J. W. Massie, op. cit., p.100.

that it might be best if the invitation to such a meeting was issued from Scotland. Dr. King took the lead in the movement and in the summer of 1845 a letter prepared by a group of Scotsmen was sent to the evangelical clergy of England, Wales, and Ireland, referring to the proposal for a London Conference, and urging that a preparatory conference be held that autumn in Liverpool.¹ This was approved and two hundred and sixteen Church leaders drawn from twenty denominations, met in the Medical Hall, Liverpool, on 1st October, 1845.² At the very first session, James was elected Chairman³ and in his autobiography attributed this honour to the general impression that he was the acknowledged originator and proposer of the scheme of a union in England.⁴ After acknowledging his unworthiness to take the chair, he gave an impromptu speech of which the following is the most important part:

It is impossible for me to forget the responsibility I have incurred, in consenting to take the chair on this occasion. In every chorus of human voices, the harmony depends upon the keynote being rightly struck: that note I am now appointed to give, and it is LOVE.... Union in prayer prepares for union in everything else that is holy and good; and we never approach so near to each other, as when we draw near together to the common centre of our union. A new scene in the history of the Christian Church now presents itself to us; may we have grace so to conduct

¹R. W. Dale, op. cit., p.412.

²John W. Ewing, Goodly Fellowship, p.14.

³Conference on Christian Union Held at Liverpool on Wednesday the First Day of October and Subsequent Days, p.13.

⁴J. A. James, Works 17, p.227.

ourselves in passing through it, as to raise the ancient admiration, from those who shall hear of our proceedings, 'See how these Christians love one another!'¹

Lasting for three days, the meetings were marked by the utmost friendliness and warmth and were quite beneficial in that preparation was made for the coming London meeting. A doctrinal basis of union was reached², the name "Evangelical Alliance" was accepted³, special committees were formed⁴, and the interest in union was heightened.⁵ It was also agreed that a series of gatherings in the great cities of the nation should be held in preparation for the London Meeting. This was accordingly done, and meetings were organised in Dublin, Belfast, Newcastle, and Birmingham. In Manchester, for example, the Free Trade Hall was taken and was thronged an hour before the time with an audience eager for Christian fellowship.

But it must not be supposed that there were no critics of the movement. The Anglican Archbishop of Dublin, Whately, thought that the members of the Alliance would defeat their own purpose by producing more dissension than union. He therefore admonished his clergy to ignore the movement and deposed a curate who disobeyed him.

¹J. W. Massie, op. cit., pp.115-16.

²J. A. James, Works 17, p.230.

³Conference on Christian Union, p.25.

⁴Ibid.

⁵C. E. Bardley suggests that the real birth of the Alliance occurred at this meeting in Liverpool, since so much was accomplished, but all the other writers point to the London meetings as marking the actual organisation of it. History and Prospects of the Evangelical Alliance, p.3.

Dr. Campbell, editor of the Congregational Union's official magazine Christian Witness attacked the movement on the ground that it proposed to achieve impossibilities, but the advocates of unity, not to be deterred by criticism, went on with their campaign. At Birmingham, in April, 1846, it was resolved that the London meeting should be held in the coming August and for the expenses of this venture £6,000 was raised quickly and with enthusiasm.¹ Hence the field was set for the great day.

On Wednesday, 19th August, 1846, the General Conference assembled in the Freemasons' Hall, Great Queen Street, London. There were more than nine hundred clergymen and laymen present from many parts of the world and representing no less than fifty religious bodies.² Many of them were quite well known in their time, among whom were Blackwood, Kinnaird, Binney, Leifchild, Howard, Hinton, Baptist Noel, Candlish, Buchanan, Patton and James.

The Conference met for thirteen days, holding sessions morning and evening, with committee meetings in the afternoon. Every session opened with a brief devotional service, and at the first session James conducted it.³ On the second day the Conference passed

¹John W. Ewing, Ibid., pp. 14-15.

²The Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. 8, p. 896; John W. Ewing, Ibid., p. 15.

³Evangelical Alliance. Report of the Proceedings of the Conference Held at Freemasons' Hall, London, From August 19th to September 2nd Inclusive, 1846, p. 1.

a resolution declaring that it had met, not to create an artificial Christian union, but to confess the unity which the Church of Christ possessed as His Body. In moving the resolution, Dr. Wardlaw expressed his conviction, which was evidently that of the Assembly, that when a sinner accepted Christ as his saviour he became a member of the Lord's Body and became at the same time one with all who were of Christ throughout the earth. In the evening of the same day, a motion was moved and accepted:

That the members of this Conference are deeply convinced of the desirableness of forming a confederation, on the basis of great evangelical principles held in common by them, which may afford opportunity to members of the Church of Christ of cultivating brotherly love, enjoying Christian intercourse, and promoting such objects as they may hereafter agree to prosecute together; and they hereby proceed to form such a confederation under the name of 'The Evangelical Alliance'.¹

¹Quoted by John W. Ewing, Goodly Fellowship, p.16. Dr. W. A. Visser 'T. Hoofft, prominent leader in the World Council of Churches, has recently listed what he considers to be the principal conclusions on Church Unity accepted at the various meetings in the past of the World Council of Churches. Perhaps, therefore, they will afford a good basis of comparison with the original goals of the founders of The Evangelical Alliance: (a) the unity of the Church is a given unity, in that it has its essential reality in Jesus Christ Himself; (b) this unity must be made manifest to the world; (c) full Church unity must be based on a large measure of agreement in doctrine; (d) sacramental communion is a necessary part of full Church unity; (e) a ministry acknowledged by every part of the Church and some permanent organ of conference and counsel are required, but that a rigid uniformity of governmental structure or a structure dominated by a centralised administrative authority are to be avoided; (f) the unity of the Church depends on the renewal of the Church; (g) this unity is not to be sought for its own sake only, but for the sake of the World in which the Church performs its mission of evangelism. The Ecumenical Review, October, 1955, p.22.

Basing its procedure largely on the work done at the previous meeting in Liverpool¹, the Alliance on the third day of the Conference considered the doctrinal basis of union, and after considerable discussion, an agreement was reached. Thus, one of the main obstacles had been overcome, but before the Conference closed a question arose which might have split the Alliance. Many of the British members wished a resolution passed that no slave-holder should be received as a member. Most of the Americans, while agreeing with this hatred of slavery, were unwilling to pass this resolution since it would prevent American churches in fellowship with churches including slave-holders from coming in, and the Alliance would be seriously limited. Perhaps no individual there detested the practice of slavery more than James, but he was unwilling to see the Alliance divided at such an early stage, so he recommended that the question be set aside for the time being and that a future meeting of select persons from Europe and America be held to determine a suitable policy regarding the membership of slave-holders.² However, his proposal was rejected and after several days of debate it was agreed not to make anti-slavery a part of the constitution of the Alliance, but to confine the basis to the spiritual principles which had brought the

¹The Congregational Magazine, November, 1845, p. 833.

²Evangelical Alliance, Report of the Proceedings of the Conference Held at Freemasons' Hall, p. 297.

members together.¹

There still remained one other big issue to settle before the Conference ended and that was the problem of the Alliance's activities. Dr. Thomas Chalmers had expressed his fear of a "union without work" and this sentiment was probably shared by the whole assembly. But after considerable discussion the following broad objects were accepted:

The diffusion of a greater spirit of harmony among Christians of various communities at home; the defence of Religious Liberty in foreign countries; and the initiation of various enterprises for the direct work of the Gospel in Heathen, Mohammedan and Christian Countries.²

With this agreement the assembly dispersed and each person left with the conviction that the Spirit of God had created among men a new and vital fellowship. Perhaps none left with more satisfaction than James. He could take pride in the fact that at least the Alliance had started on its way.

But despite all the exuberance which had been manifested in bringing the Alliance into being, it never achieved anything like the effect James had hoped it would. In fact, though it undoubtedly did much to improve relations between scores of individuals in the various denominations, its influence was

¹John W. Ewing, op. cit., p.19.

²C. E. Hardley, op. cit., p.5. For a more detailed list of specific objects of work which the Alliance set for itself, see J. W. Ewing, Ibid., pp.19-20.

relatively weak from the beginning. Referring to its state in a letter to Dr. Patton in 1853 James confessed: "We still keep going on, though I am afraid we do not make much progress"¹, and by 1858 he had catalogued the weaknesses of the movement as follows:

It began with a blaze instead of a spark.... It was reckless of expense in the way of printing and other matters. And it began on too refined a principle of action.²

But despite its waning influence, James remained loyal to it to the end. Though his pastoral responsibilities prohibited him from attending the world meetings of the Alliance³, he nevertheless took an active part in the British organisation. During most of his latter years he served on the Executive Council as a representative from the Midland division and was one of the most generous financial subscribers to it.⁴

If it is true to say that a man's influence can continue on after death in the work he accomplished in life, then it can be said that the influence of James has been very much alive in the work of the Alliance from its founding until now. Perhaps

¹R. W. Dale, op. cit., p. 550.

²J. A. James, Works 17, pp. 232-33.

³World meetings were held at London in 1851, at Paris in 1855, and at Berlin in 1857. C. E. Bardley, op. cit., pp. 3-4.

⁴A reference to the financial section of the Abstract of the Proceedings of the annual conferences of the British Alliance will substantiate this.

it will be well to mention some of the things which this organisation has attempted to accomplish through the years. For one thing it has continually sought to attract the public's attention to the need for prayer by promoting various National days of prayer, home prayer crusades, and the Universal Week of Prayer. It has given its full support to various organisations and movements to extend the Gospel throughout the world and all along it has contributed to the support of foreign missionaries. It has sought through various means to strengthen the Protestant witness in the world and has consistently attempted to oppose the advance of Roman Catholicism by every legitimate means at its disposal. It has championed religious liberty by giving financial aid to minority groups of Christians enduring persecution at various periods and in various parts of the world and has sought to intercede on their behalf with the proper authorities. It has identified itself with the movement for the preservation of the Lord's Day and has continually opposed various movements which challenged the "orthodox" Gospel, such as Spiritualism, Theosophy, Christian Science, Behaism, Millennial Dawnism, and such like. But its primary goal of increasing unity among Christians, however, has been its greatest emphasis and no doubt its greatest accomplishment:

For one hundred years it has sought not to break denominations, but to break down denominational barriers of the spirit separating Christians from fellowship one with another. As a result of its witness multitudes of Christian people, both in this country and in other lands,

have discovered unity of spirit, fellowship in worship and practical brotherly love, which have overridden differences of external church membership, whilst in no way creating disloyalty to that branch of the Church to which they belong.¹

It is also worth noting that it was the Evangelical Alliance which inaugurated and sponsored the Haringay Crusade conducted by Dr. Billy Graham. If the planting and watering done by men like James prepared in some measure the soil for the Harvest reaped by God through this mission, then it can be said that the ecumenical spirit which James displayed in the formation of the Evangelical Alliance was not only beneficial to Christendom in the nineteenth century, but was also a contribution to our time.

Towards the middle of the last century the modern missionary movement was making itself felt both in Christian and in heathen lands.² Awakened to the missionary imperative of the Gospel,

¹An Evangelical Charter, p.4. The name of this organisation now is "World's Evangelical Alliance" but consideration is being given to the advisability of returning to the original name of "The Evangelical Alliance".

²The movement even by 1850 was still very young and in a stage of development. The first of the modern missionary societies was organised in 1792 by English Baptists. The London Missionary Society, at the outset undenominational and later the agent of English Congregationalists, followed in 1795; the Church Missionary Society was founded in 1799 by Evangelicals in the Church of England; the Wesleysans, who for many years had carried on missions without a society, formed one in 1818; in 1804 the British and Foreign Bible Society was organised for the purpose of distributing the Scriptures at home and abroad; and many other similar bodies came into existence in Great Britain. K. S. Latourette, A History of Christian Missions in China, pp.206-07.

many Christians were zealously giving their money and encouraging their sons to the task of winning the world to Christ and were receiving some evidence that their efforts were being rewarded. In India, the pioneer, William Carey, had passed away but Alexander Duff and John Wilson were carrying his work forward in a great educational campaign, the most fruitful results of which are only now being realised. Progress was also being made in Africa, where Moffat was working among the Bechuanas and where his son-in-law, Livingstone, was moving north from South Africa towards the dark, slavery-cursed central region of the continent. In the Pacific Islands, visited a little before by Charles Darwin, murderers and cannibals were being evangelised by the successors of the martyred John Williams, and in China a Protestant superstructure was beginning to be built upon the foundation laid by the first Protestant missionary to that country, Robert Morrison.

Of all the countries in which the London Missionary Society was working, none was closer to the heart of James than China, probably because of Robert Morrison, his classmate at Gosport. Morrison had sailed for China in the early part of 1807, and though he had not made many converts by the time of his death on August 1, 1834, he had provided some of the instruments which would enable others coming after him to do so:

He had accomplished, almost single-handed, three great tasks - the Chinese Dictionary, the establishment of the Anglo-Chinese College at Malacca, and the translation of the Holy Scriptures into the book language of China.¹

¹Richard Lovett, The History of the London Missionary Society 1795-1895, Vol. 2, pp. 427-28.

With Morrison's adventures to intrigue him during the early years of his ministry, and with his accomplishments to challenge him during his middle years, it is natural that James's interest in China was vital and persistent, but it was only in his later ministry that an opportunity to do something significant towards its conversion presented itself. In fact, the policies of the Chinese government had made it virtually impossible for very much Christian activity of any sort to be exerted there until 1842. It was in this year, after a long period of previous political and military struggles, that a treaty was signed opening five Chinese ports to Englishmen for trade and residence, and among the first to take advantage of this were Christian missionaries.¹ About ten years later, news began to reach Britain that a rebellion in one of the Chinese provinces might possibly result in the overthrow of the Chinese government and the establishment of a pseudo-Christianity. It seems that the leader of the revolt, Hung Sew Tseuen, while studying as a youth in Canton, had been given some pamphlets in 1834 entitled Good Words to Admonish the Age, written by Leang A-fa, the first Protestant convert in China and an employee of the London Missionary Society. These pamphlets contained essays and Biblical selections, and constituted a kind of summary of the teaching of Protestant missionaries. At the time the young student did not, apparently, do more than glance them over,

¹Richard Lovett, Ibid., pp.440-42.

but, with the Chinese scholar's reverence for the printed page, took them home and preserved them. Three years later in 1837, he became seriously ill and later stated that during this sickness he had been taken up into heaven and given wonderful revelations, one of them being a commission to overturn the idolatry of his countrymen. It appears that he did little about his experiences for the next few years, but in 1843, at the suggestion of a cousin, he turned to the pamphlets which he received in Canton, and to his amazement found what seemed a confirmation and explanation of the visions of his illness. Unfortunately, however, he laid more stress upon the authority of his own revelations than upon the Bible with the result that he founded a new cult which was not Christian but which had some Christian characteristics. Zealously he began to propagate the new faith through books and preaching, and at the same time mustered an army with a view to forcing the religion upon the whole nation. The year 1850 saw a change in the Chinese government in consequence of the accession of a new emperor, and this seemed a favourable time to Hung to rouse popular discontent against the Tartar dynasty. Suddenly a great army of insurgents poured out from the mountainous district of Kang-se, and instantly swept to destruction the troops which attempted to resist their progress.¹ So general was the sympathy

¹For a very good discussion of this rebellion, including a comparison of Christianity with the religion which was associated with it, see: K. S. Latourette, A History of Christian Missions in China, pp. 282-302.

which the movement received that many missionaries in China anticipated the complete triumph of Hung.

Like most other people interested in the progress of the Gospel in China, James received the news of this uprising with mixed emotions. He feared that the movement might turn out to be an obstacle to the cause of Christ and at the same time cherished a hope that it might contribute to the people's acceptance of the Gospel. While his mind was torn between fear and hope, he received a letter from his friend Thomas Thompson of Poundsford Park proposing that an immediate appeal be made to the Sunday Schools of the nation to send a million copies of the New Testament to China, since he believed that it might be the means of converting the rebels to New Testament Christianity. According to Thompson's calculations, a single copy could be printed for fourpence and a million copies could be sent for about £17,000. In his letter of reply, James stated:

Your proposal is a noble and vast conception. It would be a gross and guilty neglect on the part of the Christian Church to suffer the revolution in China to occur without some attempt to turn it to the advantage of that cause which all events are intended to subserve. It is the greatest providential movement of modern times, and is pregnant with results of a most momentous character. Still it is yet only partially developed - it is in transitu, and how it may determine it is impossible to say.... Under these circumstances, I am inclined¹ to think, we had better wait for future developments.

But in case further developments were to make the project more

¹R. W. Dale, op. cit., p.429.

advisable, James suggested that Thompson give serious thought to widening the scope of the appeal to include Christians in Britain and America and to turning the responsibility of carrying out the scheme to the Bible Society, since in his opinion, it was the best agency in Britain at the time to do so.¹

For a period, Thompson clung tenaciously to his original idea of appealing to the Sunday Schools, but in further correspondence with James he was soon convinced that James's suggestion was the better. On the other hand, James soon concluded that Thompson's recommendation of immediate action was the wisest and accordingly penned a letter suggesting that Christians co-operate in the venture and inserted it in the British Banner and Patriot magazines.² In this rather lengthy letter, after having discussed the pertinent points regarding the occasion, cost and prospects of the work, he implored:

¹This was a perfectly natural suggestion for James to make, since he had been one of the secretaries of the Bible Society's Auxiliary branch in Birmingham from its formation in April 1806 till his death. On a national scale, he was among those who "for distinguished services in the cause of the society were appointed Hon. Governors for life", principally for his part in the million New Testaments scheme. It is not surprising to find Canton describing him as "one of the oldest, one of the warmest friends of the Society". William Canton, A History of the British and Foreign Bible Society, Vol.2, pp.189, 443.

²William Canton, Ibid., p.448. Dale states that "all the newspapers representing the great evangelical communities supported the scheme, and their columns were filled week after week with communications which showed the interest it had excited among all ranks, and in every part of the country." R. W. Dale, op. cit., p.444.

Protestants! I appeal to you, then, for the support of this project. A nobler one was never presented to your attention. What a platform does it afford for our union without compromise! Conscientious or prudential scruples keep many of you from coming within the bonds of 'The Evangelical Alliance'; while others are kept back from it by the question - Cui bono? We are told, and perhaps with some truth and force, that union for union's sake, without action, is too abstract an idea for so busy and practical an age as this. Well, then, here is an object of immense importance, which, while it unites our hearts, may engage our activities. It was my intention at one time to make the proposal to the Evangelical Alliance to take up the subject; but on consideration, I deemed it best to throw it open to the whole Protestant body...

Christian men and Protestants of all denominations! in the name of our holy religion - the spread of which is now likely to take place over so vast a portion of the earth - in the name of the great empire of China, now by the mysterious providence of God opening for the reception of the gospel of Christ - and especially in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose Kingdom seems likely to be established upon the ruins of the idolatry of half the pagan populations of the globe, - I call upon you, and conjure you, to give the subject of this paper, your serious and prayerful consideration.¹

The most significant response to this gigantic proposal was made by the executive committee of the British and Foreign Bible Society, who were so completely convinced that the plan would succeed, that on October 5th they announced that, relying on the faithfulness of the British public, they had taken upon themselves all the measures necessary to accomplish the enormous undertaking, and had already begun to make arrangements for the work to be carried out in China.² But previous to this, James had been unofficially informed that the

¹R. W. Dale, op. cit., p. 436.

²William Canton, A History of the British and Foreign Bible Society, Vol. 2, p. 448.

Bible Society would direct the scheme and consequently he had petitioned the support of Carrs Lane for the project, and in a letter written to inspire others inserted in the British Banner on September 19th, he reported that they had pledged twenty-five thousand copies, the cost of which totalled £410. In the same magazine a week later he inserted still another letter urging a public consideration of the cause but which was more specifically intended to enlist the support of special groups such as ministers, people of wealth, and Sunday School workers. But the idea so caught the imagination of the public that little pleading was needed. As James describes it:

Never was a thought more cordially, generally, promptly, and efficiently taken up than this. The expression has been echoed from the mountains of Wales. A million copies of the New Testament for China! It has floated over the lakes of Scotland; it has risen from every city, town, and hamlet in Great Britain; and even poor Ireland, weeping upon the banks of the Shannon, has taken down her harp, and amidst all her sorrows has struck a note of joy in the thought of sending 1,000,000 copies of the New Testament to China. It has come back to us from the Continent; returned in reverberation from America, and from almost every other part of the world.¹

¹Quoted by William Canton in A History of the British and Foreign Bible Society, Vol. 2, p. 448. Another quotation by Canton shows the response the appeal received from all types of people and groups: "By the end of the month, £1,060:17:5 was subscribed for 63,652 copies. Little children broke open their money-boxes and savings-banks; schoolboys sent their pocket-money, and did without their November fire-works; ingenious country girls gathered nosegays and had them sold at market by some kind farmer's wife; servant maids gave generously from their scanty wages (£6 to £10 a year); small Auxiliaries and Associations pledged themselves for so many hundred copies; £171:3:6 - the price of 10,270 copies - was received from 'the wholesale and retail tea-dealers of Edinburgh, Leith and vicinity', who thought the project 'had special claims on the tea-trade.'" William Canton, Ibid., pp. 448-49.

On 17th January, 1854, provision had been made for 909,844 copies at a cost of £15,164. At the end of February the goal of a million had been exceeded by 102,925 copies. In June, the funds, which now had included a contribution of £3,213 from the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland, was large enough to provide 2,037,259 copies at a cost of £33,954. At the end of the year it amounted to £38,346, and later subscriptions brought it up to £40,901.¹ The fund continued to increase until finally it amounted to £52,368, the last contribution being received by the Society in 1870, eleven years after James's death.²

In the broad and enthusiastic simplicity of its first inception at least, the Million Testament scheme was never realised. The brilliant prospects of a rapid and unchecked circulation of the Scriptures faded away. The cause was obstructed by the very rebellion which once seemed to offer such an excellent opportunity. Although the Scriptures had been given freely to all who were willing to accept them, the average circulation had only slightly exceeded an average of 31,000 copies a year, or a total of 156,000 from 1854 to the end of 1858. Consequently the arrangements for giving immediate effect to the million scheme resulted in large

¹William Canton, op. cit., Vol.2, p.449.

²Ibid., Vol.3, p.434. The amount collected in this campaign is all the more spectacular when it is realised that the Bible Society also made a special Jubilee year appeal at this time for funds to support a programme which included China.

accumulations of stock for which there was no adequate method of distribution. Even though the original plans for the scheme were blocked by the indifference of the Chinese, the venture was certainly not without its benefits both in the spiritual and material realms. From a spiritual standpoint a movement which touched the masses as this one did was undoubtedly beneficial to many of those who gave and received, and from a material point of view, the surplus funds which it created covered the Bible Society's entire expenditure in China for twenty years following it.¹ Therefore it was a significant move, and as Brown has pointed out, no names are more closely associated with it than Thomas Thompson, who originated the idea, and Angell James, who presented it to the public, and did so much to promote it.²

The tremendous response which this scheme received from the British people perhaps in part accounts for another bold adventure which James attempted for China a few years later. On 21 June, 1858, after considerable conflict, the government of China signed a peace treaty with the Western powers at Tien-Tsin and it was generally supposed by Britishers that it secured freedom and protection throughout China for Christian missionaries as well as toleration for Chinese who accepted the Christian faith. The

¹William Canton, op. cit., Vol.2, pp.448-450; Vol.3, p.434.

²George Brown, History of the British and Foreign Bible Society 1804-1854, Vol.1, p.263.

result of this supposition was an increased interest in the missionary movement and perhaps no one was more enthused or more hopeful about its good effect upon mission enterprises than James, who penned a pamphlet encouraging the Protestant Churches of Britain, Ireland and America to immediately accept the obligation imposed upon them by the opening of China by this treaty. Entitled God's Voice from China to the British and Irish Churches his enthusiasm is vibrant from the very beginning:

China is open! open from one end to the other for the introduction of the Gospel. If what is done on earth be known in heaven, I can imagine Morrison, Medhurst and other departed missionaries rising from their seats in glory and uttering the shout 'China is open to the Gospel!' While the heavenly hosts in millions of echoes reverberate the sound, crying, 'Hallelujah, China is open'..... Let the universal church join the strain and exult that China is open, and learn the lesson which Providence has taught by its recent wondrous dispensations towards that empire.¹

But knowing that enthusiasm without work is valueless, he suggested that Christians direct their enthusiasm toward a specific object:

If intense interest in the spiritual welfare of China qualify me for the task of urging the claims of that country, I am not unmeet for it; for I can truly say that a day never passes over my head during which I do not let my thoughts fly to it, and my earnest prayers ascend to God for it. Perhaps I may, without assumption or arrogance, affirm that the subject belongs to me, since God by my pen, no long time since, called forth between two and three million copies of the Scriptures for China Having thus sent forth the call for a million Testaments (for such only was the original requirement) I seem almost authorised to raise another call for a hundred missionaries.²

¹J. A. James, Works 16, p.477.

²Ibid., pp.478-79.

In addition to the pamphlet, he wrote many personal letters to the leaders of the various denominations urging a consideration of the proposal, and according to Dale, the replies which he received show that his letters "touched the hearts to which he appealed: all the prelates of the English Church, with one exception, courteously acknowledged his communications; several of them with great cordiality".¹

It is impossible to know the concrete results of this proposal, but if the statistics of the number of missionaries sent to China about this time by the London Missionary Society are indicative of the action of other societies, then it is more than evident that the goal was not reached until several years after James's death. Though the task was not accomplished, it was not a futile gesture, but resulted in the public's giving between seven and eight thousand pounds² to the funds of the London Missionary Society and contributed to the stimulation of public mission interest which is so vital to the progress of missionary enterprises. On the other hand, like his work in the formation of the Congregational Union and the Evangelical Alliance, his contribution to the progress of the Christian cause in China is but another demonstration of his conviction that Christians come most nearly to being in the centre of God's will when they come together as brethren for fellowship and work.

¹R. W. Dale, Ibid., p.448.

²The Saturday Evening Post, October 8, 1859.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE PRE-EMINENCE OF CHRIST

BOSTON

Extra Strong

The ministry of preaching the Word of God is a function within the Christian Church of such paramount significance that it is impossible to overestimate its importance. It is essential not merely to the Church's well-being but to her very being and in every generation there is no surer test of her vitality than the quality of her ministers and her people's appreciation of their ministrations. Perhaps few men in the first half of the nineteenth century distinguished themselves more as Evangelical clergymen than Angell James. By a consideration, therefore, of some of his basic convictions about the Christian ministry and his role as a preacher in his time, perhaps we can get a better perspective of his ministry in general and consequently lay the foundation for our consideration in the next chapter of his pastoral labours and other efforts for the Congregational ministry.

Throughout the first sixty years of the nineteenth century the story of English religion has hardly a dull page. It was at this time that the forces were slowly accumulating which were to revolutionise theology, and to bring that recasting and reconstruction of belief in which we today continue to bear our part. James's ministry had its setting in this unsettled atmosphere of transition and change. On the one hand, the forces of the Negative movement with its accent on Biblical criticism and physical science, tended to undermine the accepted theories of inspiration and revelation. On the other hand, the Broad Church

movement, fostered and influenced by the progressive and liberal nature of the times, was making a vital contribution to life and thought through the efforts of men like Stanley, Jowett, and F. D. Maurice.¹ But despite the changes everywhere apparent, James remained unalterably an evangelical of the old school and his whole ministry must be interpreted with this in mind. Fortunately he has left an ample exposition of his views on the ministry in a book which he published in 1847 called An Earnest Ministry The Want of The Times.

One of the questions which was rampant towards the end of the first half of the last century was: "Who are true ministers of Jesus Christ?" Several young clergymen, mostly associated with Oriel College, Oxford, brought this question very much to the forefront when they inaugurated the Oxford Movement which was in reality the birth of the Anglo-Catholic party within the Church of England.² A reaction against liberal and radical views in both politics and religion, the movement was part of a general awakening of the human mind and soul to the value of the past and a rebellion against a too insistent individualism. It was in some senses a completion and extension of the Evangelical Revival but it was never considered to be such by the evangelicals of the time, either

¹Vernon F. Storr, The Development of English Theology in The Nineteenth Century, p.4.

²Williston Walker, A History of the Christian Church, p.547.

within or without the Church of England.¹ One of the Anglican doctrines given new emphasis in the movement was the theory that a ministry to be valid must be in line with the so-called historic succession back to the apostles.² The reaction of James to the assertions made in connection with this emphasis is perhaps typical of nonconformity in general:

It is part and parcel of the constitution of the Church of England, which has been of late put forth with greater prominence and zeal than ever, by the authors of what are called the 'Oxford Tracts', that no man is authorised to preach the Gospel, or administer the sacraments, who has not been ordained by a Diocesan Bishop, that can trace up, in an unbroken line of succession, his descent from the apostles. The arrogance and insolence with which this pretension has been insisted upon, by the authors of these semi-popish publications, is disgusting, not only to those who are immediate objects of their attack, but to very many members of their own church, who, though they agree with them in the opinion itself, are more courteous and charitable in their manner of stating it. The sentiment is really fearful in its consequences, excluding as it does at one full swoop, from the pale of the covenanted church, not only the great body of evangelical Dissenters, and Methodists, but the whole Church of Scotland, nearly

¹Elliott-Binns, Religion in the Victorian Era, pp.103-13.

²R. W. Cornish gives the following explanation of what is meant by "apostolic succession": "When Christ established the Church He committed its government to the Apostles, giving them power to ordain others. The Apostles ordained the seven deacons, and consecrated St. James Bishop of Jerusalem. Paul and Barnabas, Timothy and Titus were bishops, and had authority to ordain priests and deacons. This order, founded by Christ Himself, and continued by the Apostles under His direction, has existed from the beginning, and only those who are duly appointed under it have power and authority to consecrate and administer the Sacraments, through which the whole life of the Church is communicated." A History of the English Church in the Nineteenth Century, Part I, pp.233-34.

all the reformed churches on the continent, and all the churches of America, except the Episcopalians. What an excision!¹

Poles apart from the Episcopal view of the ministry, James believed that any man, ordained in any denomination, who preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the evangelical sense of the word was a true minister of Jesus Christ and therefore he looked with disdain upon the Anglican practice of placing "ecclesiastical ancestry" before "personal piety".² In his opinion the very nature of the ministerial task demanded that "spirituality" have priority.³

In keeping with this concept, therefore, James determined from the very beginning of his ministry to make the conversion and care

¹J. A. James, Works 11, pp. 384-85.

²Ibid., p. 386.

³In keeping with his concept of the role of a minister as "first among equals", James was suspicious of anything which tended to foster or suggest "ecclesiastical ranks" in the ministry. Very indicative of this attitude was his refusal to allow anyone to call him "Doctor" even though he had been given honorary Doctor of Divinity degrees from Princeton and Jefferson Colleges, both of America, and from Glasgow University, Scotland. No explanation is given as to why the degrees were conferred, but the attitude of James toward them is crystal clear: "No titles of distinction are to exist amongst the teachers of religion since they suggest the idea of superiority, and foster pride and vanity. To what an exorbitant extent of mischief has this love of distinction by rank, office, and title, in matters of religion, reached in Christendom!.... May I but be considered as a faithful, earnest, and successful minister of the new covenant, and be accounted such by the Great Master, and I am quite content that my name shall stand wherever it is recorded, without any academic suffix." J. A. James, Works 17, pp. 256-58.

of souls the ultimate object of all his labour and he fully realised that this could only be accomplished by a life wholly dedicated to God. "I affirm", he wrote in 1853, "that the work of direct conversion is the great end of the Christian ministry; and that where this is not effected, a ministerial life, however long continued, or with whatever other results it may be attended, is a melancholy failure, a lost adventure."¹ Therefore in his writing and preaching, in his work with various organisations, and in his own devotional life, this aim was pre-eminent. There was no obstacle too great, no effort too strenuous, and no sacrifice too costly for this, the greatest work under heaven.

But as he looked around him and saw so many indications that many of the clergy both within and without the Church of England were not as sincere and zealous in their work as they could be, his heart was often burdened. It was as if the very times were evil. Materialism, Rationalism, Tractarianism, and a cold evangelical orthodoxy all appeared to him to be obstacles to the evangelisation of the masses, and the crying need of the times, as he saw it, was for an "earnest" ministry to combat them. In his book, already mentioned, he accordingly calls upon all evangelicals and most especially upon Congregationalists to take every possible step to satisfy this pressing need. The very nature of the Gospel, the sinfulness of humanity, the challenge of

¹J. A. James, Works 8, p. 360.

the times, the progress of false religion, all pointed to the need for a zealous ministry. Consequently he asks in his book:

In such a state of things, what kind of ministry is it that is wanted? The answer is easy, men of earnestness; of earnest intellects, earnest hearts, earnest preaching and earnest faith. Men whose understanding shall command respect, whose manner shall conciliate affection, and whose ministrations shall attract by their beauty, and command by their power.¹

But what positive steps did he think could be taken to ensure this type of ministry? Consistent with his views on church government, he states: "It is imperative first of all to have the truth deeply engraven upon our hearts, that the church is the conservator of the Christian ministry, and that it is her business, and almost her first and most important business, to see that she discharges well her duty in this momentous affair."² More specifically he recommended that the problem be a frequent matter of discussion and prayer by the ministers and leaders of the churches and that the congregations confront their most promising youth with the ministry's challenge: "Does it not seem to be the work of the pastors and the churches to call out from themselves the most gifted and pious of their numbers for this object? Is not this the working out of the principle we have already considered that the church is the conservator of an effective ministry?"³

¹J. A James, Works 8, p.203.

²Ibid., p.245.

³Ibid., p.262. For a full discussion of James's view of the need for an "earnest" ministry at this time, see Works 8, pp.182-212.

But if it is the duty of churches to call out ministers, it is also their duty to support the denominational colleges which train them and to take a personal interest in their students during their preparation. On the other hand, the colleges have the responsibility of providing a suitable curriculum for the students, and what perhaps is more important, of guiding their devotional development.¹ More will be said later, however, about James's emphasis upon ministerial training.

With the Apostle Paul, James believed that preaching was the most effective means of winning men to Christ and consequently his ministry was pre-eminently a preaching one.² It was his firm conviction that there was no work equal in range and grandeur to the work of preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ and perhaps few men in his time had a more Christ-centred ministry or were more renowned heralds of this divine message than he.³

"Alexander Whyte, describing his Saturday walks and talks with Marcus Dodds, declared: 'Whatever we started off with in our

¹J. A. James, Works 3, p.432.

²James lived in an era of great evangelical preachers. The Congregationalists, in addition to James, had Clayton and Collyer in London, William Jay at Bath, Dr. Bogue at Gosport, and able representatives both in towns and villeges all over the land. For sketches of some of the leading preachers of this time, consult Stoughton, History of Religion in England (1881 ed.) VI, Chapters 14-15; I, Chapters 9-10; Skeats and Miall, History of the Free Churches of England 1688-1891, pp.428-437.

³I. S. Spencer, A Pastor's Sketches, p.24.

conversation, we soon made across country somehow, to Jesus of Nazareth, to his death, and his resurrection, and his indwelling."¹ Similarly Christ was the centre of the life and preaching of James. Speaking to a body of students leaving Spring Hill College in 1844, he admonished:

Preach Christ, my brethren, and for Christ's own sake. Exalt Christ, not yourselves. Exhibit Christ, in the divinity of his person, the efficacy of his atonement, the prevalence of his intercession, the fulness of his grace, the freeness of his invitations, the perfection of his example; in all his mediatorial offices and scripture characters; as the Alpha and Omega of your whole ministry. Let your sermons be fragrant with the odour of his name; carry this precious unguent to the pulpit, break the alabaster box, and let the precious perfume fill the house in which you minister. Christ himself has told you the secret of popularity and success, where he said, 'And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me'. With this divine loadstone magnetise your sermons; here lies the attraction. Preach as in full view of all the wonders of Calvary, and let it be as if while you spoke you felt the Saviour's grace flowing into and filling your soul, and as if that moment you were sympathising with the apostle in his sublime raptures, 'God forbid I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.'²

Even in the sermons which he prepared specifically for Christians, the Gospel was always presented. Unequivocally he states in his book An Earnest Ministry: "I go so far as to say that each sermon must contain as much of the gospel as would make every hearer of it acquainted with the way of salvation, even if he never should listen to another discourse."³ The preaching of redemption through

¹James S. Stewart, Heralds of God, p.61.

²J. A. James, Works 8, p.424. See also Works 1, p.140.

³J. A. James, Works 8, p.74.

the Cross, then, was central in his ministry and therefore he thought it futile to obscure the gospel by bringing what he deemed irrelevant issues into the pulpit:

The supposition that something else than pure Christianity, as the theme of our pulpit ministrations, is requisite for such a period as this, or that it must be presented in a philosophic guise, appears to be a most perilous sentiment, as being a disparagement to the gospel itself, a daring assumption of wisdom superior to God's, and containing the germ of infidelity. The gospel sustains the nature of a testimony which must be exhibited to certain unique and momentous facts which must be presented as they really are, without any attempt or wish to change their nature or alter their character, in order to bring them into nearer conformity to the systems of men.¹

But James's objection to philosophical or speculative preaching was not based solely upon theological grounds; his own mind positively rejected the metaphysical and purely speculative for the concrete and pragmatic. He craved the living reality and consequently he purposed in his sermons to present the Gospel of God's redeeming love through Christ as simply as possible.²

But James recognised that in addition to the constant emphasis upon conversion which should characterise every evangelical minister's message, there must also be a continual emphasis in preaching upon the Christian Life. In a sermon commemorating his fortieth anniversary at Carrs Lane he declared: "To form the rapt pietist, the bigotted theologian, the fierce polemic, or the mere moralist,

¹J. A. James, Ibid., p.72. These words are reminiscent of some of the contemporary thoughts of Soren Kierkegaard (1813-55) in their emphasis on retaining the gospel, with its paradox and offence, as a testimony, rather than seeking to make it intellectually more palatable, which in effect, would discredit and betray it.

²Charles Vince, The Good Man A Gift From God, pp.12-16.

has not been my object: but the character which should combine the better elements of all these."¹ At times he would designate this goal toward which he was attempting to direct his people as "holiness", at other times as "righteousness", but most frequently by the Puritan term "piety". The general tone of his theology, as well as the spirit which pervaded his sermons, was that of the Puritan fathers, Baxter, Owen and Howe, and consequently it would be expected that in his preaching he would emphasise personal "devotion" to God and a vigilant morality.² Perhaps his own words, penned in 1852, put this more graphically:

Let it never be forgotten that real, actual profiting, the enstamping of the Bible deeply upon the heart and visibly upon the character, the transformation of the whole heart and soul into the image of God and the mind of Christ, the cultivation of a heavenly temper, and a meetness for glory everlasting, with real Christian consolation during our pilgrimage to the skies, are the ends of preaching: and that provided these are not promoted by it, whatever it may do in the way of gratification of taste, or excitement of pleasurable emotion, the true end of preaching is not gained by it.³

He thought it necessary, therefore, to show the application of Biblical principles to the minute circumstances of human life and therefore he considered it his duty to preach, as his son has pointed out, to people in various "positions in life" on their obligations to God and man:

¹J. A. James, Works 17, pp.63-64.

²A. Gordon, The Triumphant Career and Its Peaceful Close, p.16.

³J. A. James, Works 7, pp.66-67.

He was incessantly preaching to particular classes on their peculiar duties and dangers. He did not think it a violation of the dignity of the pulpit to preach to mistresses and servants, masters and workmen, husbands and wives, on their mutual obligations. His ethical sermons were among the ablest and most powerful that he ever delivered. Whatever truth there may be in the reproach often thrown on the evangelical pulpit of neglecting the inculcation of ordinary moral duties, no one who heard Mr. James frequently would bring the charge against him.¹

The ethical teaching of Paul was particularly appealing to him and it was perhaps when he presented the fruits of his exegetical study of Paul's epistles that he did his best expository preaching.² He was also very careful to give due prominence to the explanation of the basic theological concepts of evangelical religion and the foundational principles of Congregational polity. The times appeared to him to demand of Christians an intelligent understanding of their faith if their witness was to be vital and persuasive, and therefore he never thought of doctrine as an end in itself, but always as an aid to the Christian's growth in grace and to his witness to the world.³

Because he considered the task of preaching such an awesome responsibility, James gave considerable attention to the preparation of his heart and his sermons.⁴ Prior to any interest in the mechanics of sermon preparation, however, was the emphasis which

¹R. W. Dale, op. cit., p.614.

²Ibid., p.590.

³R. W. Dale, The Funeral Services, p.55.

⁴J. A. James, Works 7, p.57.

he placed upon spiritual discipline and devotion.¹ The need for an intense devotional life was urgent, he thought, because he was only too mindful of the temptation to depend too much upon human abilities and not enough upon the Holy Spirit. Writing in An Earnest Ministry he declares: "However earnest the preacher's manner, and however scriptural his matter, no saving result will follow unless the Spirit give his blessing."² Yet he knew that the Holy Spirit does not bless in power unless He is asked to intervene, and therefore he early came to believe, as did Kirkegaard, that prayer is the Archimedian Principle in the Christian Life³ and consequently throughout his ministry he was in his study from seven till eight every morning in prayer and Bible Study.⁴ Furthermore it became a habit with him to devote his Saturday evenings exclusively to the devotional preparation of his heart for his preaching on Sunday and he continued

¹He was in complete agreement with the emphasis which Baxter placed upon the heart in the following words: "A minister should take some special pains with the heart before he goes to the congregation. If it be then cold, how is it likely to warm the hearts of the hearers? Go, therefore, then especially to God for life, and read some rousing, awakening book, or meditate on the weight of the subject you are to speak of, and on the great necessity of your people's souls, that you may go in the zeal of the Lord into his house." The Reformed Pastor, p.312.

²J. A. James, Works 8, p.285.

³Soren Kirkegaard, Journals of Soren Kirkegaard, IX-A-115, p.249.

⁴J. A. James, Works 17, p.476.

this practice throughout his ministry.¹ Also from time to time he would take a spiritual inventory of himself since he believed that by analysing his faults he was in a better position to make more religious "progress" in the future.² Undoubtedly, these periods tended to keep his heart in tune with Christ and strengthened the determination already deeply embedded within him to give himself wholeheartedly to the conversion and care of souls.

It was John Ruskin who stated that "there are two ways of regarding a sermon, either as a human composition or a Divine message."³ James believed that the task of giving a sermon was a spiritual responsibility which in its very nature challenged the preacher to give his best to it, and accordingly for more than fifty years he very carefully prepared his sermons. Essentially a practical man, he was not in the real sense a scholar, but his faithfulness in study enabled him to cope adequately with the demands made upon him by a large and influential church and by other

¹R. W. Dale, op. cit., p. 581. Quite often on Saturday evenings he would read books to inspire him to a greater appreciation of his calling and among his favourites for this purpose were Baxter's Reformed Pastor, Payson's Life, Brainerd's Life, Howe's Blessedness of the Righteous, and Owen's Spiritual Mindedness.

²James frequently recommended this practice to others. In 1829 he advised theological students: "Let each student devote a special season to self-examination and humiliation before God apart by himself... Let him take a devout and comprehensive view of the great work to which he has devoted his life, and for which he is preparing himself. Then let him inquire into his motives, his aims, his spiritual qualifications." Works 8, p. 476.

³John Ruskin, Stones of Venice, p. 96.

other organisations which frequently requested his services.¹

In the forefront of all his study loomed the needs of the congregation. Henry Sloan Coffin writes that the most damaging criticism which can be levelled at any sermon is that the preacher was aiming at nothing in particular and proved himself an accurate shot.² But this was not true of James. He continually sought in his preparation to imagine a real and living audience, some of whom needed salvation, while others needed guidance in Christian living, and consequently he made a conscientious effort by text, topic, and application to satisfy these needs.

What instruments did he use to accomplish his task? Basically, the Bible was the indispensable one and when he used others they were only to facilitate his interpretation and application of the Scriptures. Infallible and without error, the Bible, he thought, revealed everything which God requires of men and therefore all preaching must be grounded on it. "It is a part of the super-
scription of heaven", he wrote, "it is the impress of divinity, it is the seal of truth."³ With this conviction then it would be

¹It seems that the London Missionary Society and The British and Foreign Bible Society, after his own congregation, had first claim upon his services. He was also very much in demand to deliver sermons on such occasions as denominational meetings, the settlement of new ministers, and the death of elder ministers.

²Henry Sloan Coffin, What To Preach, pp.155-56.

³J. A. James, Works 6, p.279.

expected that he would lay great stress upon the exposition of Scripture. He frequently planned and delivered series of sermons based upon one of the books, chapters, or themes of the Bible and on several occasions compiled a particular series into a book.¹ His ability to apply the ethical and theological implications of the Scripture to the task of daily living was one of his strong points and perhaps is another reason for his enthusiasm for Biblical exposition.²

But the Bible was not his only tool. He valued particularly the writings of the Puritans, Baxter, Howe and Owen, and also consulted, among others, the works of Archbishop Leighton, George Campbell, Matthew Henry, Adam Clark and Moses Stuart, gleaning from each everything that would help him to present the evangelical message.³ As to specific books, he undoubtedly relied more heavily upon Baxter's Reformed Pastor than any other, not so much in the actual preparation of sermons, but as a guide in his work. Writing only a few hours before his death, he wrote:

¹The Young Women's Guide, Christian Charity, The Course of Faith and The Family Monitor may be listed as examples of this policy.

²R. W. Dale, op. cit., pp. 589-90.

³Other authors whose writings he consulted were Andrew Fuller, Chalmers, Wardlaw, John Brown, Richard Taylor, Doddridge, Campbell, Albert Barnes, Macknight, Hammond, Bloomfield and Whitby. To trace the influence of the various writers upon the thinking of James is a task too great for this thesis and therefore the most that can be said is that they were useful to him only in so far as they aided him in presenting the Evangelical message.

If without impropriety, I may refer here, as I believe I have done elsewhere, to the service which, during fifty-four years, I have been allowed to render to our great Master, I may declare my thankfulness in being able in some small degree, to rejoice that the conversion of sinners has been my aim. I have made, next to the Bible, Baxter's 'Reformed Pastor' my rule as regards the object of my ministry.¹

He also found considerable help in the use of hymns, especially those composed by Isaac Watts, Philip Doddridge, and Charles Wesley and quite frequently he quoted some of their verses in his sermons. He kept abreast with the various trends of the times by reading such periodicals as the Edinburgh and British quarterlies, the Congregational and Evangelical magazines, and the North British Review. He was also very fond of biographical, historical, and travel books, and apart from the Bible, undoubtedly found in them more material for his sermon illustrations than anywhere else, though his sermons on the whole seem to be deficient in illustrations, even for his time.

From the very beginning of his ministry, James habitually wrote his sermons out in full and in his weekly schedule always attempted to complete one of them by Wednesday night and the other by Saturday noon, a practice which he continued throughout his ministry. The facts regarding his procedure and methods of study are very meagre, but his sermons make it clear that he was a faithful student of the Bible and that he always sought to interpret

¹Quoted in a Preface to the 1860 edition of Baxter's Reformed Pastor, p. 3.

his text with its historical setting in mind. Interspersed throughout his writings are Scripture quotations which reveal that it was his method to interpret Scripture by Scripture and on the essential doctrines his exegesis is usually quite good, though his understanding of the nature of Scripture makes some of his views quite untenable to the theologian of this century.¹

After a text and subject had been selected, he then read the various commentaries and other relevant books in his library, and quite often, if he found a sermon by another author dealing with the same theme, he would make much of the material his own, since he believed that both he and his congregation could benefit by the superior scholarship of others. Having collected his material, he then wrote his sermon, and like the Puritans before him, he persistently divided it into clear-cut divisions, usually with three to five major points, with sub-points under each one of them.² The only indication of the amount of time he spent in preparing a particular address is given by his son who said that his father usually finished one sermon at "two or three sittings".

¹His literalistic interpretation of the Genesis stories in Chapters 1-11 may be cited as a notable example. See Works 4, p.37.

²This method was employed solely for the benefit of the congregation. Writing to Dale in 1855, James asserted: "An overwhelming majority of our congregations consist of persons who, if they are to travel through a sermon at all, and not to lose their way on a plain, which has neither roads nor milestones, must travel by easy stages of three divisions. Still an occasional deviation from this plan introduces a variety of manner." R. W. Dale, op. cit., p.477.

But if James's recommendation to the students of Spring Hill College that, after they became ministers, they should spend seven or eight hours a day studying is any indication of the amount of time he gave to his sermon preparation, then it is certain that it was more than ample.¹

Phillip Brook's definition of preaching as "truth through personality" is perhaps the best and most concise description of James's idea of preaching. Because he believed that the popular effectiveness of a man's pulpit work depended largely on his ability to speak, he placed the utmost emphasis upon pulpit manner, and like Demosthenes, held that the three main points of eloquence are delivery, delivery and delivery.² "The power, passion and pathos of the living voice", wrote Allen, "touch the heart in a way that the printed pages can never do. The pen may be mightier than the sword, but it is not mightier than the pulpit. Nothing can take the place of the preacher who with quivering lips and flashing eye and pleading voice declares a living message to living men."³

It is obvious, when we remember that we are denied access to the personality which enlivened James's message and which must have made it powerful, that we cannot appraise James as a preacher simply on the basis of his written sermons. But despite this, there are indications, apart from the other points already discussed,

¹J. A. James, Works 8, p.411.

²Ibid., p.120.

³Arthur Allen, The Art of Preaching, p.8.

which at least suggest some of the reasons for his success in the pulpit, one of them being that he seemed physically gifted for the work of preaching. About five feet eight inches in height, he was not distinctively handsome, but his pleasant, manly disposition, combined with the dignity with which he carried himself, commanded the respect of all who saw him. His facial features were very expressive, varying with his thoughts and moods, and undoubtedly this natural mirror of his emotions greatly enhanced his power over an audience.¹ The great preacher Robert Hall once remarked that James's countenance was the most remarkable he had ever seen and that he was sure that his face would be the first to be seen at the resurrection.²

But his voice was perhaps equally impressive. Arthur Allen has pointed out that "a cultivated human voice is the most wonderful, the most powerful, the most persuasive and the most musical instrument known to men"³, and perhaps few ministers in the nineteenth century were more endowed with this power than James. He had an unusually strong, pleasant voice, of good

¹Rather stout in build, James was somewhat burly in appearance but, at the same time, always immaculately neat. For a more detailed description of his physical appearance, see Works 17, pp.476-79.

²R. W. Dale, op. cit., p.605.

³Arthur Allen, op. cit., p.20.

tone and wide range¹, which he was able to control with remarkable facility and which must have enhanced his rather animated type of speaking.² One writer described it thus:

Who that ever listened to his voice, can forget the richness of its tones and the variety of its power? Sometimes he would speak with a commanding majesty that befitted an ambassador for Christ; at other times there was a touching pathos and a deep tenderness in his tones as if he knew that the Lord had laid upon him this work: 'Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people.' Sometimes he would lift up his voice in most jubilant strains, as if his heart were overflowing with gladness at the good news of God he had to proclaim; at other times there was a marvellous blending of an awe-inspiring solemnity with a winning gentleness, beautifully becoming one who had to say, 'Knowing the terrors of the Lord we persuade men'.³

His ability to touch the human heart is another explanation of his power. He seemed to be able to convey his own feelings

¹W. Y. Fullerton includes the following revealing comparison of James's voice with C. H. Spurgeon's: "In point of compass and richness, the voice of Mr. Spurgeon is not to be mentioned", says an early writer, 'in comparison with that of Mr. James of Birmingham.'" C. H. Spurgeon, pp.321-22. This is perhaps the best place also to mention that Spurgeon greatly admired James as a preacher and once made a trip to Birmingham especially to hear him. He gives the following account of this experience: "In an early part of my ministry, while but a lad, I was seized with an intense desire to hear Mr. James: and, though my finances were somewhat meagre, I performed a pilgrimage to Birmingham, solely with that object in view. I heard him deliver a week-evening lecture, in his large vestry on that precious text, 'Ye are complete in Him'. The savour of that very sweet discourse abides with me to this day, and I shall never read the passage without associating therewith the quiet but earnest utterances of the departed man of God." The British Standard, February 10, 1860.

²R. W. Dale, "John Angell James", The Congregationalist, 1877, p.453.

³Charles Vince, The Good Man A Gift From God, p.11.

in such an impressive way that he could in large measure control the emotional response of his audience. The following excerpt from a review of one of his sermons is perhaps indicative of his power:

Seldom has an auditory been more deeply impressed under the Word than was the immense congregation in the Poultry Chapel, when Mr. James delivered this discourse. An uninterested countenance could not be perceived; and in many instances the warm gush of flowing tears demonstrated the depth of feeling which the preacher had awakened.¹

All along it had been James's conviction that preaching must be directed to the heart as well as to the intellect and in his opinion this was the type of preaching men wanted and needed:

A dry essay on some gospel subject which only proves a point he never doubted, or starts a difficulty he never dreamt of, is like giving him a stone when he asks for bread. He wants to be made to feel and to realise that there is something higher and better than this world. He desires to enjoy the luxury of hallowed emotion, he covets the joy and peace of believing, and the anticipations of that world where the weary are at rest, and the din of business will be for ever hushed.²

The directness of his sermon delivery also helped. James abhorred the practice prevalent in his time of reading sermons and was even prejudiced against an exaggerated dependence upon notes. Originally it had been his custom to follow the old Scottish practice of delivering his sermons from memory, but he soon abandoned this.³ During most of his ministry, he wrote his

¹Evangelical Magazine, September, 1828, p.395.

²J. A. James, Works 8, p.80.

³R. W. Dale, The Funeral Services, p.49.

sermon out in full, studied it diligently, and took the manuscript into the pulpit with him, but only very rarely did he ever find it necessary to refer to it.¹ His preaching was in a conversational manner, occasionally animated and energetic, but always with dignity and power and what perhaps is most important of all, natural and personal.

James attached great significance to simplicity of style², though his sermons by our standards would be classified as pompous, verbose and rhetorical. Undoubtedly in his earlier ministry his style was too gaudy and ornate at times, but with the passing of the years, as J. C. Miller has pointed out, "he lost somewhat of this efflorescence and the riper fruit was rich and wholesome and pleasant".³ Writing in 1858, James gives us a good indication of the style which undoubtedly was characteristic of his preaching during most of his ministry:

¹R. W. Dale, The Life and Letters of John Angell James, p.607. Undoubtedly he generally aimed in his sermons at what Baxter called "plainness": "All our teaching must be as plain and evident as we can make it: for this doth most suit to a capacity of his hearers and make it his business to make himself understood. Truth loves the light, and is most beautiful when most naked. It is a sign of an envious enemy to hide the truth; and a sign of an hypocrite to do this under the pretence of revealing it: and therefore painted, obscure sermons are too often the mark of painted hypocrites." The Reformed Pastor, pp.169-70.

²R. W. Dale, "John Angell James", The Congregationalist, 1877, p.453.

³John C. Miller, Exeter Hall Lectures: John Angell James, p.15.

What is wanted for the great bulk of the people is the earnest popular preaching of the gospel; the power of uttering vigorous thoughts in plain language; a somewhat pictorial style addressed at once to the imagination, the heart, and the conscience, as well as to the judgment, all conjoined with lively elocution.¹

Another writer thus described it:

Altogether, there was a wonderful adaptation and symmetry in his style. No one quality seemed remarkably prominent; but a number of high qualities appeared in happy combination, and culminating in the finished man. If he had not the rich imagination of Jeremy Taylor, he had at least more taste; - - if he had not the overpowering eloquence of Chalmers, he had more simplicity; - - if he had not the argumentative acuteness of Wardlaw, he had far more rhetoric; - - if he did not soar with the eagle of Meaux; - - if he did not rise to the eloquence of Bossuet; - - which Robert Hall termed inferior only to the strains unutterable of seraphs around the throne; - - he had far more truth in his utterances - - the doctrines of the cross, in their simplicity - - to give power and pathos to what he said.²

His obvious sincerity was also compelling. He was able to lead others to Christ because he was convinced himself that the Biblical revelation was true and therefore he preached with sincerity and reverence believing that these were essential qualities for a preacher. Referring to the preacher's manner in 1816, he stated: "Not only should all merriment and jocularity be excluded, but all that flippancy of manner, that light and frivolous air, that careless and irreverent expression, that 'stert and stare' theatric look, every tone, every gesture should indicate

¹J. A. James, Works 7, p.238.

²A. Gordon, The Triumphant Career and its Peaceful Close, p.3.

a mind awed by the presence of God, impressed with the solemnity of eternity."¹ This conviction remained with him throughout the years. In a private paper written in 1840, he records a resolution to limit the length of his sermons to about fifty minutes and to cultivate a "more solemn manner" with "less rhetorical loudness and vehemence."² "Solemnity" indeed seems to have become one of the marked characteristics of the Carrs Lane Services. Revisiting the church in 1853, George Jacob Holyoake records: "I recognised a face almost in every pew - which I had known before - faces I never saw smile, and which now looked as though they had never smiled since we met before."³ This is undoubtedly an exaggerated interpretation, but it is an indication of the seriousness with which James approached religion and of the people's acceptance of his austere manner.

But the question now arises, "Was James really an outstanding preacher in his time?" The answer to this depends upon the point of view one takes. From the standpoint of originality or profundity of thought, he can claim no place of distinction. There were scores of ministers who were better educated than he and who were much more capable of, and had been much more successful

¹J. A. James, Works 1, p.147. This is the very spirit of Baxter who said: "Of all preaching in the world, (that speaks not stark lies) I hate that preaching which tendeth to make the hearers laugh, or to move their mind with tickling levity, and affect them as stage-players use to do, instead of affecting them with a holy reverence of the name of God." The Reformed Pastor, p.175.

²R. W. Dale, op. cit., p.330.

³Birmingham Weekly Post, Nov.5,1948. Holyoake (1817-1906) was an English Socialist who was the last person in Britain to be imprisoned for blasphemy. He coined the word "secularism" to define his views on religion. Odhams Encyclopaedia, p.444.

in, interpreting the gospel to the intelligentsia of the times. Anyone who reads his sermons will soon realise that they are not marked by theological precision, philosophical insight, or stylistic superiority, but are in some respects, as James himself admits, undistinguished. "It happens", he wrote in 1852, "that God has given me a voice of some compass and much of what is aesthetical in my constitution. Stripped of this, my sermons would appear as ordinary things."¹ On the other hand, when his preaching is considered from the point of view of the effect it had upon the masses of people, then undoubtedly James towers above most of his contemporaries. He purposed to preach the Gospel in such a persuasive manner that all non-Christians who heard him would be challenged to repent of sin and receive Christ as Saviour and Lord. He preached as a dying man to dying men beseeching them to be reconciled to God and was so effective that Robert Hall once stated, upon hearing that James was to conduct an evangelistic service at a particular place, that he would not be surprised if one hundred people were converted during the service.²

¹R. W. Dale, op. cit., p.547. J. C. Miller put it this way: "As a preacher he left behind him no grand masterpieces which are identified with his name, as did Maclaurin in his 'Glorying in the Cross of Christ'; Robert Hall in his 'Modern Infidelity' and 'Funeral Sermon on the Princess Charlotte'; and Chalmers, in his 'Expulsive Power of a New Affection'. But few preachers were more useful in their day and generation." Exeter Hall Lectures: John Angell James, p.20.

²J. A. James, Works 8, p.133. Similarly, William Guest states that Dr. Chalmers once told him personally "that the greatest sermon he ever heard was preached by Mr. James in Edinburgh". A Tribute of Grateful Love to the Memory of the Late Rev. John Angell James, p.8.

His work of evangelism undoubtedly led hundreds of people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and the most concrete evidence of this was his own church. Writing in 1845 on the occasion of his fortieth anniversary as minister of Carrs Lane he stated:

This large congregation by which I am now surrounded, this church of nearly nine hundred members, among whom is to be found no small portion of intelligence and worldly respectability as well as great numbers of the labouring population, have been collected and compacted, not by a system of reserves or omissions of Christian doctrine; not by novelties in manner or in matter; not by philosophical speculations, nor metaphysical subtleties, but by the preaching of the gospel.¹

When his preaching ministry, therefore, is considered against the background of his congregation's growth and prosperity over a period of fifty years, then it must be admitted that James did distinguish himself and can rightfully claim a place as one of the truly great evangelical preachers of his time.

¹J. A. James, Works 17, p.64.

CHAPTER SIX

A MINISTRY OF USEFULNESS

BOSTON

EXTRA STROUNG

To be a good preacher is one thing and to be an efficient pastor is quite another. Like most men who have ministered to large churches, James found it an almost impossible task to achieve a proper balance of emphasis between his preaching and his pastoral duties. Undoubtedly in his earlier years he laid more stress upon preaching, but during the last twenty years of his life, his record leaves little doubt that his pastoral work was more central in his thinking and more conscientiously carried out than it had ever been previously.¹ At least one explanation for this is that he resolved soon after his second wife's death to be more diligent in pastoral work. In one of his private papers written in 1840 one can almost see him as he sits, pen in hand, making general plans for his future work:

Visit every member at his own house, except servants, during the present year. Meet a class of female servants, and distribute a tract to each... Visit every one of the districts and invigorate them. Meet class leaders. Visit a family every Monday. A Saturday evening prayer-meeting. A solemn church-meeting for prayer and humiliation on Good-Friday. Pastor, deacons, confess. A solemn meeting with the deacons to deliver to them an address. Catechising the children in some way or other. To labour much to promote the spiritual welfare of the church....²

It is obvious from this quotation that he felt he must visit his people more often and get to know them more intimately. It seems

¹In his Jubilee Sermon in 1855 James frankly admits: "And if there be one department of ministerial action on which I look back with a deeper regret than any other, it is the sphere of the pastor, as distinguished from that of the preacher." Works 3, p.206.

²R. W. Dale, op. cit., p.331.

that up to this point, visitation had been one of the most neglected areas of his work; this was not because he was not aware of its importance, but rather that he found it difficult, with all his other responsibilities, to give it the prominence which it deserved. This perhaps in part explains why he devised a system of lay visitation rather early in his ministry. He knew quite well that it was an impossible task for one man to do all the visiting which a congregation the size of Carrs Lane demanded and therefore he divided the city into six districts and placed two deacons in charge of each to assist him in this work. Their duties, briefly stated, were to discover and report the reason for the absence of any member from the monthly communion, to mediate the church's relief to the poor, to visit the sick and to inform the pastor concerning any person requiring special attention.¹

Not for a moment, however, did James consider this system as an escape from his responsibility to contact his people personally, but always as a supplement to his labour. Consistently he set aside practically the whole of every Monday exclusively for pastoral visitation and for most of his years he arranged to take evening tea each Wednesday with different families of the congregation. Also

¹In addition to this scheme he had another set of districts to which superintendents were assigned to conduct monthly meetings for prayer and scripture reading, to help in visitation, and to collect additional funds for Carrs Lane's mission work in Birmingham. This scheme seems to have been more specifically intended to bolster the whole programme of the church while the other was more individualistic in its emphasis. T. S. James, Memorial of Rev. J. A. James, p. 8.

during the regular meetings of the church's organisations he would use the opportunities he had to contact the people personally and to inquire about their religious life. In these ways he was able to become more acquainted with his members and consequently to minister to them all the more effectively.¹

Similarly in his home visitation the religious needs of the people were foremost in his thinking. The unchurched, the indifferent Christians, the sick, and the bereaved had first claim upon his services to the extent that his visits to the more fortunate people under his care were not too frequent. On one occasion he was reminded in the home of one of his members that a whole year had passed since his last visit. Tenderly he replied: "That shows you have cause to thank God that during that time no sorrow has befallen you, else you know you would have had me with you."²

But even when he made what can perhaps be called "routine" visits to his members he was always anxious to exercise a spiritual ministry. In fact, it seems that in all of his visiting he made it a point to speak to each person, churched or unchurched, about personal religion and sought through frank discussion, appropriate scripture, and earnest prayer to minister to people's needs as he found them. By so doing he was working out in a practical way, he thought, his conviction that the Christian pastor is a physician of

¹Ibid., pp. 8-9.

²R. W. Dale, op. cit., p. 518; J. A. James, Works 17, p. 277.

souls.

Much of the life of the Carrs Lane congregation and a significant part of the pastoral work of James centred in the Church Meeting held regularly at monthly intervals. Congregationalists have always emphasised the importance of the Church Meeting as the focal point of the religious work of the congregation and as an integral part of Congregational polity.¹ In James's time it was at this meeting that new members were received, the discipline of the church exercised, and the church's business in general transacted. To become a member of the Carrs Lane Church, either on "profession of faith" or by a "letter of dismissal from another church" was not an easy venture in those days and to begin the action a prospective member's first move was to inform the pastor of his desire for membership. If James was convinced that the person was living a Christian life, he presented his name as a "candidate" for membership at the next monthly meeting and also appointed two or three persons to visit him for the purpose of inquiring further into his religious life. After this visit, the candidate then appeared at the next Church Meeting and usually read a statement of his religious experience and reaffirmed his desire to be united with the church. Then the congregation, after having heard the committee's report on the person, decided by vote whether he should or should not be admitted, and if the vote was favourable, he was then given the right

¹W. B. Selbie, Congregationalism, pp. 3-5; 19; 26; 25.

Albert Peel, Inevitable Congregationalism, pp. 32-59.

Daniel Jenkins, Congregationalism: A Restatement, pp. 46; 53; 79; 96ff.

hand of Christian fellowship by the pastor and the church.¹

Discipline, which was a strong feature of Independency in those days, was also exercised through the Church Meeting. It is crystal clear in the various writings of James that he considered it the duty of the church to maintain discipline over its members, both because it was taught in the New Testament and because it was a practical means of preserving the purity of the church. In most instances, in his opinion, problems of misconduct should be settled without bringing the issue to the attention of the whole church, and to facilitate this, it was his policy to appoint an annual discipline committee composed of four deacons and six other members to visit and counsel any member "walking disorderly".² In his book Christian Fellowship he points out that "scandalous vices and immoralities", the "denial of essential articles of the Christian faith", "disturbing the peace of the church", "suffering near relatives to want the necessaries of life", "living in a state of irreconcilable enmity with any of the brethren", are "offences" which require and should call forth the discipline of the church.³ Since he believed that discipline was the "right treatment of offending members", he always insisted that its goal was restoration rather than punishment, and

¹J. A. James, Works 11, pp.462-64; R. W. Dale, op. cit., p.622. For further information on procedures of admitting members into Congregational Churches at this time, see: R. W. Dale, History of English Congregationalism, pp.590;605-06.

²R. W. Dale, op. cit., p.540.

³J. A. James, Works 11, pp.394-99.

therefore, love, understanding, and prayer must be very evident in its execution. If these qualities are joined with patience, then in most cases "offenders" will be reconciled. But if a member refuses to repent after the church has done everything within its power to restore him to the faith, then the only alternative left for the church is to excommunicate him at the Church Meeting.¹ As James put it in his book The Church in Earnest:

To retain notorious sinners in the fellowship of the church is the most awful connivance at sin which can be practised in our world, for it is employing the authority of that body to defend the transgressor and to apologise for his offence. There is a strong repugnance in some persons to proceed, almost in every case, to the act of excluding an unworthy member, just as there is in cases of disease, to give up a mortified limb to amputation, but it must be done; the safety as well as the comfort of the body requires it. In the case of sudden falls, and single sins, where there is a deep sense and ingenuous confession of sin, much lenity should be observed; but where the sin is public and aggravated, and the conscience hardened, to show mercy in such a case is high treason against Christ, by retaining enemies and rebels in his kingdom, who are virtually seeking its overthrow.²

¹J. A. James, Works 11, pp.399-404.

²J. A. James, Works 9, p.57. This work, published in 1848 as a sequel to An Earnest Ministry, was intended by the author to inspire church members, especially Congregationalists, to a greater zeal on behalf of God's Kingdom. The times, characterised by a perverted emphasis upon materialism, a perfunctory religiosity, and the growing strength of rationalism, seemed, James thought, to demand both an "earnest" ministry and an "earnest" laity. Therefore he sincerely calls upon evangelical Christians of the nation to be more concerned about world missions, personal religion, personal evangelism, and the religious state of the home and church. He accordingly encourages the readers to take steps to discuss the problem, to pray about it, and to use every other means available to remind the church of its spiritual nature and task. If church members all over the nation took immediate action, he reasoned, the danger of the church's being unduly influenced in the future by the destructive trends already in existence would be less acute. This work reached at least a fourth edition.

Ideally a Congregational Church Meeting should be a spiritual function of the church, but in fact, since it gives every member the right to be heard, it can develop into an arena of strife and discord. James recognised this danger from the very first and in his own congregation took precaution against it. He consistently refused to allow any important item of business to be presented to the church until he and the deacons had first reached an agreement concerning it and until he was reasonably sure of the congregation's reaction. He insisted that his members consider the Church Meeting as a religious service in which a devotional atmosphere should be maintained rather than a meeting for public debate.¹ This is not to say that diverse opinions were prohibited, but in most instances, the issue had been so thoroughly discussed in committee meetings that when a recommendation was presented and explained, little discussion was necessary.² As James said:

...our church meetings have not been thrown open to debate: we have had no talkers, no forward, obtrusive, troublesome spirits, who both loved to hold and to express their own opinion. The pastor and the deacons have had the confidence of the brethren, and while the former have never seemed to lord it over God's heritage, the latter have never even suspected them of attempting or even wishing to do so.³

Undoubtedly this sense of rapport was one of the basic reasons why

¹J. A. James, Works 1, p.152; Works 2, p.103; Works 3, p.204.

²R. W. Dale, op. cit., p.624.

³J. A. James, Works 17, p.69. James's policies concerning the Church Meeting make it evident that in practice he "infused a squeeze or two of Presbyterianism", to use J. C. Miller's phrase, into the government of the congregation. Exeter Hall Lectures: John Angell James, p.38.

the Church Meeting at Carrs Lane was a meaningful part of the religious life of the people and why it was so free from the dissension and bickering that frequently disrupted the unity and retarded the progress of other Independent Churches. What perhaps is most important of all, it enabled James to lead the church into a vigorous programme of service to the community and to the world at large.¹

The Sunday School can certainly be mentioned as one of the fields of service to which he gave his pastoral direction. The English Sunday School system, which is now such an integral part of the Protestant educational programme in Britain, was popularised by Robert Raikes (1735-1811) and very early made a significant contribution to the life of the churches. The needs confronting the movement in James's time were everywhere apparent. Birmingham in 1844, for instance, had 23,176 children under fifteen years of age, and of this number, half were not receiving instruction in the Borough and only about a quarter went to Sunday School.² With such a challenge, there is little wonder that James saw in this movement

¹The pastoral ministry of James would have been continually handicapped had he not zealously educated his people in Church Membership. Preaching was his principal means of doing this, but in addition to preaching, each member of the church was given a copy of his Manual for Church Members written especially for Carrs Lane. This little booklet, which in many respects is a synopsis of Christian Fellowship, explains such subjects as the functions of the officers of the church, the goals of church membership, admission to the church, the manner of church discipline, church meetings, the by-laws of the church, and other related subjects. See Works 11, pp. 455-501.

²Our Birmingham, p. 23.

an unlimited opportunity of service.

His interest in its progress, however, was not passive. In 1814 he made quite a significant contribution to it by the publication of a small book The Sunday School Teacher's Guide, which, next to The Anxious Inquirer, had the largest circulation of any of his books. Information on the extent of its circulation is lacking, but T. S. James says that his father published several editions independently, allowed the Methodists to publish an edition adapted to their own needs, and permitted the American Sunday School Union to publish a revised edition in 1832.¹ Its circulation, therefore, must have been considerable.

From beginning to end the main emphasis of the book is upon the spiritual nature of the Sunday School teacher's task. As James puts it:

The ultimate object of a Sunday-school teacher should be in humble dependence upon divine grace, to impart that religious knowledge, to produce those religious impressions, and to form those religious habits in the minds of the children, which will be crowned with the salvation of their immortal souls.²

To enable teachers to place their work in the right perspective and to encourage them to utilise the means at their disposal to be used of God in their work, James discusses such issues as the religious duties which a teacher owes to himself and to his pupils, the temptations and discouragements which a teacher can expect to arise, and the need for zeal in the carrying out of the work. These and

¹J. A. James, Works 16, p.5.

²Ibid., p.43.

similar subjects, however, are significant only as they contribute to the teacher's main task of pointing children to Christ. The work's principal value in its time, then, appears to be that it served, as its title implies, as a guide to the religious work of the Sunday School teachers of the nation.¹

It seems impossible to discover the exact date when Carrs Lane first had a Sunday School, but by 1812, it is certain that a school, well organised and well defined, was functioning. Its general object was twofold: to indoctrinate children with the principles of the Gospel and to teach them to read and write.² Like other progressive schools at the time, the Carrs Lane School was in some respects based on the educational experiments of the Lancastrian schools and therefore some of the teachers were senior scholars.³ Catechisms,

¹The following chapter headings of the book will give a good indication of its scope: "The History of the Sunday School System"; "The Ultimate Object of Sunday School Instruction"; "The Qualifications of Sunday School Teachers"; "Directions as to the Duty of Teachers"; "The Duties of Teachers to Each Other"; "The Temptations of Sunday School Teachers"; "The Discouragement of Sunday School Teachers"; "The Preservation of Zeal in Sunday School Teachers"; "Motives to Diligence" Works 16, p.7.

²Minutes of Carrs Lane Sabbath Schools, July 1812 to March 1845. The pages are unnumbered.

³Ibid. Joseph Lancaster, a Quaker, and Dr. Andrew Bell, a clergyman of the Church of England, created almost simultaneously systems of using senior scholars to help in teaching junior ones. The Lancasterian Society (afterwards the British and Foreign School Society from 1814) was founded in 1809, and was unsectarian, but primarily supported by Nonconformists. For critical and adverse comments on Lancaster's system, see Joseph Lancaster and B. Hammond, The Bleek Age, pp.149ff. (Penguin edition) and G. D. H. Cole and R. Postgate, The Common People, pp.302ff.

especially those by Isaac Watts, were the principal means of teaching religious knowledge while the Bible served as the textbook for the teaching of reading and writing.¹

Statistics prove that the Carrs Lane Sunday School, throughout James's pastorate, influenced large numbers of children. During the years 1832 to 1842 the average attendance of pupils per Sunday was about 700 and no less than 3,705 different children were enrolled, though these figures include the attendances of the mission Sunday Schools maintained by the Church as well.² More than 20,000 children had been scholars in the congregation's schools by the time of James's Jubilee in 1855³, a fact that gives us some indication of their scope and influence.

But Carrs Lane also maintained religious day schools in the later years of James's pastorate. During his ministry England was without a national programme for the education of the masses, but this was not because the government was unconcerned about the problem. Major attempts were made in 1820 by Baron Brougham, in 1833 by Roebuck and Grote, and in the early forties by Sir James Graham to get legislation passed which would inaugurate a national scheme, but all of these

¹Minutes of Carrs Lane Sabbath Schools, July 1812 to March 1845.
See also Works 8, p.154.

²Ibid. The enrolments and average attendances listed by years for this period are as follows: 1832: 966,666; 1833: 1,008,---; 1834: 964,623; 1835: 1,113,788; 1836: 1,098,799; 1837: 1092,735; 1838: 1,009,670; 1839: 1,026,667; 1840: 1,233,707; 1841: 1,265,---; 1842: 1,271,891. Minutes of Carrs Lane Sabbath Schools

³From the original sermon manuscript of his Jubilee address to the children of Carrs Lane.

efforts were largely defeated by Nonconformists who objected to the apparent favouritism which the bills gave to the Church of England.¹ But the needs of the masses were so challenging that it was obvious to Churchmen and Dissenters alike that positive steps of some kind would have to be taken. A few months after Sir James Graham's proposal had been defeated, the Congregational Union met at Leeds to consider, among other things, the educational crisis facing the nation. It was at this meeting that James solemnly stated: "We have defeated a great measure. Whether for good or harm, it was a gigantic proposal...We are bound in honour to do all in our power to promote the education of the people."² The Union agreed with this assertion and ultimately decided that a Committee on General Education for the denomination should be established and that the churches throughout the nation should be encouraged to organise their own day schools when practicable.³

Carrs Lane, upon James's return, was informed of this recommendation and soon decided to establish a boys' school on its

¹H. W. Clark, History of English Nonconformity, pp.417-20. James, while desiring to see the masses educated, was unwilling to see the Church of England given preference in the government schemes, and accordingly, when Sir James Graham's bill was publicised, he was the main speaker at a meeting of Nonconformists in Birmingham to oppose it. Works 17, p.279.

²The Congregational Magazine, 1843, p.839. Prior to this meeting serious consideration had been given to the possibility of establishing day schools at Carrs Lane. In August 1843 James led the trustees to move "that it is the duty of this church immediately to establish a Week Day School for boys on these premises and an infant school in Garrison." This proposal was ultimately accepted by the Church. Trustees Carrs Lane Meeting Minute Book 1834-1864.

³R. W. Dale, History of English Congregationalism, p.661.

own premises and a school for very young children at Garrison-lane Chapel, one of the church's missions. Arrangements were accordingly made to enlarge the buildings to accommodate them, and by April, 1845, after an expenditure of about £4,000, the buildings were ready and the school organisation set up. At first this new venture was financed by numerous small donations from the members of the church, but later on a very large endowment provided for its needs. At no time were government funds used, since, in James's opinion, this would have violated the principle of the separation of church and state.

Unlike the Sunday Schools, the day schools were never well attended.¹ Undoubtedly there were many reasons for this, but the basic one seems to have been parental indifference to the value of education, and, in too many instances, parents were reluctant to take their children away from work for monetary reasons. But despite the schools' lack of numbers, they were a valuable contribution to the needs of the times and serve as concrete evidence of James's pastoral concern for the welfare of children in an age when they were frequently being exploited.

The guidance which he gave to Carrs Lane in stretching out to form new churches was also a significant part of his pastoral ministry. Independency in the first half of the last century moved into a prosperous period of church-building and in this work Carrs Lane easily played the leading role in Birmingham. James was not only

¹T. S. James, Memorial of Rev. J. A. James, p.10.

concerned to send out his people to build up causes, he also had the courage to "dismiss" members by solemn act of the church so that they might be the nucleus of new churches. The success of this policy is impressive to say the least. Chapels were built at Bordesley Street, Edgbaston Francis Street, Garrison Lane, Great Barr, Lozells, Minworth, Mosley Road, Palmer Street, Smethwick and Yardley, all of which were in or near Birmingham, and some of which are still progressive churches.¹

This zealous programme of church extension, however, was not without its complications. The financial reports in the Trustees Carrs Lane Meeting Minute Book reveal beyond question that from 1820 to 1853 the congregation was frequently in debt. In a trustees report in 1853, it is stated:

Our reports for many years past have been burdened with complaints of accumulating debt which at last became greater than we could bear, and we were in a state of bankruptcy, from which we could only be relieved by the powerful influence of our Pastor over the hearts and resources of his people.²

The only plausible explanation for this condition is that the congregation was engaged in too zealous a programme for its income.³ Debts

¹For additional information on the establishment of these chapels see Works 17, pp.259-61; Works 16, p.155; R. W. Dale, op. cit., pp.494-95.

²Trustees Carrs Lane Meeting Minute Book 1834-1864.

³The following excerpt from a letter by James to the trustees on January 22, 1850, makes this fact obvious: "You will probably regard it as expedient to begin this very day a series of resolutions which shall keep your expenditures within your income; or what would be better still, to raise your income to the wants of your institution. Ibid.

on chapels and school facilities made constant demands on the treasury and the church's militant organisational work also must have imperiled its financial stability.¹ Every year the church gave the London Missionary Society about £600 and the Colonial Missionary Society about £70 and in addition to this contributed to special mission appeals from time to time. It supported two missionaries for the city of Birmingham at a cost of £200 per year and spent about £50 a year to purchase tracts for its own tract society. It gave £200 annually to the maintenance of its Sunday and Day schools and also assumed most of the expense of operating night schools which young people could attend for a very nominal fee. In addition to this £100 per year was given to Spring Hill College and £40 to the County Association of Independents.

Other organisations associated with the church, however, were not directly dependent upon the central treasury but should be mentioned in order to complete the outline of the church's organisational work. The women of the congregation maintained a "Dorcas Society" to aid the poor, a "Maternal Society" to help expectant mothers, a "Female Benevolent Society" to visit the sick of the community and a "Working Society" which produced a profit of £50 a year for orphan children of the East Indies. On the other

¹The church's expenditure on buildings, as James points out, was considerable: "We have...laid out £25,000 in improving the old chapel, and building a new one...We have formed two separate Independent Churches, and have jointly with another congregation, formed a third, and all but set up a fourth, and are at this time in treaty for two pieces of freehold land, which will cost £700, to build two more chapels in the suburbs of the town." Works 9, p.369.

head the men of the church supported a village preacher's society which utilised the services of fifteen lay preachers, a young men's "Brotherly Society" to help young men improve themselves intellectually and spiritually and a "Tract Society" which at its zenith had eighty members who periodically distributed evangelical literature.¹

Thus with building debts, operational expenses, and other gifts to various Christian enterprises, it is not surprising that for a number of years the church carried out its work under financial strain. This situation was, from one point of view, regrettable, but on the other hand, it is probable that the congregation would not have accomplished nearly so much had James been less zealous.

No survey of the preaching and pastoral endeavours of James would be complete without considering his work on behalf of Spring Hill College² which he faithfully supported from its founding in 1838 until his death.³ It was through his association with this

¹A fuller account of the work of the various organisations of the church cannot be given because of the lack of information about them.

²Spring Hill College is now Mansfield College, Oxford. The opening of Spring Hill on August 18, 1838, was to a large extent made possible by a liberal gift of money and property by Mr. George Storer Mansfield and his two sisters, Mrs. Sarah Glover and Miss Elizabeth Mansfield. Utilising the Mansfield property, the College remained in the central part of Birmingham until 1856 when it was moved to new premises at Moseley. In 1886 it was transferred to Oxford, renamed Mansfield College in memory of its original benefactors, and today is one of the most progressive colleges of the Congregational denomination. R. W. Dale, History of English Congregationalism, pp.731-33. The Congregational Year Book 1846, p.861; C. S. Horne, A Popular History of the Free Churches, p.413; Elliott-Binns, Religion in the Victorian Era, p.456; James Marchant, J. B. Paton, p.30.

³Spring Hill's committee of management put it more strongly when they said that "his name is in every possible way identified with the history of the College." Report of the Committee of Management of Spring Hill College for the Session 1854-55, p.12.

institution that his burning concern for a well trained, evangelical clergy, so apparent in his book An Earnest Ministry, was in large measure demonstrated. It is, therefore, to a consideration of this part of his ministry that we now turn.

Through the years James made a significant contribution to the life of Spring Hill in his unflagging effort to win public support for it. The generosity of the College's original benefactors had undoubtedly made its struggle for existence less precarious, but nevertheless it was still dependent in large measure upon the gifts of interested friends and consequently consistent efforts had to be made by its supporters to solicit funds. Perhaps no individual was more zealous in this task than James. Seldom did he miss an opportunity even during his nervous illness to speak on the College's behalf and quite frequently he would take the initiative in procuring speaking engagements. Dale has suggested that perhaps few of the ministers in Warwick, Worcester, Gloucester, Northampton, Stafford, Derby, Leicester and Nottingham had failed to receive letters from him at one time or another asking permission to visit their churches¹, but regardless of whether he or someone else suggested his visit, he always utilised to the fullest the opportunities of every invitation he accepted. He was never content simply to take a public collection for the college, but usually made it his policy, when practicable, to meet some of the wealthier members of the congregation in the church vestry before the service to interpret to them the institution's

¹R. W. Dale, op. cit., p. 366.

needs, and if he thought it worthwhile, he would go from house to house collecting money. Occasionally these home visits seemed to be in vain, but at times they were more than amply rewarded. On one occasion he was told that a visit he was planning to a very wealthy but eccentric old man would prove to be but a waste of time, but to the amazement of all, he returned with a cheque for £5,000. Undoubtedly in this important task of bringing the needs of the College to the attention of the public, James, by his reputation and zeal, was able to exert considerable influence in calling forth the interest and liberality of scores of people at a time in the College's history when such support was absolutely necessary.¹

He was no less interested in the internal affairs of Spring Hill. From its very beginning he was a member of the College's General Committee and chairman of its Board of Education.² By being a

¹The College's general committee, after James's death, put it this way: "His advocacy of its claims in the pulpit, and his personal appeals in private secured for it the most essential public confidence and support." Report of the General Committee of Spring Hill College for the Session 1859-60, pp. 6-7.

²The Board of Education was a special committee of the General Committee of the College. Its main purpose was to exercise "a general superintendence over the students and decide all questions connected with their admission and dismissal", while the general committee was empowered to frame the necessary rules and regulations concerning the general administration of the College. To be a member of the College's general committee it was stipulated that no person could be eligible unless "he professes and declares by writing under his hand that he believed in the unity of the Godhead, the divinity of Christ, the Atonement made by his death for sin, the divinity and personality of the Holy Spirit, the necessity of the Spirit's influence for the illumination of the understanding and the renovation of the heart, and the plenary inspiration of the Holy Scriptures." Report of the General Committee of Spring Hill College 1839-51, pp. 5-7.

member of these committees he had an excellent opportunity to voice his opinions concerning the policies of the institution, and if his various writings on ministerial education are indicative of the trend of his emphasis in this respect, then undoubtedly it was mainly practical. He fully realised the danger of a student becoming too academic and too detached from the real task of bringing men to Christ, and though he continually emphasised the necessity and worth of good academic training¹, he always insisted that practical work should be coupled with it. Lack of data prohibits any effort to show the extent of James's influence in Spring Hill's programme of practical work, but the fact that a report was regularly submitted to the Board of Education giving details of each student's activities leaves no doubt that James was deeply involved in and concerned with the success of this plan.²

¹A brief but revealing insight into the curriculum at Spring Hill during James's time can be noted in the following quotation: "The plan of Education at Spring Hill College has been arranged to meet the circumstances of two distinct classes of students; those of advanced general education, and those whose acquirements are more limited. It therefore comprises two separate courses of study: one properly theological, which occupies four Sessions; and one comprising Hebrew and the Aramaean dialects, Greek and Roman Classics, English Literature, Mathematics and Mental Philosophy, in which students remain as long as may be necessary to prepare them in the way of information or discipline, for the studies more immediately connected with the ministry." Report of the Committee of Management of Spring Hill College for the Session 1852-53, p.15.

²Dale was of the opinion that James's influence in every area of the College's life was very extensive: "It is unquestionable", he says "that his influence in the Educational Board, in the General Committee, and among the supporters of the College was so great, that had he seriously disapproved of any part of the Spring Hill system, it was in his power to have effected an alteration. For many years he was the main support of the College out of doors; his name procured both friends and students. More than any other man, he was responsible for everything." R. W. Dale, op. cit., pp.367-68.

These practical tasks, whether they took the form of preaching, teaching in Sunday Schools, or visitation, served, James thought, not only to keep the challenge to evangelise before the students, but they also afforded excellent opportunities to practise public speaking, and what perhaps is most important of all, to gain experience in dealing with people.

But it was in his personal association with the students that he probably made his greatest contribution to the life of Spring Hill, because it was here that the magnetic influence of thought upon thought character upon character, found expression. As Chairman of the Board of Education he naturally came in contact with the students at various College functions, but it was in the quiet atmosphere of his own home that he really became their friend. It seems that from the earliest days of the College he had realised that experienced pastors like himself had a responsibility to share with the students the knowledge and experience which years in the ministry afford¹, and consequently

¹The opportunities and obligations of such a relationship between students and pastors so challenged James that he felt constrained to share this conviction with his brethren. Accordingly he prepared and delivered a paper entitled On the Importance of a More Extended Inter-course Between Our Senior Ministers and the Students in our Colleges, to a conference of delegates from the Independent Colleges of England and Wales meeting at the Congregational Library January 7-8, 1845. In this paper he sets forth the opinion that an evangelical clergy are essential to the truest expression of Congregationalism and that this kind of ministry could more reasonably be assured if the senior ministers of the churches began to take a proper interest in the College students. Throughout the paper there is an undercurrent of fear that the students might succumb to some of the theological deviations which were at least being talked about at this time, and that in the scholastic atmosphere of many of the colleges evangelism might be minimised. Therefore he called upon the senior pastors to take the initiative to ensure that this did not happen. This paper was later enlarged and sent in letter form to the Council of New College, London, and appeared in its enlarged form in the British Standard in January 1859. Works 8, p.515; Works 17, p.45.

he regularly invited two or three of them to visit his home each Saturday afternoon for a period of fellowship. On these occasions, after lunch had been taken, he would suggest that they arrange their chairs around the fire, and then, by directing their attention to an article, a passage of scripture, a book, or a personal experience, he would lead them into a discussion on some topic of religion which he thought would be of interest and help to them. Perhaps the discussion was on a Biblical doctrine, a problem of Christian living, or some aspect of the minister's work¹, but whatever the subject, his practice of suggesting rather than preaching, of relating his own experience rather than dogmatizing, so completely won the confidence and called forth the respect of his guests that his influence must have been dynamic. One of the students, whose experience was perhaps typical of the others, gives us a good indication of its strength:

There are few of us, it may be, who can recall the information he communicated. Nor do we care to do it. We all know this, that he had the art of making us happy and active, by touching the springs of the best part of our nature; that he helped us to know ourselves, that he aided us to form or strengthen our holiest purposes, that he led us to feel more, watch against our peculiar perils more vigilantly, and implored the grace of the Divine Spirit to prepare us for our responsible work more fervently and importunately.²

¹James seems to have been able to inspire his student friends on the subject of evangelism more than perhaps any other. "If there was one thing in which, above all others, by look and tone, he awoke our enthusiasm", wrote one of the students, "it was while speaking of the high joy of being instrumental in the means of saving souls from death." R. W. Dale, op. cit., p.381.

²R. W. Dale, op. cit., p.388.

His concern, however, was also expressed in other ways. Invariably he would send each of the students a copy of any new work which he had just published, and occasionally, if he was informed of a student who was in financial need, he would take steps to see that the need was alleviated, not infrequently from his own resources. If he met one of them on the busy streets of Birmingham, his face would always light up with a smile, his hand would be extended in greeting and the few minutes of conversation which usually followed, interspersed as they were with questions about the student's well-being, left no doubt in the student's mind about the sincerity and depth of his interest. And as frequently as his duties would allow, he attended the various student functions of the College. In fact, so regularly did he attend the College's first prayer meeting at the beginning of each session that it gradually became a custom for him to deliver the devotional address on these occasions.

All of these expressions of friendship and interest, however, were perhaps culminated in a gesture made on behalf of the students at his fortieth anniversary services as Minister of Carrs Lane¹, for

¹James marked this occasion by preaching a sermon, later published for private distribution, from the text: "For the Lord thy God hath blessed thee in all the works of thy hand; He knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness: these forty years the Lord thy God hath been with thee: thou hast lacked nothing." Deut.2:7. Recounting in the first part how the church had grown from a little band to a thousand, he then goes on to encourage them to make even greater advances for Christ and assures them that it is his intention to continue to lead them forward: "You know a bountiful Providence has rendered me independent of the lawful hire of my labour, so that I live to preach, and do not presch to live. I love my Master and His service and so long as He will enable me to serve Him and you, I ask for no term of easy superannuation. Eternity is long enough, and heaven is place enough, for rest: till then I mean to work on." Works 17, pp.48;80

it was at this time that his congregation, undoubtedly after having consulted James, set aside £500 as a scholarship fund in his honour at Spring Hill. No overture which they could have made would have pleased him more, because, as he saw it, it was another clear sign that his congregation was supporting him in the task which was so close to his heart and which had called forth so much of his labour.

The devoted service which James gave to Spring Hill was to be rewarded even more, however, because it was in this institution that he was to find the man who was to become his assistant and ultimately his successor. Apart from his invalid daughter's health, perhaps no subject worried James more in his latter years than the problem of obtaining a suitable successor for his pulpit. His own account, written in 1855, of his deep concern with this problem is quite revealing:

About five years ago, finding myself growing old, though by no means infirm, I began seriously to think about an assistant or co-pastor. Having observed the divisions which the choice of a pastor had sometimes occasioned, I always felt an intense anxiety about this matter in reference to my own church - an anxiety which I carried to God in constant and earnest supplication, and can truly say that for years, I never entered this pulpit on a Sabbath Morning without a silent petition for divine grace to guide the church in the choice of my successor, and to preserve its unity unbroken, and its harmony undisturbed. It was also my desire that I might be allowed to assist them in their selection.¹

¹The Jubilee Services of the Rev. John Angell James, p.17. In his earlier ministry James had already had three assistants. From 1813-19 he had been assisted by a Mr. Berry, a former tutor at Homerton College who, because of ill health, had resigned his position and had consented to relieve James of the Sunday afternoon service which was then a part of the Carrs Lane weekly programme. Berry was succeeded by a Mr. Adams of the Isle of Wight who remained four years and then, after a short interval, a student came from London, stayed three months, and finally emigrated to America. Works 17, p.269; R. W. Dale, op. cit., pp.450-57.

When one now looks back on the history of Carrs Lane Church, it is more than evident that these fervent prayers were answered in a way more marvellous than James could have ever envisaged. God sent a man to Carrs Lane who was determined to retain the good emphases of evangelicalism, but who was at the same time equally determined to interpret the Gospel in forms and thought patterns which would be acceptable to the age; his name was R. W. Dale.

Dale entered Spring Hill in 1847, and like his fellow students, soon came to be a frequent Saturday afternoon visitor at James's home, where it was not uncommon for him to disagree vigorously, though always in a friendly way, with some of the opinions of his host. Though he undoubtedly respected James as a man, he was not attracted to him intellectually and in fact was often repelled. He soon discovered that James was not a man of exact thought and often concluded that his theology lacked precision and depth. James was not original, and originality, to quote Dale's own words, "was the pearl of great price: we were willing to sell all that we had to buy it".¹

With this conviction, then, there is little wonder that Dale attended Carrs Lane only on special occasions during his student days, preferring instead to hear George Dawson, a lapsed Baptist with Unitarian tendencies, at the nonsectarian Church of the Seviour.² It is not surprising that after Dale had been at Spring Hill for a

¹R. W. Dale, Nine Lectures on Preaching, p.296.

²A. W. W. Dale, The Life of R. W. Dale of Birmingham, pp.50-51.

few months, rumours of his flirtation with heresy soon reached James and immediately prompted him to invite Dale for a "talk" to discuss the matter. James frankly but sympathetically sought to persuade his young friend not to venture from the tried way of "orthodoxy", but as Dale later pointed out, his efforts were not successful:

Though his counsels, I am sorry to say, failed to influence me, the discovery which I made that afternoon of the simplicity and generosity of his temper, and his genuine and deep concern for what he believed to be my spiritual and intellectual perils, effected a complete revolution in my feelings toward him; from that time, though it was only gradually that I came to feel his power, I venerated his goodness, and felt that in any trouble he would be a most faithful friend.¹

It was a year and a half after this discussion, at the beginning of September 1849, that James, because of an illness, invited Dale to come from his home in London to take a Sunday's services at Carrs Lane. Such an invitation was an unusual distinction for a student who had not yet reached the more advanced courses at the College, but it was not without its terrors. However, upon Dale's arrival, James quickly put his young friend at ease, and although they discussed many subjects in the course of the visit on which they disagreed, nothing disturbed the harmony between them, and what perhaps is most significant of all, Dale's preaching met with James's approval.²

About a year after this, James gave Dale the first real indication that he was considering him as a possible assistant by encouraging him

¹R. W. Dale, The Life and Letters of John Angell James, p.458.

²A. W. W. Dale, The Life of R. W. Dale, pp.58-59; R. W. Dale, Ibid., pp.458-58.

in a letter not to consider accepting any charge without first contacting him. Several months passed without his making an additional gesture, but in a note forwarded to Dale on November 11, 1851, he suddenly proposed: "I should like, after the present year of your studies....to have your occasional help at Carrs Lane, without breaking up your College life, so that by the end of another year you might be wholly, if you saw fit, an assistant to me."¹

This suggestion posed quite a dilemma for Dale, because for some time he had been intending to study for a period in Germany after completing his course at Spring Hill and also he had thought that upon his return it would be advisable for him to take a very small congregation in some industrial area, since he was very interested in the efforts then being exerted by evangelicals to evangelise the industrial masses.² But after thoroughly considering the matter, he finally, though rather reluctantly, chose Carrs Lane, at least for the time being.³

When this welcome news reached James, he naturally began to prepare his congregation for Dale's coming and in Autumn of 1852 arranged with the Church for him to preach at the morning service on the first Sunday of each month. This rather informal arrangement, which afforded Dale and James ample opportunity to become more

¹R. W. Dale, Ibid., pp.459-60.

²Ibid.; See also The Jubilee Services of the Rev. John Angell James, pp.59-60; G. M. Trevelyan, English Social History, p.517; Elliott-Binns, Religion in the Victorian Era, pp.16-20.

³A. W. W. Dale, The Life of R. W. Dale, p.83.

intimately acquainted, was continued until Dale completed his College Course in the summer of 1853, at which time it was mutually agreed that James should ask the Church to appoint Dale as "Assistant Preacher" for a year with the understanding that upon its completion the procedure for the future would again be considered.

At a church meeting on July 1, 1853, therefore, Dale was accordingly appointed and the next day James exuberantly reported to him:

I now forward you a copy of the resolutions which were passed at the church meeting last evening; and it will be to you, as it was to me, a matter of most fervent praise that they all passed not only unanimously, but most cordially...I send you the letter of what was done; the spirit cannot be thus forwarded, - all hearts were full to overflowing. Is it not of God? Is it not a token for good? Have we not been led thus far by the Divine head of the Church? ... And now, my dear brother, may you come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. May your mind be rightly directed in the answer you give me! I can anticipate but one reply. You have already, I am sure, carried this matter to Him whose blessing alone can make anything we do profitable to ourselves or glorious to Himself. Still invoke His direction and benediction. May He who sent forth His seraphim to purify the lips of the prophet, and to prepare him first to receive and then deliver the message of the Lord, purify your mind and heart to know and fulfil His counsel!¹

Dale soon replied:

Your letter has moved me so deeply that I scarcely know how or what to reply. Irrepressible tears express more adequately than words the feelings with which I have read it... With your confidence and that of the people, I should rejoice to give heart and soul body and mind, hand and tongue, to God's work in Birmingham. There was a time when, from many things which had been told me about your people, I had small faith in them: it is different now.²

¹R. W. Dale, op. cit., p.465.

²A. W. W. Dale, The Life of R. W. Dale, p.88.

Having received this reassuring news, James was again anxious to prepare his congregation for this additional step towards the co-pastorate and consequently soon preached a timely sermon from the following text:

Now, if Timotheus come, see that he may be with you without fear: for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do. Let no man therefore despise him; but conduct him forth in peace, that he may come unto me: for I look for him with the brethren.¹

James's thoughtfulness did not stop here, however, but with the concern of a Paul for a Timothy he located suitable lodgings for Dale and lovingly supervised every arrangement being made for his coming. It is not surprising, therefore, that upon Dale's arrival the congregation accepted him warmly, sincerely, and enthusiastically.²

After a few months, however, Dale, blaming himself for the unusually small number of converts which were being made, began to doubt that his ministry was really accomplishing very much. James had often had similar doubts about the effectiveness of his own ministry, but had ultimately concluded that they were inspired by God to motivate him to greater efforts. Consequently he interpreted Dale's forebodings in the same way and soon informed him that he did: "It is, my dear friend, a good sign, and seems to me to indicate a coming blessing."³ But characteristically, in order to ensure it, he encouraged Dale to preach more fervently and urgently the "old truths" of salvation and reaffirmed his intention to give them even

¹1 Cor. 16:10-11.

²R. W. Dale, Ibid., p.470.

³R. W. Dale, Ibid., p.471.

greater prominence in his own preaching.

These months of assistantship, however, were most valuable in confirming and strengthening the emotional ties which bound Dale and James together. It is not surprising, therefore, that at the end of them they agreed to continue together and that it was God's will for James to recommend Dale's election as co-pastor. A Church Meeting was accordingly arranged for July 10, 1854, and Dale was unanimously elected.¹ The meeting itself deeply stirred the emotions of the Church; fifty years had passed since it had assembled to elect a pastor, and although their beloved minister was still with them, everyone, undoubtedly with mixed emotions, recognised that it marked the end of an epoch.

James, however, looked upon it as a complete triumph. Joyfully he reported to Dale the next day:

Never was there such a church meeting before. It was full to overflowing with holy joy and thanksgiving. After it was over many gathered round me to express their congratulations, and well they might. Oh, how many prayers that meeting answered, how many anxieties it relieved, how many hopes it excited.... You do not need to be told that I invite you to be my co-pastor. If you do, I relieve your anxiety by saying, 'Come and labour with me in the gospel of Christ. Come and be the evening star of my life. Come and help me amidst that growing weakness which I must soon expect. And may our good Lord bring you in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ!'²

With such an invitation how could Dale refuse? "I feel that there is simply nothing for me to decide", he wrote in his letter of acceptance, "no room for the weighing of conflicting considerations.

¹Ibid., pp.472-73.

²R. W. Dale, Ibid., pp.473-74.

I have asked God often to make my way clear to me, and now I have only to thank Him for answering that prayer."¹

"Few young men have set sail on their ministerial voyage with a smoother sea, a fairer wind, or fuller sails"² - such was James's estimate of the prospects of his colleague at the beginning of the co-pastorate. From the standpoint of the personal relationship between James and Dale, this prediction could not have been more true. The sailing was smooth all the way. Recalling the various aspects of this association soon after James's death, Dale describes it in this way:

In his heart of hearts, the aged minister loved and trusted his younger colleague.....was his generous, unflinching champion against all suspicion and unjust censure.....was ingenious in all his devices to secure for him public respect and honour.....was open and frank in the private discussions of questions on which they disagreed.....never suggested, because he never supposed, that the authority of his own age, reputation, and experience could justify him in requiring the younger minister to trifle with his convictions of truth or duty. In one word, Mr. James had a noble, generous temper, and in all his conduct towards me, there was never the faintest trace of suspicion or selfishness.³

¹A. W. W. Dale, Ibid., p.92.

²R. W. Dale, Ibid., p.478.

³R. W. Dale, Ibid., p.475. On a few occasions during the co-pastorate some of Dale's statements made him the target of considerable criticism by sections of the church and community, but in each instance James, though perhaps not in agreement with Dale's assertion, was always his unflagging ally in easing the tension which sometimes followed. For example, in the early days of the co-pastorate Dale delivered a series of sermons from Romans in which he challenged, among other things, the generally accepted Calvinistic interpretation of original sin. Some of his statements were so controversial that it seemed at one time that they might cause a serious division in the church. Recognising this danger, James calmly advised Dale to be more cautious in the future and in an effort to calm the tempest, visited each person who seemed to be especially disturbed, carefully explaining that he and Dale generally agreed on "the substance or core of Evangelical truth" and cautiously admonishing: "Now you leave the young man alone... He has the root of the matter in him. The young man must have his fling." A.W.W. Dale, The Life of R. W. Dale, pp.100-15.

In every sense of the word, as this quotation so clearly suggests, James sought to integrate Dale as fully as possible into the life and work of Carrs Lane, not as one subservient to himself, but as an equal. From the very beginning he arranged to alternate with him in taking the morning and evening services, so that each would have one service per Sunday and that neither would have both services on any given Sunday. Similarly he insisted that the Church give Dale an equivalent stipend to the one he received, and in time had them gradually decrease his own and increase Dale's, with the result that by 1859 he was receiving less than half the amount of his colleague.¹ Dale, at least from James's standpoint, was co-pastor not in name only but in actuality.

As the months of the co-pastorate rolled on, James was more and more assured that Dale was the man whom God had chosen to be his successor, but at the end of 1857 a crisis arose which seemed for the moment to threaten the very foundation of this hope. Dale announced that he had been invited by the Cavendish Street Independent Chapel of Manchester to become their minister and that he was seriously considering accepting their call. It is not difficult to imagine the great fear and anxiety which must have overwhelmed James as the full realisation of what such a move would involve dawned upon him. Similarly, Dale, who soon left the city in order to consider the matter more objectively, away from James and Carrs Lane, found himself becoming increasingly and anxiously uncertain the more he thought.

¹R. W. Dale, op. cit., p.475.

Finally, after a great struggle, he decided to send James a letter listing the reasons why he thought the Manchester invitation should be accepted and requesting James, significantly enough, to make the final decision for him.¹ This request obviously placed James in a very awkward position. However, in letters of December 24th and 26th he reluctantly replied that while he would prefer not to make the decision, he was convinced that the advantages of Carrs Lane greatly exceeded those of Manchester, and that if Dale was determined to leave the decision to him, then he must conclude, as the following excerpt from his letter of the 24th shows, that he should remain with Carrs Lane:

Your welcome letter has lifted a load from my heart, to be replaced by another. I have just risen from my knees to bless God.....for His great kindness to me and my church in retaining you amongst us. How great has been my anxiety He best knows to whom it has been expressed morning, noon, and night. Think not, however, that I am now altogether free from it, for that other load which I now am conscious of is the solicitude I feel lest, as you have entrusted the decision to me, I should do that which at any future time you should see cause to regret..... My only ground of shrinking from this is lest my own wishes should so bias my judgment as to prevent my seeing in its true light the evidence that lies on the side of Manchester. I tremble lest I should so determine as that in promoting my own comfort, and even in thinking I was promoting yours, I should so advise as to keep you from a more successful and more happy career of ministerial labour. If, therefore, you refer it to me, I must heartily say, 'STAY WITH US'. If, however, it would be more satisfactory to YOU to have the opinion of those brethren whose minds are not liable to the same warping influences as mine, I will lay the matter before them. My mind is made up..... If you can leave

¹Ibid., pp.475-76.

it with me, under God's influences, IT IS DECIDED, and you are still what I have prayed you might be - my co-pastor for a little while, and the pastor of Carrs Lane Church soon.¹

No doubt after considerable mental agony, Dale, with childlike faith, soon announced his decision to stay in Birmingham, stating that he had been so completely convinced that it was right for James "to determine this question" that his decision could not have been otherwise.² Naturally, this announcement was warmly welcomed. The whole church was completely relieved, thoroughly grateful to God for his goodness, and confident for the future. No one, however, was more pleased than James who was now completely assured that his colleague would never leave him without his approval and serenely confident that it was God's will for Dale to be at Carrs Lane.

It seems a bit odd, at first thought, that James, old school evangelical that he was, would choose as his successor a man like Dale, who all along showed a tendency toward a liberal theology which undoubtedly displeased him. But upon further thought it would seem that this is a revealing commentary on the total outlook of

¹R. W. Dale, op. cit., pp.483-84. After this crisis, James, in a letter to a minister friend on January 1, 1858, mentions some of the criteria by which he advised Dale to stay on in Birmingham: "I looked not merely at the two congregations...but I took into account the state of our denomination in Birmingham, and then I also took into view the condition of our college. We are in a very critical state. Mr. Rogers leaves us at Lady-day for Manchester. Mr. Wetts resigns at midsummer. On all these accounts I gave my judgment in favour of his remaining with us... He thought his preaching was more adapted to Manchester than Birmingham, but I told him what would suit one place would suit the other." R. W. Dale, Ibid., p.563.

²A. W. W. Dale, The Life of R. W. Dale, pp.124-25.

James in his latter years. He more and more placed the emphasis where it really belonged in the Christian religion, on the Messiahship of Jesus, and was thoroughly convinced that Dale was too securely anchored in his acceptance of this tenet ever to discard it. Similarly, he knew that Dale was convinced that Congregational Church polity was based upon Biblical principles, which, of course, was another point in Dale's favour. But above all else, James recognised from the beginning the greatness of Dale and so coveted him for his congregation that by prayer and persuasion, he at last won him. By so doing, he not only reaped the blessing of having an associate to whose leadership he could confidently leave the church at his death, but indirectly shared in the progressive and selfless service which Dale and Carrs Lane so admirably gave to the world in the decades that followed.

The celebration of James's Jubilee as minister of Carrs Lane Church, during the second week of September 1855, should certainly be taken into account if our consideration of his ministry is to be anything like complete. Surely few men had crowded more work into fifty years, or were more worthy of the honours which admiring friends gathered together to give. His interests and ministry had extended to the ends of the earth; it was appropriate, therefore, that his Jubilee should be an occasion for the members of his church, as well as scores of other people, to whom he had imparted his ideals and given his service, to come together and demonstrate to him in some practical way their love and appreciation.

Well planned and well advertised, this important milestone in James's life was celebrated by several public services. To inaugurate the series James delivered a special sermon at the Sunday morning service at Carrs Lane giving a brief summary of his ministry with the church, praising God for his blessings, expressing his indebtedness to his congregation, and encouraging them to greater efforts in the future.

In the evening Dale took the service and in his sermon expressed his great respect for his colleague's character and friendship and formally offered his hearty congratulations and best wishes for the future.² On the following evening James conducted a special service for the children of the Sunday and day schools in which, after he had delivered a sermon, he invited the children whose parents were members of the church to file past and receive from him a little booklet containing his sermon which he hoped in future years would serve not only as a reminder of the occasion but also as a testimony of the religion which he cherished and which he hoped they would embrace.³

On Tuesday he laid the foundation stone of a new church being built near his home, the Francis Street Chapel, Edgbaston, and in the evening attended a special prayer meeting of Thanksgiving at Carrs Lane arranged especially for his own congregation.⁴

On Wednesday morning his old friend Dr. James Bennett, who had

¹See Works 3, pp.189-217 for this sermon.

²The Jubilee Services of the Rev. John Angell James, pp.40ff.

³Ibid., pp.55-56.

⁴Ibid., pp.67-82.

first recommended him to Carrs Lane, delivered a sermon based on 2 Peter 1:12-15, in which surprisingly little reference is made to James. However, when the elder minister had finished, James rose and stated:

Leaving the sermon to make its own impression, may I encourage the hearts of my younger brethren in the ministry by the scene which they have here witnessed. Here are two of us, old in the service of Christ: one a labourer of sixty years, and the other of fifty: both honoured and respected in the church, both having to thank God for more usefulness than they ever expected. And how, my brethren, has it been accomplished? By the simple earnest preaching of the old Gospel. Remember that. We want no new doctrines, but we want new power to set forth old doctrines.¹

After these comments, letters of congratulation from Dr. George Redford of Worcester, a group of Ministers in New York, the Birmingham Ebenezer Chapel, a former Spring Hill student, and the Carrs Lane Brotherly Society were read. The meeting was then closed with prayer.²

But the climax to the Jubilee celebration was the great testimonial meeting held on Wednesday evening in Birmingham's Town Hall. Having just been opened after redecoration, this magnificent edifice was completely filled long before the meeting began and hundreds were turned away unable to gain entrance. Seated on the platform were a great number of distinguished people. There were ministers of practically every evangelical denomination, representatives of various organisations with which James had been associated, former Spring Hill students who were now settled in various parts of the

¹Ibid., p.115.

²Ibid.

country, and interestingly enough, Dr. Patton, who had come all the way from New York to honour his friend.¹

The meeting began with a brief devotional service. After it was finished one of the Carrs Lane deacons, who acted as Chairman during the evening, made a short introductory speech and read a letter of congratulations and appreciation from James's old friend, the Rev. J. C. Miller, the Rector of St. Martin's.² This was the first of several tributes which were given in the course of the evening both by personal friends of James and by representatives of several religious organisations which James had served. Perhaps the tribute given by a Dr. Urwick of Dublin, who had once been a member of Carrs Lane, is typical of them all in its depth and sincerity:

I feel myself warranted in saying that I stand here this night as the representative of numbers of Episcopelians, of Presbyterians, of Methodists, and of every evangelical communion in the green Isle of the West, and, if they were

¹One of the greatest tributes during the evening to the sheer goodness of James was given by Dr. Patton in the course of his testimonial. Turning to James, he stated: "My dear brother, it has been my privilege five times to meet you at this side of the water; in a few weeks I expect again to return to my native land. One painful thought comes across my mind, that when I shall shake your hand and bid you farewell, in all human probability, it will be the last verbal language that will pass between you and me. But I have one consolation: whatever may become of me - if, in the inscrutable ways of Providence, myself should be a vile reed, torn from its native rock...in one thing, I have comfort, with regard to you, that when your hour of departure shall come, your death-bed will be like the going down of the morning star that sets amid light and glory." The Jubilee Services of the Rev. John Angell James, p.147.

²The principal emphasis of this letter is upon the admirable ecumenical spirit of James. The fact that it was written by a Churchman must have made it likewise one of the more significant tributes given during the evening.

in communication with my head and my heart, and by some kind of mesmeric influence regulating my utterance, there would be from the mass of them, without exception, a most hearty Amen to all that has been uttered or that may yet be uttered, of esteem for the character of Mr. James, of gratitude for usefulness with which God has crowned him, acknowledgements of benefits received in Ireland from his writings, and earnest prayers that the presence and blessing of the head of the Church may still be with him, yet spare his life, yet multiply his usefulness, and, in conjunction with the younger pastor of the church, that he may yet long be spared to the congregation and to the world.¹

Equally enthusiastic were the words of appreciation and congratulation from representatives of the following: The English Religious Tract Society, the London Missionary Society, the Spring Hill College Board of Education, the students of Spring Hill, the Warwickshire Association of Ministers and Churches, the Baptists, Methodists and Presbyterians of Birmingham, the Presbyterian clergymen of Philadelphia, U. S. A., and the Carrs Lane Church.²

After all of the testimonies had been given, Carrs Lane then presented James with several gifts, Bagster's Comprehensive Bible, Robert's Illustrations of the Holy Land, a silver vase, an English oak cabinet and a cheque for £500. James was deeply moved:

My dear Sir, I must be more or less than human if, on the present occasion, I were not oppressed and almost overwhelmed by emotion. I wish it were possible for me with a calmer mind, though not with a colder heart, to survey the scene by which I am at this moment surrounded. My feelings I can assure you are not altogether of unmixed delight. My consciousness of utter unworthiness of this demonstration of

¹The Jubilee Services of the Rev. John Angell James, pp.133-34.

²Ibid., pp.133-62. A letter from the American Religious Tract Society arrived too late to be read.

respect and affection is so intense, and my fears so great that the glory which belongs only to God should be given to one of his dependent creatures, that these considerations shed a few drops of.....salutary bitterness into the full and otherwise intoxicating cup of delight which is now presented to me..... If in any degree I shine, and with any radiance, it is by reflection from the Great Sun of Righteousness, of which I am but an humble satellite..... Let all that has been done, or that you imagine has been done, by instrumentality, during the fifty years I have been with you, lead you to honour Christ as the sole Agent and Author of all..... Of the chorus of joy this evening, be this the theme - and I will be the leader, and strike the highest and loudest note of praise - 'Not unto us, not unto us, O Lord, but unto Thee give glory.'¹

He went on in the course of his speech to express his heartfelt appreciation for the gifts which he had received, for the many letters and testimonials of tribute, for the added joy of having a colleague to share the occasion with him, and ended by expressing a hope that he would be among the great number who would hear God's great "Well done, good and faithful servant" at the end of the way.²

After this a "sentiment" of praise and appreciation of his young co-pastor was given by the Carrs Lane Church; this was followed by the singing of the Doxology, a vote of thanks to the Chairman, and the benediction.³ Thus ended probably the greatest celebration of a ministerial Jubilee which Birmingham had ever seen previously or perhaps has ever seen since.

It is interesting that while the celebration of James's fortieth

¹The Jubilee Services of the Rev. John Angell James, pp.163ff.

²Ibid., pp.163-69.

³R. W. Dale, op. cit., pp.505-06.

anniversary as Minister of Carrs Lane was marked by the establishment of a scholarship for students at Spring Hill, his Jubilee was ultimately to benefit the older ministers of the denomination in the formation of a "Pastors' Retiring Fund".¹ For many years prior to his Jubilee James had recognised the need for some fund of this sort which would enable the older ministers of the churches to retire with a reasonable amount of financial security², but it was in 1858 that he was to give the lead which was to result finally in its formation. In a proposal to the Congregational Union in this year, he stated that he would donate the £500 which his congregation had given him at his Jubilee, plus £200 of his own, on the condition that the denomination would raise the amount to £5,000 to inaugurate such a scheme within two years. He subsequently increased his offer to £1,000 and with such an inducement, the Union soon began work on the problem. Their progress, however, was slow. But shortly before James's death, he received word from the Assembly that the £4,000 had been raised and that they were aiming at a much higher goal.³ By 1859, £9,000 had been received, by 1864 the fund

¹James Smith, Christ Magnified: A Tribute to the Memory of the Rev. John Angell James, p.16.

²In 1833 he had contributed £100 to a rather hastily formed scheme called the "Ministers' Assurance Society". Unfortunately, however, this organisation was abandoned by the Union two years later as wholly impractical. Albert Peel, These Hundred Years, pp.96-97.

³See The Congregational Year Book, 1860, pp.299-300; Works 16, p.621.

had increased to £35,000 and by 1869 to £60,000.¹

This fund continued to be the denomination's principal means of providing for its elder ministers until 1925 when a new Superannuation Fund was formed by merging the Pastors' Retiring Fund with £150,000 collected for this purpose under a denominational financial scheme called the "Forward Movement".²

Thus the simple challenge which James gave to his brethren in 1858 in a very real sense set into motion the processes which resulted in the formation of the Pastors' Retiring Fund.³ This scheme, as we look back on it now, undoubtedly proved to be a blessing to hundreds of ministers in their retirement. Could James have foreseen in his life-time how extensively it would bless, however, he then would have had cause to give God even greater glory, not only for His blessing upon his ministry as preacher, pastor, and educationalist, but also for the privilege which He had given him of contributing in no small way to the peace and security of many of God's faithful ministers in their latter years on earth.

¹Part of the profits from some of the Union's periodicals were channeled into this fund and partially accounts for its rapid growth. Congregational Year Book, 1861, p.291.

²Albert Peel, Ibid., p.400; W. B. Selbie, Congregationalism, pp.179ff.

³For the original constitution of the Pastors' Retiring Fund, see The Congregational Year Book, 1861, pp.325-26.

CHAPTER SEVEN

RELIGION IN LIFE AND DEATH

P. T. Forsyth in his penetrating book Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind realistically asserts that the task of the Christian Minister in making the Kingdom of God relevant to men is utterly "useless" if the centre of a minister's life is not under the control of Christ.¹ If this is true, and undoubtedly it is, then there can be little doubt, when all is taken into consideration, that the success which James achieved in his ministry in bringing the Kingdom of God home to the hearts and minds of so many people in his day was due primarily to the control which Christ had of his very being. Our considerations in this thesis up to this point have made it obvious that James's religion affected every area of his life and motivated all his labour, and consequently it will be well for us to consider some of the more prominent convictions which he held concerning it since they are such determining factors in any appraisal of him.

One of the basic convictions which undoubtedly shaped his religious life and work was his uncompromising belief in the inspiration and infallible authority of the Bible.² To him the

¹P. T. Forsyth, Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind, p.42.

²This view, along with some of the others to be discussed in this chapter, has admittedly been obvious all through this thesis and has been briefly considered in our discussion of The Anxious Inquirer. But it seemed advisable to give it and the others a more detailed consideration and to relate them to James's interpretation of the Christian life as a whole, since some of these points were considered only in relation to James's emphasis upon conversion.

Bible was "God's Book, written by the inspiration of God's Spirit, containing God's thoughts, expressed in God's Words"¹ and consequently in matters of religion he believed there could be no appeal to a higher authority than that of the Scriptures:

We must go to the Word of God with these convictions in our mind: 'This is the master from which I, who know nothing, am most implicitly to receive all things. My teacher is infallible, and I am not to cavil at his instructions, however, in some things, they may transcend my ability to comprehend them.' Yes, the Bible, the Bible alone, is the infallible teacher in religious matters, from whose solemn dicta reason must bow in humble silence, to learn and to obey.²

Holding this conviction, James naturally refused to acknowledge the authority of the writings of the church fathers, of church councils and of creeds, though he did not object to creeds as confessions of faith. Believing that the Bible was given for the good of all men, he thought that individual interpretation of Scripture was both the right and the duty of every Christian and that the clergy, of whatever period or denomination, were no more authoritative or pre-eminent in this task than were laymen.³ Undoubtedly this view resulted, to some extent at least, in an

¹J. A. James, Works 5, p.115. This view of Scripture was prevalently held by Evangelicals in general at this time. See Vernon F. Storr, The Development of English Theology in the Nineteenth Century, pp.69-70; 177-78. It was also held by James's Tutor, Dr. Bogue of Godport. See David Bogue's Essay on the Divine Authority of the New Testament, pp.12-50.

²J. A. James, Works 13, p.31.

³J. A. James, Works 10, p.251ff.

exaggerated individualism in James's approach to Scripture, as it did with most Evangelicals of the time, but on the other hand it did emphasise the personal responsibility of every man to search the Scriptures with his own understanding rather than rely too heavily on the opinions of the clergy; and in this respect it was a good thing. However, most evangelicals in the first half of the century, and certainly James, would admit that this privilege could be abused and often was, but it was their contention that it was infinitely better to place the Bible in the hands of the masses than to make its interpretation the sole prerogative of the clergy. After all, they reasoned, the clergy could abuse privileges too.

Even though James did have a rather 'mechanical' conception of the inspiration of Scripture and did make the Bible in many respects the Protestant Pope, he did recognise the truth, which men like P. T. Forsyth, Karl Barth and Emil Brunner have emphasised in our own century, that the Bible's main purpose is to bear witness to the Word which became flesh. "Still remember", he wrote, "that the general design of the Bible is to testify of Christ, and to reveal the moral character of God through Him."¹ This conviction of the centrality of Christ was evident at all times, as we have seen, in his preaching and pastoral work, and was itself a stabilising influence in his religion. It must also have

¹J. A. James, Works 15, p.190.

accounted in large measure for his refusal to give prominence to any rather doubtful or controversial topics in Scripture, such as certain aspects of prophecy or eschatology.¹ He was content to emphasise Christ and the things clearly taught concerning the Christian religion and to wait until after death for an explanation of its mysteries.

With such an attitude toward the Bible, it would be expected, therefore, that James would vigorously resist the influence of the Biblical Higher Critics which began to be felt in English theological circles toward the middle of the century. It is indeed unfortunate that Biblical criticism in its early stages was identified in the minds of most Englishmen with the naturalistic philosophy which was then so prevalent in Germany, for had it been independent of it, it probably would not have been repudiated so long and so categorically by Evangelicals in general and by James in particular.² Naturally, James looked with disdain upon any apparent efforts to undermine the authority of the Scriptures and consequently believed that most of the work of the Biblical critics had little or no constructive value and was probably even destructive. "I am afraid",

¹He thought it futile, for example, for ministers to be dogmatic about the relation between prophecies in Daniel and the teaching of the Apocalypse.

²W. B. Glover confirms this: "Only when presented in a manner consistent with evangelical theology did higher criticism win a real foothold in Victorian England." Evangelical Nonconformity and Higher Criticism in the Nineteenth Century, p. 283.

he wrote, "that many of the attempts of modern criticism are but concealed attacks upon the old theology. Words are the signs of things, and with the words will go the things."¹

James was too firmly anchored to his own views of Scripture to be easily persuaded by the conclusions of the critics. He himself had experienced the power of God through the Bible and had seen countless others changed through its influence and like scores of Evangelicals was unwilling to lift himself above the religious traditionalism of the time to investigate objectively the claims of the critics. Had he done so, he would have discovered that his view of the verbal inspiration of the Bible was not indispensable to a reverent approach to Scripture and that his conviction that the Bible's main purpose was to bear witness to Christ was an adequate foundation on which to construct a doctrine of Scripture more in harmony with the discoveries of the age. But, on the other hand, had the Bible been divested of its absolute authority in the mind of James, there is the possibility that his religious zeal would have been less intense and the quality of his religious life less striking.

Emerging from this view of the Bible was another conviction which gripped the heart of James and which undoubtedly contributed to the intensity of his religious zeal: his belief that all mankind was in a fallen and depraved state of existence. Taking

¹J. A. James, Works 2, p. 389.

the Bible quite literally, he believed that Adam, the first man, disobeyed the command of God in the Garden of Eden and by doing so fell from his state of innocence and purity. This act of disobedience, he thought, involved all of Adam's descendants in its consequences so that every child born after Adam was born in sin and with an inherent inclination to moral evil.¹ He firmly believed that man in his own strength could not make himself acceptable in God's sight but was wholly dependent upon the mercy of God for salvation. From this standpoint, therefore, man was totally depraved, but to hold this view was not to say, in his opinion, that man was altogether destitute of good in other respects:

The fall of Adam, though it struck out from the heart all that is holy towards God, did not extinguish all that is amiable towards man. Lapsed humanity is not, indeed, as angelic as its ignorant or false flatterers would represent; but neither is it always as unlovely, diabolical, or brutal, as its injudicious detractors assert. If no plant of paradise grows in man's heart till planted there by grace, there are wild flowers of some beauty and pleasant odour which relieve the dreariness of the wilderness 'and waste their fragrance on the desert air'. Where this mixture exists, let us recognise it, and neither allow the good to reconcile us to the evil, nor the evil to prejudice us against the good.²

Such was James's interpretation of the depravity of man.

¹This was precisely the view of Dr. Bogue: "If the annals of the different nations of the earth do not portray the tempers and actions of a race of dreadfully depraved creatures, there is no such thing in nature as an argument. The tendency of guilt and depravity is as naturally and certainly to misery, as of a stone to fall downwards." Essay on the Divine Authority of the New Testament, p.26.

²J. A. James, Works 5, p.104.

But in spite of man's depravity, he was not, James thought, without hope; God had provided a solution to his problem in the Cross of Christ which James interpreted as the ground of God's forgiveness and the only sure hope of the sinner for eternal salvation. By His death on the Cross, Christ bore the punishment which sin deserves and accordingly revealed God's eternal mercy. His death appeased the wrath of God against sin, established the law, and was a triumph of grace. It was, as he understood it, a substitutionary death which had subjective meaning to the sinner and objective significance to God:

Substitution has ever been the principle on which God has acted in dealing with our sinful race. Ever since he instituted the sacrificial system, this has been set forth. The Jew who brought his sacrifice to the priest considered it was accepted, not only for him in some general manner, but as his substitute, to die in his place. It was life for life in his estimation. Wherever animal sacrifice has been practised among the Gentiles, the same idea has always prevailed. And neither Jew nor Gentile, in reading such phrases as Christ dying for us, or dying for our offences, could entertain any other idea than that he died in our stead.¹

The substitutionary theory of the atonement, of which this quotation is representative, was the view generally held by Evangelicals in the first part of the century, but toward the century's end and in the early part of the twentieth century, the Moral Theory of Abelard, which asserted that Christ creates within the individual His own passion in the form of a divine love which itself delivers

¹J. A. James, Works 3, p. 308.

from sin, gained ascendancy.¹ Modern theology, however, has reacted vigorously against this theory and once more the emphasis is upon an objective atonement in which the just claims of God and His judgment are made and in which the tyranny of sin is broken. Brunner in The Mediator has stressed this point², but P. T. Forsyth anticipated him many years earlier when he asserted:

The work of Christ was.....triumphant on evil, satisfying to the heart of God, and creative to the conscience of men by virtue of His solidarity with God on the one side, and on the other with the race. He subdued Satan, rejoiced the Father, and set up in Humanity the Kingdom - all in one supreme and consummate act of His one person. He destroyed the Kingdom of evil, not by way of preparation for the Kingdom of God, but by actually establishing God's Kingdom in the heart of it. And he rejoiced, filled and satisfied the heart of God, not by a statutory obedience, or by one private to Himself.....but by presenting in the compendious compass of His own person a Humanity presanctified by the irresistible power of His own creative and timeless work.³

Thus the redemption wrought by Christ on the Cross is again central in the most advanced form of Evangelicalism in our day, Neo-Orthodoxy. The present day stress upon the atonement, however, differs from the view held by Evangelicals in James's time in that our view is broader than the "substitutionary" interpretation of the death of Christ and is more vitally linked with a stronger emphasis upon the

¹Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics 1, p.18.

²Emil Brunner, The Mediator, pp.516-35. Dr. Bogue also stressed it: "The doctrine of a Mediator, and redemption through him, presents itself to our eyes in every page; and forms the very core of the Christian religion." Essay on the Divine Authority of the New Testament, p.28.

³P. T. Forsyth, The Work of Christ, pp.224-25.

Incarnation. Despite this, however, James emphasised the "Work of Christ" in his death and in reality this is the essential thing.

Another salient aspect of the religion of James was the great importance which he attached to the reality and work of God's Spirit. The Holy Spirit, James thought, made the Biblical revelation directly relevant to sinful men and apart from His influence no spiritual good could be accomplished. It was the Holy Spirit who convicted men of sin, inspired them to repent and to receive Christ as Saviour and Lord and who gave them the power to live victorious lives. In fact, the whole of the religious life, as James conceived it, was in reality made possible by the Spirit:

It is an important lesson, and one that should be learntthat the work of the Holy Spirit in the sinner is as necessary to his salvation as the work of Christ for him. As we are all corrupt by nature, in consequence of our descent from Adam since his fall, we grow up and remain without any true religion, till it is implanted in the heart by Divine grace: true holiness is something foreign to our corrupt nature; and the whole business of religion, from first to last is carried on in the heart by the Spirit of God.¹

The Holy Spirit did not work, James believed, apart from the Bible, but in conjunction with it.² Any person who claimed to have a new revelation from God which was contrary to Scripture was therefore

¹J. A. James, Works 10, p. 83.

²At times he almost merges the Spirit into the Bible in his thinking: "The Spirit of God is both in the Word, by its divine inspiration, and with the Word, to make it effective to the conversion of the sinner; and He renders that same Word the means of progressive sanctification in the believer." Works 17, p. 64.

considered to have arrived at his conclusion without the inspiration of the Spirit and his message should consequently be ignored. The Spirit was not at variance with God the Father, God the Son, or the Bible, but agreed with them. As he saw it, the Spirit was sent by God to testify of God's love in Christ, to lead men to repentance and faith and to perfect them by sanctification.¹

Justification by faith was also a continual watchword of James. The righteousness of Christ and His righteousness alone was the only merit which he thought the sinner could claim as his hope for eternal life and this righteousness was God's gift to every man who would receive it by faith. Even this faith, however, was not to be considered as a merit in itself, since it was made possible by the sheer grace of God, but principally as a medium through which the Spirit of God grafts the sinner into the new covenant. Faith is, therefore, the sinner's response to the Divine initiative of the Spirit of God and is by its very nature primarily an individual thing. Such a view rules out, he thought, the Divine approval of human dependence upon church affiliation, the sacraments, or good works for justification, and gives glory to the sovereign regenerative grace of God alone.²

This faith by which the individual is justified, however, was not merely a personal matter in James's opinion: it should also

¹J. A. James, Works 15, pp.458ff.

²For the most complete exposition of this doctrine by James, see Works 6, pp.400-25.

express itself in fellowship with other people of "like precious faith". This fact is quite evident in his book Christian Fellowship and to a lesser but prominent extent in his books The Christian Professor, which is a collection of Communion addresses published in 1846¹, and The Course of Faith, which is a compilation of a series of sermons published in 1852 on various aspects of the Biblical doctrine of faith. Both these works place the greatest accent upon the personal elements of religion, as do all James's writings, but, there is an underlying strain of emphasis upon the communal life of the Christian as well. He believed that the main arena of this fellowship, as we have noted previously, was the local congregation, which, ideally considered, should be composed of men and women who have been redeemed by Christ and brought together by the Holy Spirit. This fellowship should be a community of love, centred on the Person of Christ and geared to worship and work. The outward sign of this unity was, he thought, the Lord's Supper. James, however, was not a "high" sacramentarian.² In no way did he anticipate the objective emphasis which Dale and others placed upon the sacraments in the latter years of the century³, but

¹This work was a sequel to Christian Fellowship.

²Baptism, for instance, received little emphasis by James. Like the 1833 Declaration of Faith and Order, he never really defined baptism in his writings or related it to his theological system and was apparently content simply to say that it was an "ordinance" of Christ to be administered to converts to Christianity and to the children of Christians.

³See A. W. W. Dale, The Life of R. W. Dale, pp. 212-16; 361ff.

following in the tradition of Zwingli, with perhaps a little more emphasis upon a didactic, pictorial interpretation of the Eucharist, he considered this sacrament simply a commemorative rite and nothing more. Like the hearing of a sermon, the Lord's Supper could be, in his opinion, a means of grace, but its effect was dependent upon the faith of the Christian:

The same exercises of mind must be carried on in partaking of the Lord's Supper as in hearing the gospel.....the bread and the wine can do us no more good, with whatever superstitious reverence received, if our minds are not directed by them in faith to Christ crucified, than the words of Scripture upon the tongue can do us good without any intelligent notions of their meaning in the mind. When we meet at the Lord's table, then, it is to eat bread and drink wine in remembrance of Christ; to be put in penitent, believing, loving, grateful, obedient remembrance of him. In this state of mind we are to go to the table of the Lord, not to expect grace in some mystical way and manner, because a minister regularly ordained says to us, 'Receive the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ': but in the way of understanding and believing the truth of Christ's death for sinners, so impressively set forth by the broken bread and poured out wine. This is what the apostle calls 'discerning the Lord's body'.¹

The Communion was not in itself, therefore, the cause of Christian fellowship, but it did testify, he thought, to the unity of faith among all Christians which does exist as a result of each Christian's experience of God's saving power. The Lord's Supper, therefore, is a communion with God and with man and is an expression of the life of love and fellowship which should characterise every Church of Christ.

Another prominent aspect of the religion of James was the

¹J. A. James, Works 15, p. 371.

emphasis which he placed upon "personal piety". Conversion, in his opinion, was the foundation of piety, since it was here that the person was "born into the Kingdom", but it was not the Will of God, he thought, for the Christian to remain a "babe in Christ", but rather that he should "grow in grace". To James, therefore, the Christian Life was not a static thing, but must be characterised by a progressive sanctification:

Religion is of an aspiring nature, requiring us to proceed from grace to grace; to faith adding virtue, to virtue adding patience, to patience temperance, to temperance godliness, to godliness brotherly-kindness, and to brotherly-kindness charity; thus ascending by degrees, till at length the top of the lofty staircase reaches to heaven, and lands the soul so qualified in the mansions of glory.¹

Holding this view, James naturally laid great emphasis all along in his preaching upon this qualitative life of sanctification,² and also attempted to spread his views concerning it by his publications. Some of these have already been considered, but the works which give this subject the greatest prominence have not yet been noted. This is true of his books The Christian Professor and the Course of Faith, mentioned earlier in the chapter, and of his

¹J. A. James, Works 6, pp.502-03. A belief in "progress" in every realm was almost a "mania" with the Victorians. For a discussion of this subject, see Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians, pp.33ff.

²James defines sanctification thus: "Sanctification.....means that work of grace which is carried on in the soul of the believer by the Spirit of God, through the instrumentality of Divine truth, whereby he is made more and more like God in righteousness and true holiness." Works 6, p.428.

book Christian Charity, which is an exposition of the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians, and also of his book Christian Progress, which was published in 1853 as a sequel to The Anxious Inquirer, but which was never extensively used. It is equally true of his last book, Christian Hope, which he published in 1858, and which contains his views on the Biblical doctrine of hope. There is a certain sameness of emphasis in all these works and consequently it seems best to draw from all of them James's principal beliefs about a "pious" life rather than to consider each work in detail.

Like Barth, James thought that the Christian Life was in some respects a life of struggle. To him the Christian, whom he likened to a pilgrim on a voyage to eternity, had to be on continual guard against the subtleties of his own fallen, Adamic nature, against the attacks of Satan the Adversary, and against the corrupt world around him.¹ The Christian, he affirmed, was suspended in his earthly life between two conflicting worlds, the world of the Kingdom of God and the fallen and perverted state of Society. The

¹J. A. James, Works 5, p. 22. In seeking to do this James bordered at times on asceticism. For many years he deliberately left the table after every meal without having completely satisfied his appetite and from 1830 onward refused to set aside very much time in his schedule for purely "social functions" which would require him to be away from home or his work. He consistently refused to relax for more than half an hour after lunch and not for a moment after breakfast and tea, and always denied himself anything which he considered a "luxury". As long as his health would permit he refrained from using his horse on Sunday and when his health required him to abandon this policy in his latter years, he made certain that his horse was not used on Saturday. See R. W. Dale, op. cit., pp. 577-80.

latter, he believed, was a perennial threat to the disciple of Christ:

The world is a foe which attacks us in various places; in the shop, by all the temptations incident to trade and wealth; in the halls of legislation and public business, by all the enticements to pride and ambition; in the places of amusement, by all the soft blandishments of pleasure; in the haunts of vice, by all the gratifications of appetite; in the scenes of nature, by all the delights of taste and imagination; in the walks of science and literature, by all the delights of intellectual gratification; in the social circle, by all the enjoyments of friendship; and in the domestic retreat, by all the sweets of connubial bliss. Oh, how many are the scenes where the world meets man and subdues him! And how many also are its weapons and its methods of attack.¹

Because the world was such an enemy, he thought it absolutely necessary for every Christian to make a conscientious effort to avoid the very appearance of evil and to make certain that his character did not conform to the world but was modelled instead on the qualities of character set forth by the Bible:

It should be a frequent reflection with you, yea an habitual one, as you take up the Bible to say, 'This book is intended to form in me a particular character to fashion my whole self after a prescribed manner and am I, by reading it, and studying it, answering this end? Have I a Bible character? Is my mind a Bible-mind?: my heart a Bible-heart?: my life a Bible-life? As the seal impresses its own image upon the melted wax, has the Bible impressed its own character on me? Do others see the fruit and effect of my study of the Scriptures in my likeness to the Scriptures.....am I....a living, speaking, acting Bible?'²

¹J. A. James, Works 7, pp.12-13.

²J. A. James, Works 15, p.191. Dr. Bogue described it this way: "If I may express the whole in a few words, such as Jesus Christ was when he dwelt on earth, such it is the design of the New Testament that his disciples should be; and such it is their aim to be." Essay on the Divine Authority of the New Testament, p.42.

To progress toward such a character required, James thought, not only a struggle against the world, the self, and the devil, but also a willingness to depend upon the Holy Spirit to help in the task and a determination to use every other "spiritual means" available. Habitual Bible study, regular private prayer, participation in public worship, fellowship with individual Christians who were distinguished for their "religion", and occasional periods of intense self-examination and humiliation before God, were all necessary, he thought, to the attainment of a high standard of piety.¹

All these things, however, had to be done, he emphasised, in faith, for faith was both the means of entering the Kingdom of God and of living in the Kingdom, and apart from it, as he points out in his book The Course of Faith, there could be no victory over the world.² Faith, as he conceived it, was a belief in and a dependence upon the promises of God, as they were contained in Scripture, which expressed itself in action. Faith was essential, he thought, to progress in sanctification, to the experience of Christian joy, to effective service for Christ, to power in prayer, to the realisation of Christian assurance concerning salvation, for strength to endure affliction, for courage to face death, and for an eternal existence with God.³ He therefore categorically sums up

¹J. A. James, Works 10, pp. 242-56.

²J. A. James, Works 7, pp. 12-50.

³Ibid., pp. 205ff.

the part faith plays in the Christian life by saying: ".....our personal religion, our whole religion in fact, consists in our believing that book and acting according to it."¹

But the same God who inspires the faith of the Christian also "sheds abroad" His love, James believed, in the heart of the Christian. The clearest and most comprehensive exposition of James's view of the part divine love plays in the Christian life is in his book Christian Charity Explained, published in 1828.² To James, Christian love was not an emotional, flimsy thing, which fluctuated "to and fro" and which lacked stability, but it was a consistent, self-emptying, sacrificial quality of life, inspired and made possible by the Spirit of God, and directed toward the glory of God. It was, he believed, one of the "fruits" of regeneration, the effect of faith, a result of obedience to the authority of the Bible, and founded, at least subjectively, upon the Christian's experience of forgiveness. Love, as he conceived it, was meek, kind, free of envy, humble, tactful, unselfish, trusting, joyous, honest, self-denying, eternal in its nature, anticipatory of heaven, and a quality of life which must characterise

¹J. A. James, Works 6, p. 379.

²The poet Wordsworth (1770-1850), according to T. S. James, read this work and was so impressed that on one of his visits to Birmingham, he attended a morning service at Carrs Lane, and after the service, while the people were filing out, introduced himself to James and stated that for some time it had been his desire to meet the man who had written Christian Charity Explained. Works 6, Introductory Note.

the Christian life.¹ It should, he thought, consequently find its way into every area of the Christian's existence:

This is love, blended with all our living habits, diffused through all our conduct, forming our character, breathing in our desires, speaking in our words, beaming in our eyes; in short, a living part of our living selves.²

In his own life, James made a diligent and consistent effort to cultivate and to exemplify these qualities of love and the proof of his success in this effort is clearly evident in many areas of his life. We have already noted how devoted he was to his congregation and how deeply they respected him. We have also seen him as he gave himself to the students of Spring Hill College in the various gestures which he made on their behalf. We have observed him in his personal efforts to extend the Kingdom of God by his preaching, by his writing, and by his co-operation with various organisations, such as the Bible Society, the London Missionary Society, the Congregational Union, and the Evangelical Alliance; all of these activities were clearly expressions of Christian love.

In his use of money this quality was also striking. No appeal for any worthy effort to strengthen or extend the Kingdom of God was ever refused by James and for a number of years it is

¹All of these points are discussed at length in Christian Charity Explained. See Works 6.

²J. A. James, Works 6, p. 35.

said that he regularly gave one third of his stipend for Kingdom purposes.¹ It became popularly known in Birmingham that he would always give assistance to anyone in need and consequently it was not unusual for several people each week to appeal to him. On several occasions he commented to his friends that he recognised that such a policy laid him open to exploitation and that undoubtedly he had often been "taken", but that he preferred to assume these losses rather than to refuse aid to someone who might sincerely need it.² Such was the quality of his love.

But the Christian life, James believed, was also a life of hope, and his views on this aspect of his religion are largely contained in his book Christian Hope which he published in 1858. Dedicated to his young colleague, Dale, this work, from beginning to end, asserts that Jesus Christ is the only sure hope of the individual sinner and of the whole world. As far as the individual's salvation is concerned, he unhesitatingly catalogued human dependence upon the "benignity of the divine nature", the "equity of God", the purifying effects of a person's own "vicarious suffering", and church affiliation, as "false hopes" if they were substituted for a personal faith in Christ, and accordingly sounded the clarion call of Evangelicalism that Christ is the Alpha and Omega of Salvation.³

¹John C. Miller, Exeter Hall Lectures: John Angell James, p.29.

²See R. W. Dale, op. cit., p.576.

³J. A. James, Works 7, pp.275-90.

It is by hope, which James describes as a "complex passion" of desire, expectancy, and joy¹, that the Christian affirms his belief, he thought, in the Messiahship of Jesus, His Second Advent, the resurrection of the dead, and the eternal happiness of the redeemed in heaven.² Like love and faith, it must, therefore, pervade every aspect of the person's religion.

This means, consequently, that the hope of the Christian, as James understood it, must not be limited solely to the salvation of the individual, but must include the salvation of the world as well: "Here, then, is the object of the Christian hope, so far as earth and time are concerned, a redeemed, regenerated, holy, happy world."³ No Evangelical Christian who took his religion seriously, he believed, could fail to cherish the hope that the time would come when the Star of David, the Crescent of the "False Prophet", the Superstitions of Popery, and the idols of heathenism, would be replaced by the Cross of Christ which brings salvation and healing to the nations.⁴

James himself firmly believed in the ultimate triumph of Christianity because he believed that the course of the world was in the hands of God:

Everything falls in with the current of God's gracious purposes toward our dark disordered world; everything indicates human improvement and the progress of social

¹J. A. James, Works 7, p. 254.

³Ibid., p. 305.

²Ibid., pp. 306-335.

⁴Ibid., pp. 295-305.

existence; everything tends to the diffusion of the Bible, and harmonises with its tendency, design, and announcements, everything is making way for the universal spread and triumph of religion, for the reign of Christ, for the millennial glory and the jubilee of the world.¹

This day of glory for the world could be hastened, he thought, by the efforts of Christians, but the final triumph was in the hands of God,² who willed that all men everywhere should repent and embrace the only true religion, the religion which alone enabled men to walk triumphantly in faith, love and hope.

Social reform was another prominent feature of the religion of James. While it is true that he thought that the greatest hope of changing the world, apart from the Second Advent of Christ, lay in the changing of individual men by conversion³, this belief in no way contradicted or obstructed his conviction that it was the Christian's duty as a citizen to do everything within his power to

¹J. A. James, Works 5, p.255.

²Dr. C. S. Duthie in his provocative book God in His World recently emphasised what is undoubtedly the twentieth century counter-part of this belief in the triumph of the Gospel: "Christ has brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel. God raised Him from the dead and now He is alive for evermore, the bringer of the new creation. Because He lives we shall live also in the fellowship of the beloved community. Through Him God will finally vanquish all evil and the Kingdom will fully come. It is in the confident hope of that triumph which God will accomplish that we love, adore, serve and obey Him now as the God who so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." pp.57-58.

³Dr. Bogue undoubtedly influenced him on this subject. In his book Discourses on the Millennium, Bogue continually stressed that the world would be changed primarily through the changing of individual men. See pp.243-277.

make the world a better place in which to live. To James this meant, therefore, that the Christian could not remain aloof from politics, because it was within this realm of human endeavour, he thought, that the disciple of Christ had an excellent opportunity to exercise his influence in shaping the character and course of the nation. And to refuse to assume this responsibility, he thought, was to avoid Christian duty.¹ This belief also meant that the Christian should co-operate with every movement which was geared to improve the well-being of man, provided it did not conflict with Evangelical religion. The personal example of James makes it evident that in this responsibility he practised what he preached. In addition to the organisations which we have considered in previous chapters he also identified himself with the Temperance Society², with various movements to protect the interests of Dissent, with the movement to separate Church and State, but most notably, at least from a sociological standpoint, with the movement to abolish slavery.³ The traffic in human life was extremely abhorrent to James; Negro people were always welcome in his own

¹J. A. James, Works 9, pp. 392-95.

²For most of his ministry James was a total abstainer.

³H. W. Clark states: "Nonconformists generally.....supported the crusade of Clarkson and Wilberforce for the abolition of the slave trade, the crusade which planted its flag on the enemy's citadel in 1807. Slave emancipation was, of course, another matter. This did not come till 1833." History of English Nonconformity, p. 320. See also Elliott-Binns, Religion in the Victorian Era, pp. 23-28.

home and in his pulpit and perhaps there was no time when he became more indignant than when he was denouncing the injustices against the Negro race, especially as they were manifested in such an enlightened nation as America. In his correspondence with his American friends this subject is evident again and again. For example, in 1833 he stated in a letter to Dr. Patton:

There is another subject of immense consequence to the interests and moral reputation of your country which ought to be deeply studied by all who have her welfare at heart - I mean, the perplexing question of slavery. The determined opposition, so long and so successfully carried on by Great Britain against this evil, renders us still more alive than ever to the flagrant and shocking inconsistency of some of your States in retaining more than two million of their subjects in a condition of cruel vassalage, and in a land, too, professing the most love of freedom. I am quite aware that this is a matter of state, and not federal legislation; but it does appear to all thinking people in this country that the anti-slave States have not done all they could and should do in the way of intelligent and affectionate appeal to their slave-holding neighbours, and in the way of generous willingness to bear the loss, to induce them to wipe out this foul blot on your national escutcheon.¹

But if America had cause to blush for its treatment of the Negroes in the South, Britain, James thought, could take no pride in the efforts being made by some of her own sons to solve her social problems by ways which he considered to be "Godless". For example, the Welsh Socialist, Robert Owen (1771-1858)², who believed

¹R. W. Dale, op. cit., pp. 268-69.

²See G. M. Trevelyan, English Social History, pp. 484, 546-57. Similarly James regretted that the Chartist Movement (1836-48) was so indifferent to Evangelicalism. And while he was sympathetic with many of their goals, he could not endorse the movement. Works 9, p. 264.

that man's character was wholly determined by his environment and that a better environment would create better men, was categorically condemned by James:

The subtleties of Hume, the pompous deism of Bolingbroke, and the artful insinuations of Gibbon, have given place to the ribaldries of Paine, and recently to the absurdities of Owen. The system, if system it may be called.....announces as its leading dogma, that man is entirely the creature of circumstances; is in no sense the author of his opinions and volitions; nor the founder or supporter of his own character... Young man, can you believe it? No, your reason revolts from it, and so would your heart, too, if you could witness the moral ravages it has committed. 'Call it not socialism, call it devilism; for it has made me more a devil than a man', exclaimed a poor dying man in my neighbourhood, to one of our town missionaries who visited him on his death-bed.... I have seen man, morally happy and useful, so long as he professed religion, and have seen him in misery, poverty and ruin, since he has thrown it off: I have heard the impassioned accents of his heart-broken wife.....exclaiming, as she looked at her miserable companion, 'O sir, he has been a changed man ever since he went among the Owenites!' Such is socialism.¹

This quotation makes it obvious that James was as prejudiced and uncompromising towards Owen as he was towards the Biblical critics. He allowed Owen's basic premise, which was in his opinion completely opposed to Evangelical theology, to obscure the good which was being accomplished in Owen's social experiments and accordingly felt compelled to condemn the movement. It was not that he was against social progress, but he believed that the best social advances were those which not only improved the physical condition of men, but which were conducive to the Christian religion as well. For this reason, therefore, James did most of his work with organisations

¹J. A. James, Works 5, pp.403-04.

which were distinctively Evangelical.

Still another striking aspect of James's view of the Christian life was his conviction that the life of the Spirit is the most profitable and happiest of lives. This theme runs throughout his writings but is best expressed in his books for young people, The Young Man's Friend and Guide through Life to Immortality¹, published in 1851, and Female Piety: or The Young Woman's Friend and Guide through Life to Immortality, published in 1852. Both these works, which were quite popular in their day, emphasise the usual evangelical themes and include a great deal of sensible, practical advice to help young people to make the most of this life and at the same time to prepare for "eternity". The religion of the Bible gives man a "Friend", James emphasised in these works, who alone can enable a young person to rise above his circumstances and live victoriously. If a young person is leaving home to embark on a career, planning to emigrate, establishing a home of his own, or in destitute circumstances, Christ can help him and to ignore Him is the greatest of follies. Every young person should realise, therefore, that to have Christ in his heart will be conducive to his temporal well-being, since this relationship will improve his

¹This work contains the same general emphasis and much of the same material of an earlier work of James, The Young Man from Home, which he published in 1839. It is, in reality, simply an enlarged, differently arranged, version of this earlier work, and like The Young Man from Home and The Young Woman's Guide, it was extensively circulated. This was probably due to a number of reasons but the principal one seems to be that James was able to make religion vitally relevant to the problems and circumstances of young people in an increasingly industrial age.

character, channel his talents into useful and beneficial endeavours, and in every way help him to face life and live it triumphantly.¹

Not only is personal religion profitable to the person, but it also brings the greatest happiness in life. The ways of the world, James thought, can bring a superficial contentment, and sin can even give pleasure for a season, but it is only for a season. But the life of "piety" brings real joy which the world can neither take away nor understand. This qualitative type of life is not characterised, however, by a constant elation of the emotions, but by a rational joy which springs from a consciousness that the individual has been justified before God and that his life is in God's hands. The pleasures of the world, in his opinion, could not compete with this.²

But James also placed continual stress in his religion upon the glory after death which awaits those who faithfully persevere until the end in the religion of Christ. Heaven, he believed, was a place of eternal "bliss" where all of the redeemed of the earth would dwell eternally with God to praise Him, and, in a way which the finite mind cannot conceive, to serve Him. Here the Christian, he was convinced, will have perfect opportunity to go on to new heights of glory and knowledge. Accepting the Apostle Paul's phrase "to die is gain" quite literally, he believed that immediately upon death, the spirits of just men enter the presence of God to await the

¹J. A. James, Works 5, pp. 54ff.

²Ibid., pp. 450ff.

resurrection, at which time God will give them new bodies and so shall they ever be with the Lord.¹

Thus, to draw these emphases together, James believed that the Bible was God's inspired Word, that men by reason of their sin were in need of the salvation which God in His Grace had provided through the atonement of Christ on the Cross, that God's Spirit leads men to repentance and faith and helps them to live the Christian life. But, on the other hand, if the Christian is to be successful in this the greatest of all adventures, he himself must make a persistent effort to give the Kingdom of God pre-eminence by cultivating faith, love and hope, through personal devotion and by means of fellowship in the church. This life in Christ will also express itself in the Christian's identification of himself with every effort to promote the well-being of the total man and will be rewarded in the end by an eternal existence with God. Such was the simple but vital faith of James.

Having, therefore, considered some of the main elements of James's religion, we turn now to consider his death, because his death, like his life, bore witness to his faith. It was in the summer of 1859 that James occasionally began to mention to his friends that he thought his physical condition was getting much

¹J. A. James, Works 15, p.350; Works 10, p.178.

worse¹, and though it was apparent that he was not in good health, neither they nor his physicians supposed that his death was so near at hand. Certainly the number of his activities during the last few weeks of his life gave no impression that his death was near. On the second Sunday of September, he preached a sermon at Carrs Lane, as he annually did, for the London Missionary Society, and on the following Sunday evening, conducted a service during which he preached his last sermon in his own pulpit. It did not, however, mark the end of his preaching, for he took the morning service on September 25th at the recently built Francis Street Congregational Chapel, Edgbaston, and delivered a sermon on his favourite theme: Salvation. It was often reported after his death that it was in the course of this sermon that he solemnly stated that if he knew this were his last sermon he could not have chosen a subject closer to his heart. Certainly the main emphasis in all his preaching confirms this.

In the evening of this same day, he attended public worship at Carrs Lane and on the following day came to a mid-day prayer-meeting held in the church library. It was at this meeting that he

¹J. A. James, Works 17, p.304; T. S. James, Memorial of the Rev. J. A. James, pp.26-27. Reference has already been made earlier in the thesis to the fact that James suffered in his latter years both from a fear that death might be imminent for him and from periodic attacks of fever which began to appear rather frequently from 1853 onward. We have also noted that despite these maladies, he remained diligent in his work to the very end. This perhaps can partially be accounted for by the fact that he had remained completely faithful to the resolutions which he made soon after his wife's death to give God his best and because in some ways he had attempted to substitute more work for that part of his life which had been cut off by his wife's passing. See William Guest, A Tribute of Grateful Love to the Memory of the Late Rev. John Angell James, pp.18-19.

again expressed his conviction that he would not be with God's people on earth much longer and earnestly requested prayer.¹ Little did he realise, however, just how near death really was, because on the following morning, Tuesday, he was struck with the heart attack which was to result within a few days in his death. Awakened with severe pains in his chest, he soon decided it was best to remain at home for the day and consequently cancelled the engagement which he had arranged with the Rector of St. Martin's to plan a series of interdenominational prayer-meetings in the interest of revival. His condition, though painful, did not necessitate his staying in bed and by Wednesday morning his symptoms had completely gone, though he felt extremely weak.² In the afternoon of this same day Dale visited him and found him in a cheerful but contemplative mood:

On entering his study that afternoon I found him sitting at the table with one of his little granddaughters on each knee, bending over a book of pictures, and talking to them with great cheerfulness about the wonderful things at which they were looking. The gray head and furrowed but happy countenance between those two childish eager faces, made a picture that will never be effaced from my memory. When the little children had kissed him and run away, he began talking solemnly, but not sadly, about his consciousness of increasing weakness. Gradually his thoughts moved towards the highest regions of saintly contemplation, and I was so impressed with the unusual glow and brightness of his faith and hope, that I said to him, 'Mr. James, you have an extraordinary measure of happiness and joy in God today; I remember that when I first came to college your sermons seemed to indicate that you were almost permanently under the shadow of religious despondency;

¹J. A. James, Works 17, p. 304.

²Ibid.

and I cannot help thinking of the contrast.' He smiled and said, 'Yes, I used to be clouded sometimes; and now I am afraid that my joy only rises from the hope and prospect of release; I want to slip away and be gone.'¹

On Thursday his condition had not changed noticeably, but his conviction that death was soon coming still pervaded his thoughts. In the course of a conversation which he had with his daughter-in-law on this day he stated:

I am a wonder to myself - you know that on former occasions in illness I have had so much gloom and depression, and now it is all gone - I am perfectly peaceful, nay, happy - I am sure that many must have been praying for me - I am sure that other prayers besides my own are being answered in me...² I am like a letter signed and sealed, and waiting for delivery.

"Dear papa, not to be delivered yet, I trust", interrupted his daughter-in-law.³ James replied:

I have but one wish now on the subject, and that is that I may be spared a long time of uselessness. To live and not to be able to work would be very painful to me; but I have worked long for God in action, and if He wills that I am soon to glorify Him in suffering, I know that He will help me to do so.⁴

He paused for a moment and then leaning back in his chair, clasped his hands and with a radiant smile on his face, continued:

Oh, to have fellowship with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ; oh, the blessedness of such a support. Oh, cultivate it in health, that you may possess it in sickness!⁵

Throughout Friday his condition seemed to remain the same. He wrote several letters, and in them all again expressed his conviction

¹R. W. Dale, op. cit., pp.523-24. ²J. A. James, Works 17, p.306.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., pp.206-07.

⁵Ibid., p.306.

that death was near. To his brother Thomas James, a minister in London, he wrote:

My condition just now is very low - not my spirits. I am peaceful, I may say happy, quietly and contentedly waiting to see how it will go with me. Through mercy I get tolerable nights, but I believe it is the beginning of the end.¹

In another letter written this same day he stated: "What a dark object is the grave when seen by the eyes of sense and reason, but how changed when seen in the sunshine of revelation!"²

In the evening, after having heard several missionary reports read aloud to him by a friend staying in the house, he conducted family prayer as usual and suggested that his invalid daughter meditate on the text "My grace is sufficient for thee" as she went to her bed. Soon after his daughter had left him, he was suddenly struck with almost unbearable pain in his chest. Naturally this caused great alarm and consequently a doctor was quickly summoned. Before twelve, however, the pain had largely gone and at James's own request the doctor left.

The pain recurred periodically throughout the night, but for some reason, James refused to allow his servant to call the doctor again. From time to time, as the servant later reported, James spoke of his gratitude for the strength of God's presence and repeated at various intervals in the night two verses of the hymn, "Begone, Unbelief, My Saviour is Near".

¹J. A. James, Works 17, p. 305.

²Ibid.

About six o'clock on Saturday morning, October 1, 1859, he suddenly became much worse. His servant immediately summoned his son, and the doctor who lived only a short distance away, but they arrived only in time to receive one look of love and a word of recognition before he sank into unconsciousness, and about seven o'clock he quietly and painlessly passed away.¹

The news of his death spread rapidly over the nation and naturally brought great grief to all who knew him. None, however, were more conscious of their loss than the people of Carrs Lane. In the regular services of the church the following day, people were crying in all parts of the building. In fact, the church's sense of loss was so great that a special prayer-meeting was arranged for Wednesday evening to entreat God to have mercy upon them in their bereavement and to ask Him to forgive them for not taking more advantage of the example and admonitions of the Godly pastor who had now been taken from them. In this meeting, and in the days which followed, many people who had never really renounced sin and received Christ did so and many who had lived rather mediocre Christian lives were quickened to a deeper commitment to Christ by the spiritual power which seemed to pervade the whole atmosphere.²

The funeral services were held on Friday, October 7th, and

¹J. A. James, Works 17, pp. 306-07.

²R. W. Dale, op. cit., p. 527.

undoubtedly left their mark on the life of Birmingham.¹ The whole city spontaneously expressed its grief. One minister, who was in Birmingham for the services, describes the city's response thus:

At eleven o'clock the coffin, containing the honoured form of the revered dead, upborne on the faithful shoulders of members of the church, was seen leaving the door of that dwelling which for fifty-three years had been his home, and in the presence of uncovered heads was placed in the hearse. It would have been vain to attempt to estimate the length of the moving procession, composed as it was of the authorities, clergy, and other distinguished inhabitants of the town, and of a long line of Christian men, emulative to testify the love and honour they bore. There was no part of the long route which was not lined with sorrowing countenances; but, as the files approached the main thoroughfares, the spectacle grew overpoweringly sublime. It was noon but all business was suspended; not a vehicle was seen; the streets were cleared for the procession. Except one or two which, however, were partially darkened, the whole of the shops were closely shut up. Upper windows in the houses were filled with persons in mourning apparel. Every standing point was thronged with spectators.... On the face of the aproned artisan, there rested a reverential sorrow. Women took up the corner of their shawls to wipe away their tears. The little children were obviously subdued into wondering seriousness. The death-like silence over these crowds in that great mart of industry was deeply affecting.²

It was fitting that the Carra Lane Chapel, where James had laboured so long, should be the place where his funeral services and

¹One Birmingham newspaper announced James's death in this way: "The good men, who by their deeds, their teaching and their example have made Birmingham famous the world over, are fast falling around us.....it is our melancholy duty to record the going down to death of one full of years and honours, another co-operator in every great and good work, the venerable John Angell James." The Saturday Evening Post, October 8, 1859, p.1.

²William Guest, A Tribute of Grateful Love to the Memory of the Late Rev. John Angell James, pp.20, 21.

his interment should take place. For a number of years it had been James's desire to be buried in the vault beneath the front of his pulpit and with this wish the church naturally complied.¹

For two hours before the funeral service began the galleries and available space in the Chapel were completely full², and when the funeral procession finally arrived, hundreds were unable to gain entrance. After the coffin had been placed in front of the pulpit, several passages of Scripture were read and prayer was offered. Dale then delivered the sermon. Both his countenance and his words made it obvious to all that he was deeply and sincerely moved:

We mourn the loss of one whom many of us revered more deeply than any living man - whom we loved with an affection most intense and fervent - to whom we clung with all the gratitude and trust which Christian hearts are accustomed to feel for one who has been made to them the earthly channel of divine and immortal blessings.

And this immense assemblage does but represent a sorrow too widely diffused to take part in these sad solemnities. The inhabitants of this great town, in which for more than half a century our lost friend resided as one of its most useful and conspicuous citizens, acknowledged his worth while living, honoured him with universal and ever deepening confidence and esteem, and today are penetrated with the most profound regret for his departure. The two thousand Churches of this country

¹At the ordination of Dale he had stated: "As it was in my case, so may it be in yours, and this church be your first, your last, your only love. Even longer, more happy, and more useful may you be here than I have been. Rich in years, in honours, and in usefulness, may you come at some far distant day to your end: and then, after labouring in the same pulpit, come and lie down with me in the same grave, at the foot of it; so shall we resemble warriors resting on the field where they fought and conquered." The Ordination Services of the Rev. R. W. Dale, pp. 65-66.

²Evangelical Magazine and Missionary Chronicle, 1859, p. 786.

adhering to the same faith and polity as himself.....are one with us in our present distress. And myriads more, belonging to all the various Churches of Protestant Christendom.....will be troubled and heavy at heart when they hear that he is with us no longer..... He lived not long enough to satisfy our love, but yet long enough for us to feel that there was a singular and marvellous completeness in his life.¹

After the sermon, while the coffin was being prepared for lowering, the congregation rose and sang a hymn. The coffin was then lowered, words of interment were pronounced, and the benediction was given. Slowly the people left the building.

Who can tell what thoughts, what emotions, were in the minds and hearts of the people who had gathered on this day to honour the memory of one of God's chosen vessels? Only God! But undoubtedly the sentiment of each person must have been similar to that expressed by A. Gordon when he later wrote:

Farewell, Servant of God! Thy work hath ended, and thy bliss is come..... Enjoy thy eternal repose; God, even thy God, will defend and advance the cause which was so dear to thy heart. Thy mantle fell in thine ascent, and there are those who have taken it up; and men yet unborn will take it up, and they will not cease from their efforts to extend that Kingdom, which is righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, till Messiah, King of Zion, shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied.²

¹R. W. Dale, The Funeral Services, pp.9-10.

²A. Gordon, The Triumphant Career and its Peaceful Close, p.22.

CONCLUSION

Having surveyed the life, work and thought of James, it now becomes my task to summarise certain evaluations which already have been suggested by my research and which will, I trust, help us to appraise James more completely. We shall begin, therefore, by noting some of the more striking weaknesses of his ministry, before considering the many good features which distinguished it and which undoubtedly made it great.

One of the things which has impressed me in the course of this study is the fact that throughout his ministry James was uncompromisingly obstinate in his attitude toward the discoveries of the age which appeared to contradict the Bible. Throughout the century the crucial task of theologians was to decide what concessions, if any, should be made to developments in secular knowledge. Theology, once the queen of the sciences, was faced with a revolt by her former subjects. Geologists, by revealing the extreme antiquity of the planet had destroyed the chronology based upon the evidence of the Old Testament while Biblical criticism tended to undermine the belief in the infallibility of the Bible which was so prevalent in the first half of the century. It must have been difficult, therefore, for Evangelicals like James to decide what attitude should be taken toward these new onslaughts, but as might be expected, most of them refused to abandon their position and thus increased the unnatural tension between science and religion which became conspicuous from 1850 onward, and which still exists to some extent today. Living at

a time when mediation between science and religion was vitally important, James, by not recognising his share of responsibility in this work, missed a great opportunity. In fairness it must be said in his defence, however, that his academic training had not equipped him intellectually for research into the deepest dimensions of these problems, but this did not excuse his dogmatic antagonism against those who held views which differed from his.

Akin to his literalistic approach to the Bible was the exaggerated line of demarcation between the world and the church which he sought to maintain. This is particularly evident in the attitudes which he displayed in the theatre controversy, but it also underlay his general outlook as well. Too often he lived and moved in the dialectical antithesis of "yes" and "no", of "either" and "or", and did not give enough attention to the fact that life does not always express itself in sharp contrasts of "yes and no", "truth and error", "belief and unbelief", "virtue and vice", but in an infinite wealth of transitional forms and intermediate stages.

And to maintain such a marked distinction between the Church and the world almost always increases the likelihood of an individual's religion becoming to some extent legalistic and negativistic; and the religion of James was not altogether free from these tendencies. He placed a great deal of stress upon the Christian's need "to avoid", "to shun", "to flee", "to resist", "to subdue", "to crucify", various things connected with "the world",

"the self", and "the devil", and while I agree that restraint is part of the minister's emphasis, it would seem that James at times overstressed it. By so doing, both he and his people, in their efforts to "keep themselves pure and unspotted from the world", shut themselves off from much which gives dignity and grace to man's earthly existence and much that is capable of elevating the mind and the heart.

This is suggestive of what seems to me to be another weakness of James's religion: an almost morbid pre-occupation with the "self" which often characterised it. His religion was too self-conscious and this robbed him of a great deal of personal happiness and effectiveness. While it is true that he often spoke about Christian joy, it is also true that in his own religious experience there was much which could be described as doleful and sombre. This was undoubtedly due partially to the nervous condition which troubled him for so many years and to the bereavements which disrupted his domestic life, but also to the stern conviction that the Christian must continually avoid the "world", crucify the self, and keep his eyes firmly fixed on eternity. James emphasised these duties so strongly at times that this emphasis tended to foster within the individual a sort of "repression" which was not conducive to a full life in Christ and which in reality obscured the Christian's vision of Christ.

Too much stress upon the "self" in religion always tends to lead to self-centredness and to the minimisation of the value of

the corporate side of religion, and while James would never have wished this, in fact he unconsciously encouraged it. This emphasis also tended to produce an excessive rigorism in conduct and to narrow the interests of the person to those things which were directly concerned with the salvation of the soul and to exclude anything which seemed to be in any degree "unorthodox". It also created an unbalanced subjectivity in the interpretation of the Bible and tended to ignore the relevance and value of the history of the Church to the working out of the Christian life and witness. This pre-occupation with the self also occasionally expressed itself in an exaggerated emotionalism in the religious life, and while this was more characteristic of James's early life than his more mature latter years, nevertheless it was true in his experience, if not in his teaching, all along.

Thus, to sum up, his refusal to adjust his views about the Bible in the light of the discoveries of his age, the exaggerated distinction between the church and the world which he sought to maintain, the insistent individualism which characterised his ministry, all tended to make the person too concerned with saving his own life, too suspicious of and somewhat ungenerous towards the world around him, and too narrow in his choice of means to improve society.

But there were so many good things about the ministry of James that these weaknesses seem insignificant in comparison with them. One of the more prominent of these was the high conception

which he had of the privilege, responsibility and glory of being a Minister of Christ. To be called by God to the Gospel Ministry was the highest and most responsible privilege which James thought could be given to mortal man and consequently he determined that he would be a good steward of his office. To be useful in bringing men to Christ and in guiding them in the Christian life was his greatest joy and in several ways he distinguished himself in this work.

One of the ways he did this was through his writing. Surely few Christian writers in the first half of the nineteenth century were more prolific than James. His pen was continually busy and his works, being widely circulated, found their way into the homes and lives of thousands of people both in this country and abroad. His most famous work The Anxious Inquirer certainly reached a circulation of over a million copies and who can tell how many people were spiritually helped by it? His book for Sunday School teachers, his publications dealing with family life, with the problems of young people, with the Christian graces, faith, love and hope, and with the problems involved in the Congregational system of church polity, were all contributions of worth to his time. These works were not distinguished by originality of thought, but they bore witness to Christ and contained a great deal of good, sound, practical advice which was extremely relevant to the needs of the masses who read them; they must have done an immense amount of good.

But as a pastor he was also obviously successful. No man could have possibly built up the membership of a church from less than fifty to a thousand, and its attendance from less than two hundred to almost two thousand, who was not in many respects efficient as a pastor. It is true that James did not visit his people enough, but this did not mean that he ignored their needs. By his practical lay system of visitation (a scheme quite common at the time among the more progressive Congregational Churches) and through the various functions of the Church Meeting and other organisations, he kept in touch with them and always made it absolutely clear that he was at the disposal of anyone who had special need of him.

But if he was not as constant in personally contacting his people as he might have been, in other areas of his work, he excelled. As a leader he was very competent, perhaps at times too ambitious, but always progressive. Under his leadership his congregation built a new house of worship at a considerable cost, was zealous in erecting several buildings to house new Congregational Churches in and around Birmingham, provided facilities for a vigorous programme of Sunday and day schools for children, and maintained numerous other organisations in the church to improve the educational and spiritual level of the people. These accomplishments were not achieved by drifting, but by hard work, and they are all the more significant when it is remembered that they are but a part of James's labour.

This compelling desire to be useful in the Kingdom of God was also very much in evidence in his preaching. James was first and foremost a preacher and soon proved his exceptional ability. His period of training at the Gosport Academy under Dr. Bogue had not prepared him to be a great scholar, and consequently he had no claim to eminence on this ground, but it had instilled within him an earnest determination to make the conversion and care of souls the principal goal of his labour and to make the Bible the ground of his preaching. And in this sphere of Christian endeavour his record makes it evident that he indeed distinguished himself.

The pre-eminence which James gave to this work naturally affected every other area of his labour. His writing, in many respects, was simply his preaching placed in print. His success with the Carrs Lane Church, if his own opinion is correct, was the direct result of the proclamation of the Gospel, and his work with the various other organisations with which he identified himself, was intended to promote the spreading of the Word of God by one way or another. The preaching of the Cross, therefore, was the compelling force which continually moved the heart of James and which stirred him to give his best to this the greatest of all labour.

With this intention ever before him, James prepared his sermons diligently and always made certain that his own heart was in tune with God before he went into the pulpit to deliver God's message to the people. His task of communication was made easier,

however, by the fact that he was physically suited to preaching in that he had an extraordinarily good voice and a commanding physical presence. But his directness of delivery, his simplicity of style, and his sincerity which enabled him to touch the human heart, also added grace and power to his words and consequently increased his influence.

The greatest tribute which can be given to his preaching in my opinion, however, is the fact that from 1820 to 1859 his congregations from Sunday to Sunday regularly numbered almost two thousand people. Surely this is a tribute to any man and is a good indication of his power. Indeed, taking all into account, I do not think it is unwarranted to classify James as one of the most popular, one of the most noble, one of the greatest preachers of his day.

But James was also extremely influential within his own denomination. Believing that the Congregational system of Church polity most nearly resembled the New Testament pattern and that this system was more conducive to the practical realisation of a "pious" ministry and an enlightened people than any other, he was uncompromising in his convictions concerning it, and unflegging in his efforts to protect it from abuse and to improve it. His part in the Wolverhampton Case and in the controversy with the Church of England clergyman clearly indicates that he was prepared to defend his principles. His books Christian Fellowship and The Christian Professor make it evident that he was deeply concerned with the

problems which arise in the working out of the Congregational system and that his own experience with and understanding of this system made him uniquely qualified to give intelligent guidance regarding it. And while he insisted that every congregation should be independent, he did not advocate or approve of isolationism. Any congregation which isolated itself from the fellowship of churches of life faith and order and from the whole Christian Church, was guilty, he believed, of perverting the Congregational system. Liberty never meant licence to him. The most tangible demonstration of this fact in his own history appears to me to be the fact that he was one of the Founders of the Congregational Union of England and Wales and one of its most faithful supporters.

His work on behalf of Spring Hill College also demonstrates his denominational concern. His book An Earnest Ministry makes it absolutely clear that he recognised the necessity and value of an educated clergy to the effective working out of Congregational principles and his close association with the life and work of Spring Hill proved his determination to do something tangible to insure that this need was at least partially satisfied. His identification of himself with the College and his selfless efforts to enlist support for it undoubtedly made a significant contribution to its financial stability and its reputation.

He must also have been an inspiration and help to many young men in their preparation for the ministry by his work as Chairman of the College's Board of Education, by the scholarship bearing his

name, through his contacts with them in his home, and by many other gestures which proved his interest and concern. Certainly this was true of R. W. Dale. Although Dale was not attracted to James intellectually, who can say what influence James's spirit had on him? This defies an answer, but it is not unreasonable to assume that it was great, otherwise Dale would never have entrusted the decision concerning his going to the Manchester Church to James or paid him the high tribute of writing his biography.

His loyalty to his denomination was further revealed when he offered, on condition that the denomination would also raise a substantial amount, to give the money presented to him at his Jubilee services towards the establishment of the Union's Pastors' Retiring Fund. He thus furnished the incentive for this fund. It came into existence, increased, and became a blessing in the years that followed to scores of retired ministers. This last significant gesture, like the others, showed how eager James was to be useful in his denomination and how successful he was in his efforts.

Though James was a convinced Congregationalist, he was not sectarian in his outlook and realised that the whole Church of Christ was greater than any part of it. As a Christian he had a Catholic spirit which enabled him to have fellowship with anyone who was a disciple of Christ and to work with any organisation which had as its purpose the extension of the Kingdom of God. His Christian fellowship with Drs. Patton and Sprague, Presbyterian

Ministers of New York, with the Rev. J. C. Miller, Rector of St. Martin's Church of England, amply illustrate the fact that he was completely free of the bigotry which characterises the sectarian. His efforts to bring revival, it will be remembered, were not limited to Congregational circles, but were intended to quicken Evangelical Christians of all denominations to the need and to the possibility of a spiritual refreshing. His work with the British and Foreign Bible Society, both in its auxiliary branch in Birmingham and in the national organisation, also suggests his ecumenical spirit. In his appeal on behalf of the million New Testaments for China, his plea was to Christians in general and not to Congregationalists alone. His many sermons and other contributions to the London Missionary Society were clearly nonsectarian in their emphasis. And his call for one hundred missionaries for China in the last year of his life also suggests that he loved the Universal Church better than his own branch of it.

But this Catholic Spirit was best expressed, in my opinion, by his work in the formation of the Evangelical Alliance, and while this organisation never accomplished what he hoped it would, the fact that he was one of the most prominent leaders in its formation and that he supported it to the end is a good commentary on the breadth of his Christianity and proves that his ecumenical spirit was real and vital.

But underlying all these aspects of his ministry was the personal faith of the man. His work as an author, pastor, preacher,

denominationalist, and for the whole Christian Church, was the result of his belief in and allegiance to Jesus Christ. Christ was a living reality to James, and His principles and promises were held in such high regard by him and were so completely a part of his faith and action that those who knew him best were most convinced that the Image of God had been more nearly perfected in his character than in most men. In fact, everyone who knew him witnessed to his goodness and affirmed that his sincerity and faith were indisputable. There was, of course, a certain amount of sheer "natural" goodness in his disposition, but I am convinced that it was his religious conviction which inspired and helped his labour. And apart from this I know of no other explanation of his achievements.

Taking all into consideration, therefore, I think it is true to say that James was one of the most notable Congregational Ministers who ever lived and one of the most outstanding evangelicals in the last century. His eminent leadership and service was appreciated in his own day and we too must acknowledge it. However, we cannot measure it, because even the most detailed research into the written records of a man's life cannot equip us to discover the depths and complexities of his personality or to trace the fulness of his influence in all the living consequences of his actions, his prayers, and his words. But we can recognise the fact that the Spirit of God worked in his life and rest content in the certainty that his work and influence had eternal significance. Only God,

who will reward all men according to their works, can truly estimate a man's work, but we have seen enough evidence of the fruits of the Spirit in James to thank God for this evidence of Himself and for this example of such a faithful follower of Jesus. May God help those of us who are just beginning our ministry to remember the examples of stalwart men like James, to profit from their mistakes, to imitate their good qualities, and to give ourselves, as they did, to that Kingdom which shall one day completely triumph!

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APPENDIX

THE 1853 DECLARATION OF FAITH AND ORDER

The Congregational Churches in England and Wales, frequently called Independents, hold the following Doctrines, as of Divine authority, and as the foundation of christian faith and practice.

They are also formed and governed according to the principles hereinafter stated.

PRINCIPLES OF RELIGION

I. The Scriptures of the Old Testament, as received by the Jews, and the books of the New Testament, as received by the Primitive Christians from the Evangelists and Apostles, Congregational Churches believe to be divinely inspired, and of supreme authority. These writings, in the languages in which they were originally composed, are to be consulted, by the aids of sound criticism, as a final appeal in all controversies; but the common version they consider to be adequate to the ordinary purposes of Christian instruction and edification.

II. They believe in one God, essentially wise, holy, just, and good; eternal, infinite, and immutable, in all natural and moral perfections; the Creator, Supporter, and Governor of all beings, and of all things.

III. They believe that God is revealed in the Scriptures, as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and that to each are attributed the same divine properties and perfections. The doctrine of the Divine existence, as above stated, we cordially believe without attempting fully to explain.

IV. They believe that man was created after the divine image, sinless, and in his kind perfect.

V. They believe that the first man disobeyed the divine command, fell from his state of innocence and purity, and involved all his posterity in the consequences of that fall.

VI. They believe that therefore all mankind are born in sin, and that a fatal inclination to moral evil, utterly incurable by human means, is inherent in every descendent of Adam.

VII. They believe that God having, before the foundation of the world, designed to redeem fallen man, made disclosures of his mercy, which were the grounds of faith and hope from the earliest ages.

VIII. They believe that God revealed more fully to Abraham the covenant of his grace; and, having promised that from his descendents should arise the Deliverer and Redeemer of mankind, set that Patriarch and his posterity apart, as a race specially favoured and separated to his service; a peculiar church, formed and carefully preserved, under the divine sanction and government, until the birth of the promised Messiah.

IX. They believe that, in the fullness of the time, the Son of God was manifested in the flesh, being born of the Virgin Mary, but conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit; and that our Lord Jesus Christ was both the Son of man and the Son of God, partaking fully and truly of human nature, though without sin, equal with the Father, and 'the express image of his person'.

X. They believe that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, revealed, either personally in his own ministry, or by the Holy Spirit in the ministry of his apostles, the whole mind of God for our salvation; and that by his obedience to the divine law while he lived, and by his sufferings unto death, he meritoriously 'obtained eternal redemption for us'; having thereby vindicated and illustrated divine justice, 'magnified the law', and 'brought in everlasting righteousness'.

XI. They believe that, after his death and resurrection, he ascended up into heaven, where, as the Mediator, he 'ever liveth' to rule over all, and to 'make intercession for them that come unto God by him'.

XII. They believe that the Holy Spirit is given in consequence of Christ's mediation, to quicken and renew the hearts of men; and that his influence is indispensably necessary to bring a sinner to true repentance, to produce saving faith, to regenerate the heart, and to perfect our sanctification.

XIII. They believe that we are justified through faith in Christ; as 'the Lord our righteousness', and not 'by the works of the Law'.

XIV. They believe that all who will be saved were the objects of God's eternal and electing love, and were given by an act of divine sovereignty to the Son of God; which in no way interferes with the system of means, nor with the grounds of human responsibility, being wholly unrevealed as to its objects, and therefore incapable of becoming a rule of human duty.

XV. They believe that the Scriptures teach the final perseverance of all true believers to a state of eternal blessedness; which they are appointed to obtain through constant faith in Christ, and uniform obedience to his commands.

XVI. They believe that a holy life will be the necessary effect of a true faith, and that good works are the certain fruits of a vital union to Christ.

XVII. They believe that the sanctification of true Christians, or their growth in the graces of the Spirit, and meetness for heaven, is gradually carried on through the whole period, during which it pleases God to continue them in the present life; and that, at death, their souls, perfectly freed from all remains of evil, are immediately received into the presence of Christ.

XVIII. They believe in the perpetual obligation of Baptism, and the Lord's Supper: the former to be administered to all converts to Christianity and their children, by the application of water to the subject, 'in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost'; and the latter to be celebrated by the Christian churches as a token of faith in the Saviour, and of brotherly love.

XIX. They believe that Christ will finally come to judge the whole human race according to their works; and that the bodies of the dead will be raised again; and that as the Supreme Judge, he will divide the righteous from the wicked, will receive the righteous into 'life everlasting', but send away the wicked into 'everlasting punishment'.

XX. They believe that Jesus Christ directed his followers to live together in christian fellowship, and to maintain the communion of saints; and that, for this purpose, they are jointly to observe all divine ordinances, and maintain that church-order and discipline which is either expressly enjoined by inspired institution, or sanctioned by the undoubted example of the apostles and of apostolic churches.

PRINCIPLES OF CHURCH-ORDER AND DISCIPLINE

I. The Congregational Churches hold it to be the will of Christ that true believers should voluntarily assemble together to observe religious ordinances, to promote mutual edification and holiness, to perpetuate and propagate the gospel in the world, and to advance the glory and worship of God, through Jesus Christ; and that each Society of believers, having these objects in view in its formation, is properly a Christian church.

II. They believe that the New Testament contains, either in the form of express statute, or in the example and practice of apostles and apostolic churches, all the articles of faith necessary to be believed, and all the principles of order and discipline requisite for constituting and governing christian societies; and that human traditions, fathers and councils, canons and creeds, possess no authority over the faith and practice of Christians.

III. They acknowledge Christ as the only Head of the church, and the officers of each church, under him, as ordained to administer his laws impartially to all; and their only appeal, in all questions touching their religious faith and practice, is to the Sacred Scriptures.

IV. They believe that the New Testament authorises every christian church to elect its own officers, to manage all its own affairs, and to stand independent of, and irresponsible to, all authority, saving that only of the supreme and divine Head of the church, the Lord Jesus Christ.

V. They believe that the only officers placed by the apostles over individual churches, are the bishops or pastors, and the deacons; the number of these being dependent upon the numbers of the church; and that to these, as the officers of the church, is committed respectively the administration of its spiritual and temporal concerns; - subject, however, to the approbation of the church.

VI. They believe that no persons should be received as members of christian churches, but such as make a credible profession of Christianity, are living according to its precepts, and attest a willingness to be subject to its discipline; and none should be excluded from the fellowship of the church, but such as deny the faith of Christ, violate his laws, or refuse to submit themselves to the discipline which the word of God enforces.

VII. The power of admission into any christian church and rejection from it, they believe to be vested in the church itself, and to be exercised only through the medium of its own officers.

VIII. They believe that christian churches should stately meet for celebration of public worship, for the observance of the Lord's Supper, and for the sanctification of the first day of the week.

IX. They believe that the power of a christian church is purely spiritual, and should in no way be corrupted by union with temporal or civil power.

X. They believe that it is the duty of christian churches to hold communion with each other, to entertain an enlarged affection for each other, as members of the same body, and to co-operate for the promotion of the christian cause; but that no church, nor union of churches, has any right or power to interfere with the faith or discipline of any other church, further than to separate from such as, in faith or practice, depart from the gospel of Christ.

XI. They believe that it is the privilege and duty of every church to call forth such of its members as may appear to be qualified, by the Holy Spirit, to sustain the office of the ministry: and that christian churches unitedly ought to consider the maintenance of the christian ministry, in an adequate degree of learning, as one of its especial cares; that the cause of the gospel may be both honourably sustained, and constantly promoted.

XII. They believe that church officers, whether bishops or deacons, should be chosen by the free voice of the church, but that their dedication to the duties of their office should take place with special prayer, and by solemn designation, to which most of the churches add the imposition of hands by those already in office.

XIII. They believe that the fellowship of every christian church should be so liberal as to admit to communion in the Lord's Supper, all whose faith and godliness are, on the whole, undoubted, though conscientiously differing in points of minor importance; and that this outward sign of fraternity in Christ should be co-extensive with the fraternity itself, though without involving any compliances which conscience would deem to be sinful.