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Together in the Work of the Lord

in Shropshire, Bath and Madagascar

Congregational Studies
Conference 1997

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Robert Pickles, Philip Swann, Noel Gibberd

Congregational Studies Conference Papers 1997

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The papers are printed in the order in which they were given at the Conference; as usual each contributor is entirely responsible for the views expressed in his paper.

Robert Pickles is the minister of Highley Evangelical Church, Shropshire, and the Principal of the Independent Theological Academy, Wolverhampton.

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Foreword

The following papers were delivered at the Congregational Studies Conference held at Westminster Chapel, London, on 15 March 1997.

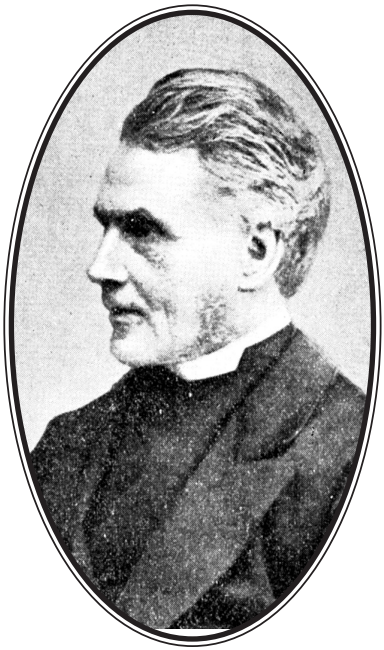
"No history," wrote JC Ryle, "ought to receive so much attention as the past and future history of the Church of Christ. The rise and fall of worldly empires are events of comparatively small importance in the sight of God."

The papers by Philip Swann and Noel Gibbard both underline the effectiveness of the Bible in advancing the work of God. At Argyle Chapel, Bath, William Jay, for 62 years, faithfully preached the Word of God, which resulted in remarkable growth. His biblical ministry extended far beyond Bath and resulted in Gospel advancement worldwide. The same was true of the work in Madagascar. At great cost the Scriptures were translated into Malagasy, and those same Scriptures, in times of great persecution, enabled the believers to show courage, patience and wisdom and remain faithful to their Saviour. The paper by Robert Pickles also shows that where the Scriptures are honoured and preached, the Gospel advances, and where they are neglected the work goes into decline.

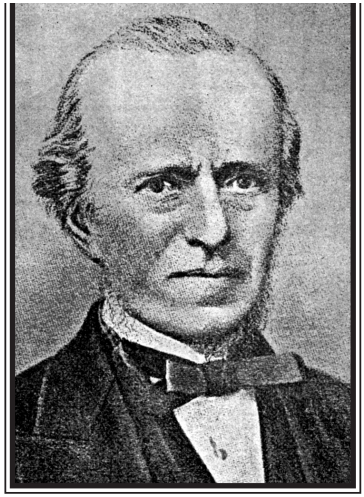
Surely these are lessons we need to heed in our own day.

Derek Swann

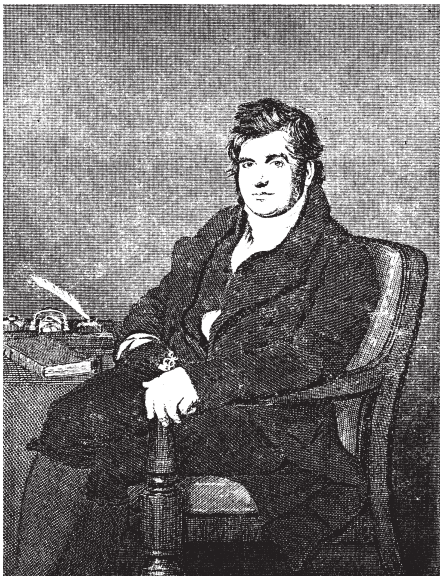
Cardiff



Rev. David Daniel Evans, author of A Sketch of the History, Condition and Work of the Congregational Churches in the County of Salop, published in 1872, and Rev. Ernest Elliot, editor of A History of Congregationalism in Shropshire, published in 1898. Both men were ministers of Stoneway Chapel Congregational Church in Bridgnorth.

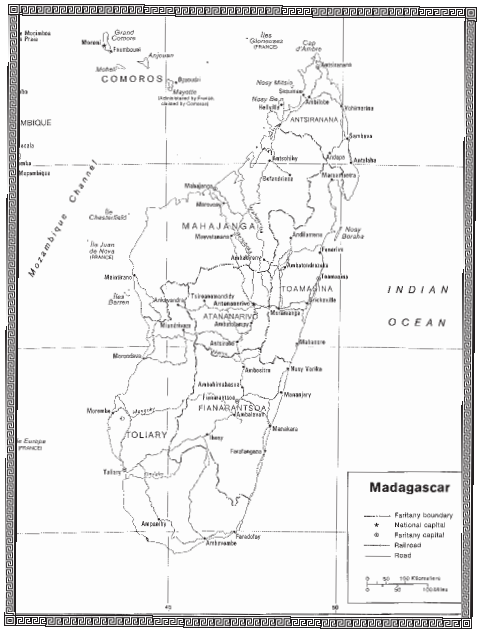


Thomas Barnes, Liberal MP for Bolton 1852–57 and 1861–68, magistrate and High Sheriff of Denbighshire, built the Quinta Congregational Chapel in 1858 and was treasurer of the Shropshire Congregational Union from 1861 to 1885.



William Jay of Bath at the age of 46, minister of Argyle Chapel, Bath, from 1791 to 1853.

Map of modern Madagascar.



Shropshire

Details of church buildings still in existence can be found (with exact map grid references) in Non-Conformist Chapels and Meeting Houses: Shropshire and Staffordshire, extracted from An Inventory of Nonconformist Chapels and Meeting Houses in Central England prepared by the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England (HMSO, 1986).

The Rise and Fall of the Shropshire Congregational Union (and its Rebirth?)

Robert Pickles

The history of the *Shropshire Congregational Union* is neither spectacular nor unusual.[1] So, then, why even highlight this association of congregational churches on such an occasion as this?

First, lectures are often given on spectacular subjects like a revival or an important person. However, at a time when the extraordinary is absent, it is of great use to study a so-called unimportant example because it is more applicable than the spectacular. The spectacular may give vision but the ordinary helps practically.

Second, there are three competent guides to the history of the Shropshire Congregational Union, or the *Shropshire Association of Independent Ministers and Churches* as it was originally known. Of particular use has been the work of a predecessor of mine in Bridgnorth, Rev. Ernest Elliot,[2] who wrote *A History of Congregationalism in Shropshire* in 1898.[3] The second guide is Elliot's predecessor at Bridgnorth, DD Evans, who in 1872 wrote *Congregationalism in Shropshire: A Sketch of the History, Condition and Work of the Congregational Churches of the County of Salop*. The third guide for this work is *"One Hundred and Fifty Years": A Brief Survey of the Work of Shropshire Congregational Union from its formation in 1796 to 1946* written by Alfred Clegg. The third guide is what it declares itself to be, a brief survey. It was produced by the Shropshire Congregational Union and never published to the same standard as the other two histories.

Third, it will become obvious that many of the lessons which this history makes apparent are applicable to contemporary evangelical Congregationalism.

Where did the idea of Associating come from?

The writers of the *Savoy Declaration* in 1658 state in *The Institution of Churches and the order Appointed in them by Jesus Christ*, that,

> 25. As all churches and all the members are bound to pray continually for the good or prosperity of all the churches of Christ in all places, and upon all occasions to further it: [every one within the bounds of their places and callings, in the exercise of their gifts and graces]. So the churches themselves [when planted by the providence of God, so as they may have opportunity and

> advantage for it] *ought to hold communion amongst themselves for their peace, increase of love and mutual edification*.
>
> 26. In cases of difficulties or differences, either in point of doctrine or administrations, wherein either the churches in general are concerned, or any one church in their peace, union and edification, or any member or members of any church are injured in, or by any proceedings in censures (*disciplining of a member*), not agreeable to truth and order: *it is according to the mind of Christ, that many churches holding communion together, do by their messengers meet in synod or council, to consider and give their advice in, or about that matter of difference, to be reported to all churches concerned.* Howbeit that these synods so assembled are not entrusted with any church power, properly so called, or with any jurisdiction over the churches themselves, to exercise any censures, either over any churches or persons, or to impose their determinations on churches or officers.[4]

Although Synods were only occasional meetings in their classical form, the use of them implies the necessity of Associations or Unions of Churches. Thus by 1800 most counties had their own unions. This development enabled the establishment of the Congregational Union of England and Wales in 1831. Some concern was expressed over this development, but Shropshire was amongst those unions which were enthusiastic for this national development.[5] Indeed RW Dale in his *Manual of Congregational Principles*, recently republished, states his view that associating should not hinder the sovereignty of the local church. Colleges, missionary societies and the support of smaller churches are the provenance of such a body. "These associations are perfectly voluntary", Dale comments,[6] and later continues,

> It is a fundamental principle with all Unions that they have no kind of control over the churches associated with them.[7]

In Dale's time the Unions were simply confederacies of independent churches; however the picture gradually changes until the establishment of the *Congregational Church of England and Wales* in 1966.

The Early History of the Congregationalism in Shropshire

These comments may only be centred around the individual churches rather than the Association which was not founded until 1796.[8] In Shrewsbury in 1407 a priest by the name of William Thorpe was disciplined as a follower of Wyclif.[9] Elliot believed that a dissenting congregation could have existed from this point or resulted from the ejection of Julines Herring[10] who was removed from his lectureship at St Alkmund's, Shrewsbury in the early 1600s.[11] In the 1660s there was a Baptist/Congregational Church which eventually

amalgamated with the Presbyterian Church in 1741. Mr Job Orton became the minister of this amalgamated fellowship until 1765.[12] It is anachronistic to view these denominational titles in the modern sense but it is the simplest way to describe them. The congregation divided over the successor to Job Orton and the Swan Hill Congregation was formed in 1767 with a very individual inscription on the building.[13] It is interesting to note that the doctrine and practice of church government was a very confused issue at this time. Many Congregational Churches had elders as per John Owen's views stated in his *True Nature of a Gospel Church.*[14] Owen's view could be interpreted as independent Presbyterianism. It is an interesting area of study to see the development away from this practice to the founding of the Congregational Union in 1831 where only deacons are mentioned as church leaders.[15]

The congregation at Oswestry began at Sweeney, two miles south of Oswestry. Rowland Nevet was ejected from Oswestry in 1662 and the work in both places developed. Philip Henry, father of Matthew the Bible Commentator, was a close friend of Nevet.[16] James Owen, Nevet's successor, had an Academy for educating ministerial candidates at Oswestry.[17]

Philip Henry is seen as the founding pastor of Whitchurch by Elliot.[18] Although the church was a Presbyterian Church, as a result of a secession over a heterodox minister it became a Congregational Church in 1797[19] (hence there is not a minister from this important church at the founding of the Association). Philip Henry's influence also extended to the development of the church in Market Drayton which similarly traces its history to the Ejection.[20] Whixall[21] and Prees[22] churches could likewise claim an illustrious past. The influence of both Philip and Matthew Henry in North Shropshire receives regular mention in Elliot at this formative time.

Bridgnorth, too, had links with an eminent minister. Richard Baxter was curate at St Leonard's between 1640–41. His successor Andrew Tristam was ejected in 1662 and became the pastor of the Congregational Church which would eventually call Elliot in the nineteenth century.

The history of dissent in Wem began with William Glover in 1558.[23] Again the influence of the Henrys is evident. There were two churches in Wem which were part of the Association until this century. One was Congregational; the other belonged to the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion and founded in 1777.[24]

The church in Ludlow was also founded as result of the Ejection, although it may be argued that the foundation goes back to 1651.[25] This church had many restarts and did not get established until the years following 1737.[26]

New churches were commenced after the Ejection of 1662 and before the founding of the Association. The church at Newport was started in 1768 and

had a chapel built in 1792.[27] Ellesmere had some kind of a meeting from 1786. This work was supported first by the students of the Oswestry Academy and later by the students of Wrexham Academy. In 1812 the Shropshire Association provided a pastor/evangelist for the church.

The Founding of the Association

A meeting was held for ministers in Shropshire and other West Midlands counties in 1786.[28] *The Shropshire Association of Independent Ministers* was founded in 1796, *and churches* being added later.[29] The founding ministers were: Rev. Peter Edwards, Wem, Moderator; Rev. John Whitridge, Oswestry, Secretary; Rev. Samuel Lucas, Shrewsbury; Rev. John Wilson, Market Drayton. Ludlow, Newport, Bridgnorth, Noble Street at Wem and Whitchurch churches existed but were not in the Association at the inception. Evans says, "If there was a minister in charge of these churches he was not evangelical."[30] Thus Evans points out that the Association was essentially evangelical in its origin, as well as evangelistic in its purpose. Clegg comments that the first financial entry of the Union was to pay for a representative to attend a meeting of the newly formed London Missionary Society founded in 1795.[31] Elliot adds that they held "fixed times of prayer" all over the county for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.[32]

At the founding of the Association the chief aim was evangelistic: the supply of men to evangelise the growing population. By the end of the period it had also became the support of small churches in needy areas.[33]

In the years 1796–1846 rapid expansion occurred: 1800 Prees, Lyth Hill, Wollerton; 1805 Wistanswick; 1806 Dorrington; 1807 Bishop's Castle; 1818 Bethel at Sychtyn; 1819 Broughall; 1821 Clive; 1822 Pant; 1826 Dovaston, Forden; 1827 Marton; 1830 Nantmawr, Hadnall; 1831 Grimpo, Maesbury, Preeshenlle; 1833 Ruyton; 1843 Frankton, Wilcot, Bayston Hill; 1836 Pontesbury, Longden; 1837 Broseley; 1838 Ollerton; 1843 Castle Gate at Shrewsbury which later moved to Coton Hill, Dogpole at Shrewsbury [Welsh], Oakengates; 1844 Whittington; 1845 Melverley, Carneddau (Trefonen). A grand total of forty one churches in fifty years. Many of these churches developed from preaching stations or cottage meetings. In 1839 it was reported that there numbered more than 50 across the county.[34] The report concluded with the comment,

> A wide field is yet unoccupied, and there are multitudes in Shropshire living and dying without a knowledge of salvation.[35]

The development of the Association during this period was not without its problems. There were great problems with chapel debts. So many chapels had sprung up but were not being paid for. The Association funds were only

gained from subscriptions and there was not enough money to meet the needs. One result was that *aided* churches had to start sending their accounts to the Association annually if they wished to receive further funds.[36] By 1848 the annual report states that there were 28 pastors to 41 churches.

The Zenith of the Union 1846–1946

Elliot reports that during the period 1846–1896 the Association grew by another eight churches.[37] He also records that there were several closures; 1874 Noble Street in Wem; Agden and Coton had been rented to the Primitive Methodists; Bomere Heath was rented to the Calvinistic Methodists. Some churches were also transferred to the North Wales Union because, though planted by the Association, they were in Wales.

Finance remained a problem, but the person of Thomas Barnes, MP, JP,[38] who built the Quinta Church at Weston Rhyn near Oswestry, was on hand to rectify the problem. Not only was he very generous to the Association but he also was capable of getting others to give to this work.[39]

In 1876 the Cheshire Congregational Union promised fifty pounds a year for the support of ministers' stipends in Shropshire for three years. Just as this money came to an end, the newly founded *Church Aid and Home Missionary Society* came to the rescue.[40]

At Dovaston in 1882 Evangelical Services were held for two weeks and "more than twenty found peace and many backsliders were restored".[41]

At the Centenary Celebrations in 1896, held in the Non-conformist Gothic church building in which the Abbey Foregate Congregational Church, Shrewsbury, met, it was decided: to increase all ministers' minimum stipends to the princely sum of eighty pounds;[42] to ask our guide through this first hundred years to write *Congregationalism in Shropshire* and to become secretary of the Union; and to found a forward movement for the next millennium.[43]

The Dorrington church was founded in a house or cottage in 1896 and survived until 1970. Melverley was founded in 1896. At the turn of the century the church at Wellington was re-opened.[44] It was later known as Union Free Church when the Baptists amalgamated with it after 1918. In the year 1901 the church at All Stretton was recognised. The inauguration of Pant Congregational Church took place in 1906.

The name of the Association was changed from the *Shropshire Association of Independent Ministers and Churches* to the *Shropshire Congregational Union* in 1906. The Shropshire Congregational Union was incorporated in 1910.[45]

In 1919 the scheme to divide the country into nine provinces each comprising three or more unions was accepted. In each of these provinces there was a Moderator. Moderators were to take some of the pastoral

responsibility from the General Secretaries. They were to act as a *Pastor Pastorum* or as a pastor to the pastors. They had the power to approve appointments to the ministry in churches which received funds from the Church Aid and Central Fund Committees.[46] The Provinces were as soon as possible to become administrative areas. This system was much maligned by those who considered the foundation of the Congregational Church of England and Wales a travesty of Congregational polity—the moderators were accounted as Congregational Bishops, as someone commented at the May Assembly of the Congregational Union, even in 1920.[47] However, if the office had simply remained as a pastor to the pastors then it would have been very helpful. It was simply recognising the role that senior ministers had always played. The Moderators were, however, funded in this role rather than doing it in their spare time. The first Moderator, Lincoln Jones,[48] served from 1919–1939 when he was succeeded by John Phillips.[49] These Moderators served the West Midlands as an area. From 1954–1969 the moderator was William J Coggan.[50]

What were the functions of the Shropshire Congregational Union at its height? There were two regular Assemblies each year. Interestingly, delegates' travelling expenses were paid by the Union and a bus timetable was provided. They provided a list of preachers who were available to the churches. This gradually became formal and exclusively Congregational. Then there were the committees (Congregationalists have always had a plethora of committees) covering every area of church life: for example, Youth, Missionary, Forward Movement, Women.

There were also special facilities for ministers in Shropshire. First, the Ministers' Rest. This was in picturesque Church Stretton. The house had been donated for ministers and their families to get a holiday.[51] Second, the ministers' circulating library and also the "Judge" Library Fund.

On the financial side the Shropshire Union always had given loans and grants. As Elliot had seen, this became the priority of the Union. The Shropshire Union financial committee notes make for interesting reading. This was separated from the Executive Committee of Shropshire Congregational Union. There was a fund for ministers, for widows of ministers, for widows of church members and for orphans.

The Shropshire Congregational Union Magazine was founded in 1866 but is not mentioned until 1886. Clegg suggests it could have been in difficulties during this period. It continued from 1886 onwards into the 1960s. However, there was no more information on this matter.[52]

After 1918 the Union was divided up into districts: Eastern, Northern, Shrewsbury and Oswestry. The Assemblies moved around these districts in

turn. They met in April and September annually. A typical programme between the wars was:

10.45 Arrive—Refreshments
Morning Devotions
Lunch
Afternoon—Assembly meeting
Tea
Evening Service

Mayors or other civic dignitaries were often invited to the opening meeting of these Assemblies.[53] Two ladies were called to the Chair of the Union: Mrs MW Minsull in 1928 and Miss Lucy Ward in 1948.[54] Another notable figure was C Sylvester Horne who spent his formative years in the Newport Congregational Church and is buried at Church Stretton.[55] Clegg records the influence of laymen increasing in the period 1896–1946.

Times of spiritual refreshing came in 1936 through the *Inner Mission* in the churches. The ministers' fraternal was much affected as ministers confessed their faults.[56]

The Union continued in its regular fashion. Although the seeds of decline were present, there was as yet no clear indication of this. It appears like a game of cricket on a warm summer afternoon before a flash storm. No one notices because they are all enjoying the game too much. In the end, the heavy rain arrives and no one is ready.

The Decline of the Union 1946–1972

In 1946 the *Shropshire Congregational Union* celebrated 150 years of its existence. There were 51 churches in the Union at this time. Clegg commented in 1946,

> We are no longer "Independent" but Congregationalists, "bound in the bundle of the Christian life with one another and with the Lord our God."[57]

In 1959 the *Executive Report* reported the following aims in regard to lay preachers of the Shropshire Union.[58]

1. That our Lay-Preachers be members of a Congregational Church.
2. That they be recommended by their church.
3. That a report be received regarding their conduct of worship.
4. That their names be considered by the Executive for recommendation to the Union.
5. That a Recognition Service be arranged at their home church and attended by the Commissioner for the County.

It is possible to refer to constant closures, openings and re-openings throughout the Union's/Association's history, for example, at Wellington.

However from the 1950s they began. The list reads like an obituary: Market Drayton (1949); Oakengates (1950); Ollerton (1951); Chine (1952); Hadnall (1954); Broad Oak, Bridgnorth (1962); Ludlow (1962); Broseley (1967); Langdon Common (1969); Dorrington (1970); Melveley (1971). From 1972, when it became the responsibility of the *United Reformed Church:* Bishops Castle (1976); Coton (1976); Leominster (1978); Madeley (1985); Maesbury (1985).

So What of the Shropshire Congregational Union Now?

The direct successor to the union is now the Shropshire District of the West Midlands Province of the United Reformed Church. The following churches are still in existence: Bridgnorth (united with the Methodists); All Stretton (united with the Church of England); Church Stretton; Dovaston; Wilcot [Nesscliffe]; Ruyton XI Towns; Weirbrook; Gobowen [Preeshenlle and Welsh Frankton]; Oakengates (united with the Methodists); Wellington (united with the Baptists); Oswestry (united with the Presbyterian Church of Wales); Pant; Newport; Shrewsbury; North Shropshire Group [Wem (united with the Methodists), Whitchurch, Whixall, Prees, Wistanswick, Wollerton]. A total of 22 Churches with 821 Members and 10 Ministers (2 part time, 2 Methodists, 1 Vacancy) according to the *United Reformed Church Year Book* for 1996.

There are three churches that are part of the *Congregational Federation*. Minsterley and Pontesbury have been a joint pastorate for more than 100 years.[59] Shrewsbury Swan Hill is the oldest Congregational church in the town. Shrewsbury has a minister; Minsterley and Pontesbury are seeking a minister.

There are three churches which are part of *An Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches:* Quinta, Bridgnorth and Highley. Bridgnorth is seeking a minister. Quinta and Highley have ministers but are small causes. Bridgnorth and Highley were not part of the Shropshire Union. Therefore out of 51 churches in 1946 only 26 churches remain in 1996.

The Shropshire Congregational Union has been for various reasons reduced to this sorry account of closure and division. A recent lecture, *Why did the English stop going to Church?*[60] may provide some answers. In this lecture Watts argues (by comparing American church culture with British) that the English stopped going to church because the church stopped believing the Bible and preaching hell. He argues in his last paragraph that Spurgeon's comments in the Downgrade Controversy were absolutely correct.[61]

Interestingly, there has been a development amongst independent evangelical churches in Shropshire. The *Shropshire Evangelical Churches*

originally comprised Wem Baptist Church, who worship in the former United Reformed Church chapel; Park Evangelical Church at Whitchurch; Grange Free Church at Shrewsbury; (these first three all belong to the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches founded in 1922) and Shrewsbury Evangelical Church.[62] It is interesting to note that these churches are close descendants of the 1796 founding churches. It is also important to note that this was first of all an association of ministers. History has also repeated itself in that the ministers of these churches also belong to a fraternal which meets at Cloverley Hall Conference Centre. Ministers from Staffordshire, Cheshire and the West Midlands attend these meetings. To the original Shropshire Evangelical Churches have been added Bridgnorth and the Quinta mentioned above. Perhaps this is a re-birth if the original Association was only for evangelical ministers as Evans' comment suggests. Prophecy is not a gift this lecturer would wish to claim in this matter.

Reflections

1. Not all the early churches were Congregational. Certainly Oswestry[63] and Bridgnorth had Presbyterian leanings. Minsterley was a joint Baptist work until 1831.[64] Wellington was refounded in 1898 and after 1918 acted as a joint Baptist and Congregational Church or a *Union Church* as they were named.[65] We must be careful in our fellowship not to stand in the way of or to be critical of churches that are not perfect Congregational churches yet. We need to stress again to Baptists who do not separate from the rest of the church over the issue of baptism that they are essentially congregational and attempt to open their minds to the other side of the story.
2. For this lecturer Congregationalism is the *via media* of English evangelicalism. It is necessary for us to re-take the ground that is traditionally ours. If a church can accept the Congregational understanding of the ministry of the Members' Meeting and can tolerate other baptismal views, then what hinders us recognising our brethren? On the other hand we have the freedom without compromise to accept all evangelicals. Martyn Lloyd-Jones' dream of evangelical unity, which he outlined many times, can be achieved by a Congregational methodology.[66] Our fathers and mothers in the faith understood these ideas. At the same time let us learn from their mistakes regarding the issue of a clearly evangelical statement of faith, and the need to remain faithful to those doctrines.

3. The need for the development of the regionalisation already espoused by the Main Committee of an EFCC. This matter needs setting before the churches in the locality.
4. Local churches need to be part of local synods or assemblies where they can meet together and deal with matters of mutual concern. The members of churches need to be involved and not just the ministers. History shows that the ministers need to lead in this, then the people will follow. An appeal for the development of a system of synods has been made before in these lectures.[67]
5. Our fellowship has invested for many years in the ministry of men in the local churches. This is an understanding that we need to preserve. We need to develop the practice of using assistantships which not only serve the larger churches but also plant new ones. It is the hope of some of the ministers that we may be able to provide two pastor-evangelists for the millennium to plant such churches.

References

1 GF Nuttall, "Assembly and Association in Dissent 1689–1831", in *Councils and Assemblies,* Studies in Church History ,VII, eds., GJ Cumming & D Baker (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1971), p. 295. Dr Nuttall does not in any way treat the subject of the Shropshire Association with contempt; it was simply just one among many others.

2 EE Elliot refers in *A History of Congregationalism in Shropshire,* (Oswestry, Caxton Press, 1898), pp. 12–13, to the importance of church planting and that the Union should not simply be concerned with buildings. He put his own views into practice by encouraging the foundation of *People's Hall Independent Evangelical Church* in 1903 by Francis B Foxall and others. Elliot based his work on one of his predecessors in Bridgnorth who was also Secretary of *The Salop Association of Independent Ministers and Churches:* Rev. DD Evans' *Congregationalism in Shropshire: A Sketch of the History, Condition and Work of the Congregational Churches of the County of Salop,* (Bridgnorth, Evans, 1872).

3 Congregational Year Book (from here CYB), 1959, 418–419. Ernest Elliot ATS, 19/9/1869—15/11/1958. He was born in Wolverhampton and attended grammar school there. He studied at Hackney College from 1889–1894. He was minister at Bridgnorth 1894–1905, then moved to Sheerness and later Dartmouth. He was 9 years at Hope and Denton. He remained in the Manchester area (Besseso'th'Barn 1925–33; Stretford 1934–37; Eccles 1941–44) until his retirement at the age of 75.

4 GT Booth, *Evangelical and Congregational* (Beverley, An Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches, 1981), pp. 91–92 (italics mine)

5 A Peel, *"These Hundred Years", A Centenary History of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, 1831–1931,* (London, Independent Press, 1931), p. 49

6 RW Dale, *A Manual of Congregational Principles,* ed., DL James, (Weston Rhyn, Quinta Press, reprint 1996, first published 1884), pp. 173–176. It is significant to quote Dale who had such influence in Shropshire and surrounding counties, as did his predecessor John Angell James, both of whom served at Carr's Lane, Birmingham.

7 Ibid. Dale, p. 174

8 Ibid. Evans, p. 3. He sees Job Orton's secession as the origin of the first Congregational Church, but mentions the earlier secession at St Alkmund's. However Clegg claims that Oswestry has that privilege.

9 Wyclif has been claimed as a Proto-Congregationalist by some of the historians of the last century. However the greatest authorities of the twentieth century, Dr Geoffrey

Nuttall and Dr Tudur Jones, do not comment on the issue, preferring to see an origin in the periods 1640–1660 and 1560 respectively.

10 Ibid. Elliot, p. 15

11 Ibid. Elliot, p. 16. After the ejection Herring moved to Wrenbury near Wem and finally moved to Holland where he became the minister of the English Presbyterian Church in Amsterdam in 1637. He died there in 1644, aged 62.

12 Job Orton was trained at Dr Doddridge's Academy at Northampton and was originally Doddridge's appointed successor. He retired from the ministry due to ill-health but was involved in settling Robert Gentleman as his successor at Swan Hill, although he had already moved to Kidderminster, where he died in 1783.

13 This building was erected in the year 1767,
For the public worship of God,
And in the defence of the right of majorities
in Protestant Dissenting Congregations
To choose their own ministers

14 John Owen, *Works,* 16 volumes (Edinburgh, Banner of Truth Trust, 1968 reprint), "True Nature of a Gospel Church", Chapter 8, "The Nature of Church Polity or Rule, with the Duty of Elders", 16:130–143. This book was published posthumously in 1689.

15 W Walker, *Creeds and Platforms of Congregationalism, (*Boston, Massachusetts, Pilgrim Press, 1960), p. 552

16 Ibid. Elliot, p. 32

17 The Academies developed for the training of ministers when the universities were closed to them. They also developed along other lines by training the sons of the Non-conformist middle classes. The history of the academies has been fully documented in *The Making of Modern Education*, Dr W Ashley-Smith (London, Independent Press), p. 19. Elliot comments on the interesting point that James Owen was training Presbyterian ordinands (Elliot, p. 34). It is interesting to note that the Oswestry, Wem (Elliot, p. 62) and Whitchurch (Elliot, p. 88) congregations were influenced by the Presbyterianism of Philip and Matthew Henry.

18 Ibid. Elliot, p. 88

19 Ibid. Elliot, p. 90

20 Ibid. Elliot, p. 115

21 Ibid. Elliot, p. 130

22 Ibid. Elliot, p. 149

23 Ibid. Elliot, p. 60. His brother was burned at the stake in Coventry in 1555.

24 Ibid. Elliot, p. 66. Rowland Hill preached regularly here.

25 Ibid. Elliot, p. 97

26 Ibid. Elliot, p. 100

27 DD Evans, *Congregationalism in Shropshire*, p. 11. Mr Jones was one of six students expelled from Oxford for Methodist-type behaviour. See Elliot, p. 106

28 Ibid. Elliot, p. 3

29 Ibid. Elliot, p. 4

30 Ibid. Evans, p. 12

31 Ibid. Clegg, p. 2. Rev. Arthur Clegg, of Tideswell, Derbyshire, was minister at Dorrington & Bayston Hill from 1941 and editor of the Union magazine from 1942–48 (Shropshire Congregational Union Annual Report, 1948, p. 6). The magazine faltered after this but still kept on going into the 1960s (Shropshire Congregational Union Annual Report, 1950–51, p. 6; Report, 1956–57, p. 6)

32 Ibid. Elliot, p. 12

33 Alfred Clegg, *A Souvenir of the 150th Anniversary Celebration in Abbey Foregate Congregational Church on April 2nd 1946*. (Shropshire Congregational Union, 1946) [Shropshire Records and Research Centre 4950/1/45], p. 2–3

34 Ibid. Elliot, p. 7

35 Ibid. Elliot p. 7

36 Ibid. Elliot p. 8–9

37 Elliot, p. 10. Although Clegg estimates it was 10, Ibid. Clegg, p. 18

38 Thomas Barnes was born in 1812. He held just about every office in secular life possible, MP, JP, High Sheriff of Denbighshire. He built the church at Quinta now pastored by Dr Digby James, the Quinta Sunday School, as well as houses in the village. His home is now a Christian conference centre, and the UK offices of Operation Mobilisation and two Cause for Concern homes are based on the site. He was chairman of the Shropshire Union eight times between 1862–1874. His benevolent acts form an enormous catalogue. An able businessman, he was the typical philanthropic Victorian Congregationalist.
39 Ibid. Elliot, p. 10–11
40 A Peel, *"These Hundred Years", A History of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, 1831–1931,* (London: Independent Press, 1931), pp. 302ff
41 Ibid. Clegg, p. 11
42 A move endorsed by the Congregational Union soon after.
43 It is not quite clear whether this was akin to the Forward Movement amongst the Calvinistic Methodists in Wales, which was evangelistic and planted churches in difficult areas in Wales, or whether it was simply another fund for improvement of the pay of ministers and the denomination. See Peel, pp. 387ff, 399ff
44 Ibid. Elliot, p. 218. Wellington had a chequered history from the earliest days of the Association.
45 Most of the Unions were incorporated for financial purposes as more and more held the deeds of the churches in their areas. By the 1950s most of the Shropshire Churches had their deeds with the Union. These were kept in a strong box in the Midland bank. The key disappeared for a while and the story is related in the minutes of that body.
46 Ibid. Peel, pp. 378–382
47 EPM Wollaston, "The First Moderators" in *The Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society*, Vol.5, No. 5 (URC, 1994), p. 298
48 Rev. Lincoln Jones was a brother of JD Jones of Bournemouth. He was also influenced by the Oxford Group Movement of Frank Buckman, so a former church member has stated. Ref., *n.* 59
49 No details found in the CYB.
50 URC Year Book 1990–91 p. 195
51 Annual Report 1947–48 4950/1/6 7 (Shropshire Research and Records Office)
52 Ibid. Clegg, p. 14
53 Shropshire Congregational Union Executive Report, 1959, p. 2
54 Ibid. Clegg, p. 7
55 Ibid. Clegg, p. 12
56 Ibid. Clegg, p. 7
57 Ibid. Clegg, p. 5
58 Executive Report, Shropshire Congregational Union, 1959, p. 1
59 J Griffiths, *In the Strength of God, 150 Years of Pontesbury Congregational Church* (Pontesbury: Pontesbury Congregational Church, 1990)
60 M Watts, *Why did the English stop going to Church?,* (London, Dr Williams's Library, 1995)
61 Ibid. p. 16
62 Their minister is Rev. John Legg, a former member of An EFCC Main Committee and an author. He was ordained in a Congregational Union Church in the early 1960s which later seceded.
63 Elliot, p. 40
64 Elliot, p. 138
65 Ibid. Clegg, p. 5
66 DM Lloyd-Jones, "Evangelical Unity: An Appeal" in *Knowing the Times* (Edinburgh, Banner of Truth, 1989), p. 246ff
67 G Evans, *Richard Mather-The True Use of Synods* (Beverley: An Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches, 1988)

William Jay: Pastor and Preacher

Philip Swann

Who was William Jay and does it matter, anyway?

William Jay was born on 8th May 1769 in a small Wiltshire village, the youngest of four children and the only son. He was born into a typical working class family of that day where his father worked as a stone cutter and mason. His upbringing appears to have been very ordinary. The only observations made on his early life were that he was a day dreamer and was slow learning to read (one of his sisters commented that they thought he would never learn).

Jay described his parents as being of "slender education but of good understanding and much common sense."[1] They were religious people with a love for God. However the minister of the village Presbyterian Chapel they attended was an Arian (that is, he believed the heresy that God the Son was at one point created by the Father and before that time did not exist). As a result they had not heard an evangelical ministry. Though dry and dull, this minister was a kind and warm hearted man. Jay wrote fondly of him, recalling how this minister once presented him with copies of Watts' *History of the Old and New Testaments* and Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* as a gift.

Conversion

With regard to his conversion, Jay comments that though never falling into gross and obvious sin, he was conscious of his sinfulness from a young age. This awareness steadily grew, as did the sense that he needed something more than what he was hearing from his own minister. However deficient his own minister's ministry was, he greatly helped Jay once by giving him a copy of a letter written by a father, who had become a Methodist, to his son, urging him to be converted. Jay had never heard of the Methodists before but was so impressed by the letter that he decided to go and hear them at the first opportunity. That opportunity was close at hand when a Thomas Turner returned to the village. Turner was a Methodist and had returned with the specific purpose of bring the Gospel to the people of Tisbury. He bought a house, licensed it and opened it for preaching.

The fourteen year old Jay attended the first meeting and was immediately struck by the singing, the extemporaneousness of the address and the love and earnestness of the preacher. The preaching was evangelistic and Jay described it as being, "like rain upon the mown grass, or cold water to a thirsty soul."[2]

Deeply effected by this first meeting Jay turned up early the next morning ready for the seven o'clock service. As Mrs Turner opened the door, she found the young apprentice stonemason waiting and gently challenged him, "Are you hungering for the bread of life?"[3] Mrs Turner was to have a great effect on Jay, often looking out for him and talking about his spiritual concerns. Jay said of her,

> Her information and addresses were more useful than many of the sermons I heard, as she adapted herself to the state she found I was in and to the present kind of knowledge which I required.[4]

It was about this time that Jay was converted.

Shortly after his conversion Jay heard Cornelius Winter of Marlborough preach. Winter had been converted under the preaching of George Whitefield and ran a small Academy at Marlborough for preachers. Turner introduced Jay to Winter, who was deeply moved by the seriousness of the young man. This meeting of the two men was to prove to be of profound significance for Jay's future ministry, since soon after this Winter invited Jay to join the Academy, to which he agreed.

In his autobiography, Jay identified the poverty of his formal education on going to the Academy: "no one could have gone to an Academy more destitute for advantages than me."[5] However he went on to add, "but I had a thirst for knowledge and a valuation of it."[6] He "fagged hard" at study and soon found what at first appeared "insuperable" became a "pleasure". It was during this time that the great principles that were to govern Jay's thinking concerning the ministry were formed. Winter's involvement is critical to our understanding of Jay. As the *Congregational Year Book* for 1855 indicated:

> without Winter's influence, Jay would have been an obscure village mason; and without Jay the incomparable memoirs would have never been written.[7]

One of the principles the Academy at Marlborough operated under was the need for these young men to be engaged in preaching as soon as possible (interestingly they were instructed to avoid preaching at times that would clash with "Church hours" or harvest time, lest they gave offence to the farmers by attracting the labourers away). So as well as study, Jay engaged in the work of preaching in the local villages (there was tremendous need in these villages as many were, as Jay had been, ignorant of the Gospel). Of this Jay wrote,

> Great attainments and qualifications were not necessary in those rude villages where we made our first attempts to minister. But we knew enough from Scripture and our own experience to "Show men the way of Salvation" and to say "Behold the lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world".[8]

Although preaching interrupted study, Jay considered it a justified interruption and gives three reasons as to why:

1 Souls were saved
2 Maintained the spirituality of the students
3 Enabled students to grapple early with difficulties and gain confidence; "thus though the scholar was injured, the preacher benefited".[9]

Jay's first sermon was preached at Ablington on 1 Peter 2:3 "If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." He was sixteen, and by the time he was twenty one he had preached about a thousand sermons.

Interestingly Jay identified some of the difficulties that the young men from the Academy faced as they went out preaching. He recalled the humorous incident of arriving at Melksham to preach when he was rudely greeted by the news that a "beardless boy" would not be permitted to preach. His response was to quote the response of a young ambassador who, when on the receiving end of a similar critical observation from the king of France, replied,

> Sir, had my master supposed you wanted a beard he would have sent you a goat![10]

Evidence of the esteem in which Jay's early preaching was held was the plan, by some, to raise money to finance him through Oxford and into the Anglican ministry. This was very tempting as life at the Academy was hard and "by faith". However Sir Richard Hill and John Thornton came to Jay's aid by pledging to finance his remaining time at the Academy (Hill was a Nonconformist and Thornton an Anglican).

> God has opened the young man's mouth and for years to come we dare not shut it, while there are so many intermediate and pressing calls for exertion.[11]

Had Jay gone to Oxford it would have taken five or six years before he was ordained, but because of Hill and Thornton's wisdom, Jay was enabled to spend the time engaged in preaching the Gospel to thousands and seeing souls saved.

At nineteen Jay was invited to preach at the Surrey Chapel, in London, for Rowland Hill. This was a remarkable opportunity for a young man and Jay's preaching was well received by a packed church. This occasion was the start of a lifelong friendship with Rowland Hill, resulting in a commitment to preach at the Surrey Chapel every year. This occasion also brought Jay into influential contact with John Ryland, John Newton and Anne Davies, who was to become his wife.

On hearing of Jay's success at the Surrey Chapel, Cornelius Winter wrote to him urging him to:

> leave London immediately. Come into the country to pray and reflect and wherever you go, set the picture of your mortality before you; and consider that he who has raised you can sink you and will, unless you give him the Glory of the gifts he has given you.[12]

Not long after this Jay took up a pastorate at Christian Malfonts near Chippenham. From there he moved to Hope Chapel at Hotwells where he stayed for eighteen months. He moved from Hotwells to the Independent Chapel at Bath following the death of its previous minister, the Rev. Thomas Tuppen. Interestingly Tuppen had been converted under the preaching of George Whitefield. He had attended Whitefield's preaching with the intention of stoning him but instead came under conviction of sin and was converted.[13] Jay was inducted on 30th January 1791, the Chapel having recently moved to a new site in Argyle Street (Jay had previously preached at its opening for Thomas Tuppen and from then on it would be known as Argyle Chapel).

Jay was to pastor Argyle Chapel until 28th March 1853 (he died in the December of 1853 aged 84), a period of sixty-two years. The work soon grew and during Jay's ministry the building was enlarged three times. From here he exercised a remarkable ministry both as a preacher and author. During this time he became friends with many prominent people. As well as John Ryland and Rowland Hill, he was a good friend of John Newton and William Wilberforce. He met John Wesley, and Charles Haddon Spurgeon once heard him preach at Cambridge in 1851.[14] His ministry spanned what Iain Murray described as, "one of the most striking periods of British Church History". Murray reminds us that he was born in the last year of Whitefield's ministry in England, 1769, and died during the first year of Charles Spurgeon's ministry, 1854. He lived through four reigns from George III to Victoria.[15] During this time he exercised an outstanding ministry that impacted the lives of thousands for eternity. The legacy that he has left us with is his remarkable example of consistent pastoral preaching, an example that Murray describes as falling into the category of being an outstanding help to ministers of the Gospel in all ages.[16]

So it is Jay the Pastor and Preacher of Argyle Chapel that we shall examine.

Jay as Pastor

While there is material commenting on Jay's preaching, there is far less on his pastoring. The reason is that he devoted considerably more time and energy to preaching than to pastoring. Just as the regime at Marlborough favoured the preacher at the scholar's expense, this was also true of the relationship between Jay's preaching and pastoring.

One writer attributes this to the fault of the system in which he had grown up, that

> did not insist so much on pastoral care and general regard for the flock as upon pulpit exhortations and long prayers.[17]

Another identified the great pressures under which Jay worked and the demands for his time that they presented, pointing out that he

> had begun his career young; he had four services a week at home, besides calls abroad; his congregations extended over the whole of a large city, his residency exposed him to many interruptions (he lived just off the main London to Bath road) …he was moreover an author of much acceptance.[18]

Under the tension that exists between seeking to be a useful preacher and a helpful pastor, Jay gave most time to preaching, time that was vital to his being a useful preacher.

> A man who has some degree of talent, especially an easiness and fluency of speech, may do for an itinerant or an occasional preacher, by his brisk superficialities; but let him become stationary, & have to preach 3 or 4 times a week to the same people and he will soon abound with sameness & become sapless & unedifying; the young will feel little attraction; the intelligent will be tempted to withdraw; the dull will become drowsy & the ignorant that remain will be ignorant still.[19]

His son Cyrus made the following observation,

> He felt that he was better promoting the welfare of his people and the public in his study than, to use his own language, "in gadding about without an aim and wasting time in idle intercourse and nursery talk".[20]

We must avoid however, drawing the conclusion that Jay was indifferent to the pastoral needs of the people at Argyle Chapel. He felt the weakness of his pastoral visitation deeply, describing it as "my one vice".[21] The strength of his pastoral concern is clearly seen in his writings. Many of his works are specifically aimed at encouraging and equipping Christians. It was said in the context of his writing, "His supreme object was to do his fellow men good".[22] This was also true of his preaching. Towards the end of his ministry he appears to have recognised the need for greater pastoral involvement. One writer comments that Jay believed that something more than praying and preaching was "indispensable" to a pastor: that is, a knowledge of his people, their thoughts, habits and personal lives.[23]

Jay identified three models of pastoral visitation that he did not believe he was called to follow:

1. The pipe smokers who went from home to home.
2. The listless who used visiting as an excuse from hard study.

3. The truly pious who failed, through lack of study, to be able to do the people any real good because they were unable to instruct or advise them.[24]

He also wrote of the pointlessness of "set visits" and included in this "Table and tea entertainments". He was concerned about the danger of over familiarity reducing reverence and blunting the influence of a minister.[25] He also identified the danger, with a large congregation, of trying to visit everyone and being taken up as "a respecter of persons".[26]

Whatever criticism may be levelled at Jay as a pastor or to what extent we may consider this aspect of his ministry a weakness, there can be no doubt that he always tried to do his people good. Working within his emphasis on preaching Jay sought to be helpful to his people. It was from the strength of his gift as a preacher that he tried to help people. An example of this was the Monday evening meeting, where Jay would speak informally and practically for an hour with the specific purpose of seeking to help those with practical concerns in the Christian life.

His sermons testify to the fact that he was a "pastoral preacher". Truth was broken down simply and carefully so that everyone could understand it. He worked at being understood, although this led to him being criticised as being, "too colloquial".[27] For Jay, preaching was to produce results in the life of the listener, so he worked hard at developing and maintaining an emphasis on practical application and encouraged his people to apply this. There is no way a man who is out of touch with his people could preach like this. For all his pastoral failings, Jay loved his people and by his preaching pastored them faithfully and to the best of the abilities God had given him.

Jay as Preacher

Jay's preaching was highly esteemed by his contemporaries. We have seen already the interest and appreciation aroused by Jay's early preaching at the Surrey Chapel for Rowland Hill. His gifts and potential were clearly obvious on that occasion. Jay recounts how, at the end of the service at the Surrey Chapel, John Ryland (senior) came up to him, grabbed him by the collar, shook his fist in his face and roared, "Young man, if you let the people of Surrey Chapel make you proud, I'll smite you to the ground!"[28] Ryland went on to warmly encourage him and after this encounter Ryland and Jay were to become great friends.

After Jay's death, his friend and member of the congregation at Argyle Chapel, Dr Bowies, described Jay as the "simplest preacher possible to be conceived" (by simple he was referring to clarity) and how Jay's preaching left him feeling "I could do that".[29] Dr Bowies illustrated the effectiveness of Jay's

preaching by recalling how an Anglican clergyman once commented on a picture of Jay hanging on a wall in the doctor's study. The man then went on to recall how he had once heard Jay preach on the text, "But to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in who is all my delight", Ps. 16:3. He then went on to give the outline of Jay's sermon. Dr Bowies asked when it was that this man had heard Jay preach. The man replied, "thirty five years ago".[30]

So why was Jay's preaching so effective? The first observation we must make is to identify what it was Jay understood God had called him be. Jay believed God had called him to be, above everything else, a preacher. So it was to being a preacher "of some little distinction"[31] that he dedicated himself. It was becoming evident that he possessed unusual ability as a preacher. Although surprised at this, he accepted it and set about working at his preaching gift. He spoke of being struck by a comment in Johnson's *Life of Watts* in which it says,

> The reason why the ancients surpassed the moderns was their greater modesty… they confined their application to one thing, instead of expanding it over a wider surface.[32]

As a result of this Jay wrote of how he:

> resolved more peculiarly to dedicate myself, keeping to make every thing not only subordinate, but subservient to my chosen and beloved aim.[33]

That aim was preaching.

Later on he was to speak of a humorous incident that would illustrate his single eyed commitment to preaching. It concerned a coach journey he took from Bath to Bristol. Sitting next to the driver, Jay heard a fellow passenger ask the coach-driver a series of questions. "Whose villa is that?", "Where does that new road lead to?", "Who lives there?". To each of these questions the coach-driver simply replied, "I don't know". The questioner, frustrated by the coach-driver's replies, then asked, "Don't you know anything?" "Yes," replied the coach-driver, "I know how to drive."[34] Jay was fond of using this illustration when speaking to others about the need to be singly devoted to preaching.

George Redford and John Angell James wrote of how,

> He clearly saw that, if he would clearly do one thing well he must concentrate his powers upon *that*; and make everything else give place, or become subservient to it. He had from the beginning an almost intuitive perception of what constituted pulpit excellence; he studied the attractions and defects of other preachers; felt the promptings of a holy ambition after eminence and usefulness; and with that consciousness of power which usually attends genius, and inspires it with the foresight of success, he determined by God's grace to attain to distinction as a *preacher*.

Redford and James added that this degree of devotion was completely justified as:

> This, however, was not the mere yearning of youthful vanity, but the prompting of a heart throbbing with a solicitude for the salvation of souls.[35]

A second indicator of Jay's effectiveness as a preacher was his understanding of what preaching was to be. To Jay preaching was primarily the matter of communicating the Word of God to all people as clearly as possible. He saw this and understood it from the beginning and spent the rest of his life labouring at it. It is interesting to consider the extent to which he was influenced as a youth by the contrast between the dry, dull preaching of the Arian Presbyterian Minister he had been brought up under and the warm lively preaching of Thomas Turner. He clearly knew and felt the difference between these two types of preaching. From his earliest experiences Jay knew there was such a thing as preaching that did nothing, or very little, and preaching that "woke the dead".

The great burden of Jay's ministry was that by clear communication he might present people with the Gospel, evangelistically, the Gospel being the central message of the Scripture. Though Jay laboured hard to feed the people of God, it was bringing the Gospel of Jesus Christ to sinners that was his great concern.

> I consider that the one great object of a Minister of Christ should be to make the people understand the Gospel and to preach in such a way continually, as that all may understand.[36]

> The end of preaching should always be regarded to win souls to Christ.[37]

It appears, however, that for a period of his ministry he was in danger of neglecting this distinctive. Concern about this was aroused in the congregation to the point when his great friend the Member of Parliament for Bath, William Wilberforce (who worked hard for social reforms in the United Kingdom, such as the abolition of slavery) wrote to him about it. Wilberforce wrote that it had been reported that his preaching was recently, "not sufficiently Evangelical" (by evangelical he meant evangelistic). Wilberforce kindly understood in the letter the concern that Jay had at that time about those who make false professions of faith, but he argued that there was a way of, "preaching Evangelical truth practically and applying Evangelically the rich and full variety of these doctrines and precepts of the Word of God". Wilberforce concluded his letter by encouraging Jay and identified that he was the only minister in Bath from which, "the poor wretched upper classes" were likely to hear the Gospel; they may "never have another opportunity". "Pity them my dear Sir!"[38] To this letter Jay commented on how it was, "most

gratefully received. Nothing could have been more seasonable. It was really needed". Jay confessed that he had been guilty of avoiding the offence of the cross. Jay then went on to comment on how he hoped his account of this incident might be a help to rescue young preachers from making "a similar mistake."[39]

Although memories of the preaching of Whitefield and Wesley were still relatively fresh in the memories of people, the pulpit was becoming a place for the display of scholarship. Preaching was becoming an art form and as a result was often forced and stiff. Because Jay understood preaching to be the presentation of God's truth to people, he could never accept this pattern. As we examine his ministry we can see how well he succeeded in avoiding this type of preaching. Redford and James wrote that the one thing that described Jay as a preacher was "naturalness",[40] and naturalness was what he believed the people needed.

A humorous example of his "naturalness" or humanity in the pulpit was when some trouble makers (Jay thought pick-pockets) pushed a bull into the chapel while Jay was preaching. Jay wrote that he was preaching on "the affairs of the nation" when "John Bull came seasonably in". As they could not push the bull out, half a dozen of the deacons held on to either of the bull's two horns while the clerk gave out the hymn "Praise God from whom *all* blessings flow, Praise him *all creatures* here below". Jay wrote,

> O that the bull could have *roared* his compliance with the exhortation! I looked down from the pulpit and seeing the gentlemen who held him singing with their faces lifted up, as if returning thanks for this unexpected blessing, I was obliged to put my hands in front of my face while I dismissed the congregation.[41]

In other words, he laughed.

Another amusing incident came out in one of Jay's letters where he wrote of how he:

> …knew a man at Avebury some years ago… one Sunday afternoon, after listening for some time to a sermon, correct enough, but perfectly dry and uninteresting, rushed up the aisle and pulled the man [Jay named him] by the collar out of the pulpit, and then with his iron tipped shoes kicked the pulpit in pieces, for which he was confined five months in Fisherton gaol, but for which he ought to have had a statue erected to his memory. Poor fellow, I remember him well. The last time I saw him, after mowing all day, he had walked six miles, and had the same distance to return, to get something to affect his poor heart and which he could think of when whetting his scythe, or eating his crust upon the new-mown swath.[42]

Commenting on preaching, Jay once drew attention to the difference between

the preaching of the Dissenters and Methodists. He maintained that the preaching of the regular Dissenters was often:

> grammatically correct and methodical: but, with very few exceptions, pointless, cold and drawled off notes.

Interestingly, Jay believed that it was a specific reaction to this style that provoked early Methodist preaching to be "often boisterous, rude, coarse, incoherent".[43] Jay believed that what was needed was a union of the two styles:

> freedom without irregularity, arrangement without stiffness, animation without violence, soberness without dullness, solemnity without sanctimoniousness, readiness without rapidity and plainness without vulgarity.[44]

Jay's preaching was about clear, simple communication that reached both the head and the heart of his hearers. His commitment was not to impress his hearers with a display of learning but to reach them with the truth of Scripture in an unmistakable and unavoidable way. It was to do people good. He once wrote,

> It is strange that men of God, who profess to be ministers in a kingdom not of this world, and who are sent to seek that which is lost, should, while sitting in judgement upon their mode of preaching, inquire not what kind of address and illustration is most likely to be useful to the bulk of an audience, but what agrees best with the most admired modes of composition.[45]

Such an approach to preaching was, for Jay, an anathema. Instead, his concern was to regularly question how his preaching could be clearer and more accessible to people. Jay's concern for clear communication is well summed up by his comments on Hannah More, whose concern was that preaching should not be concerned about:

> ingenuity or originality in the preacher, but one that bore upon the conscience of the hearer, and was most likely to awaken and convert the sinner; observing that preaching was an instrument… adding, "a knife is valued for its edge, not for its ebon handle".[46]

It is important to state at this point that Jay's commitment to clear communication was communication in its fullest sense. It is not simply that he worked at what some call "communication skills" or "craft" and saw that as the end of the issue. He worked at clear communication in the understanding that what was really needed was God to make his clear preaching effective in the hearts of the people. That is, he knew his preaching had to be more than "in word only" but also "in demonstration of the Spirit's power".[47] Because of this

awareness we see clearly in his life a commitment to prayer for the success of his preaching. One of his son-in-laws once commented,

> He always took a *prayerful* review of his subject, and often was a tearful, wrestling season of communion with God in private the prelude to the holiest and happiest seasons in public. His practice uniformly was to go from the closet to the pulpit. Nothing was allowed to intervene… He came from the Divine Presence with a message from God to men.[48]

This principle was something that was put before him right at the beginning by Winter during his days at the Academy. Writing of this, Jay said,

> He constantly reminded them of the absolute necessity of personal religion; and endeavoured to keep alive a sense of their dependence on *God,* for the preservation and the increase of their powers and the success of their applications and exertions.[49]

The communication that Jay worked at was utterly dependent on God for ultimate success.

Inevitably Jay's preaching provoked criticism. Some felt that in seeking clarity he became on occasions too coarse, "There was frequently a want of delicacy, refinement and true polish",[50] wrote one biographer. However it was the conviction that preaching had to be clear if it was to achieve anything that re-emphasises the observation that he was a pastoral preacher. His overwhelming desire was to do the people at Argyle Chapel good. The friendship with Rowland Hill of the Surrey Chapel led to an annual commitment from Jay to preach for Hill each year. He honoured this commitment until a short time after Hill's death. However it is obvious that this commitment was burdensome to Jay. The burden was that it took him away from the people of Argyle Chapel. Jay had little concern to be a popular preacher in London. It was among his own people at Argyle Chapel that he most wanted to be. It appears to be only the strength of his friendship with Hill that kept him going to the Surrey Chapel.

It was not fame that motivated him but his desire to be faithful to the call God had given him to the people of Bath. He was not a "man pleaser". He cared little for fame or status. When he came home from a preaching trip away he found to his horror that his wife had had a brass plaque placed outside their house in Percy Street, engraved with "Rev. William Jay". Jay had it removed, but compromised by allowing one to go up with simply the name "Jay".[51] Another example is seen when he was invited to preach at the opening of Hanover Chapel. Jay was invited to dine with the Duke of Sussex before the service. Jay had no time for the Duke as he was on the King's business, so he

declined and when entering the pulpit, he wrote later, "I felt no more than if I had been going to preach Christ in a poor house".[52]

Jay turned down many requests to sit on committees and trusts. He once said that, "Had the ark been appointed to be built by a committee, it would never have been finished".[53] He also declined requests to preach for organisations, particularly those who were wanting to raise money. He considered it:

> a debasement of the glorious Gospel, to deal much in pounds, shillings, and pence.[54]

He did however preach at the first anniversary of the London Missionary Society in May 1796. He went on to preach for the LMS five times, something no other minister had been invited to do at that time.

Because of his concern for clarity, the themes Jay preached on were often highly practical and designed to do people good. In fact Jay says there were certain things he could never preach on because he considered that very little good could come from them. For example he says he could never preach a series on "evil characters" and wrote with dismay of a preacher he knew who preached nineteen sermons on 2 Timothy 3:3–5, "People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy…" There can be no doubt that here was a man who pastored skillfully from his pulpit. But to do this careful attention had to be paid to getting the message out clearly.

Jay was to argue that extemporaneous preaching was best and that if it was to be successful it must be animated, as animation is essential to getting the message home. In a letter to his son Edward in 1818 he wrote,

> The great thing is to forget *one's-self*, and to speak with *seriousness* and *affectionate feeling*. Feeling is always eloquent: and if the preacher is obviously affected, and appears concerned to do good, and not to gain applause, he will always be felt, and always approved.[55]

As a result of this conviction Jay would sometimes begin his sermons with a startling comment or illustration (he worked hard at illustrating his sermons). On one occasion, preaching on the text "God is love" he pretended to ask the philosopher Simonides the question, "What is God?". The philosopher asked for a day to consider the question, then another and another, until after four days he has Simonides saying "The more I consider the question the less able I am to answer it". He then pretended to ask a shepherd boy, "David, what is God?" The answer came straight back in the form of Psalms 46 and 23. Then he went to two fishermen of Galilee. "Peter, what is God?" "John, what is God?" The answer was immediate, drawn from the writings of these Apostles

and concluding with the words of John from 1 John 4:8, "God is love"; and away Jay went to open up this text.[56] The impact of this approach must have been unavoidable.

For Jay, the delivery of a sermon should be varied. Jay criticised the "brawlers and strainers" who delivered their messages with the "same tone and forced vehemence" from beginning to end. For Jay, preaching was more than just exegeting a passage. It was bringing that exegesis to the minds and hearts of people. He could never be satisfied with being merely exegetically accurate; his exegesis had to reach people and do something to them. This is what he meant by "animation". As Redford and James commented, "He preached not only before his congregation but to them".[57] Jay went on to show:

> the danger of rendering the Scriptures in time, a mere book for criticism, and to be treated scientifically; without regarding it for the sole purpose for which it was given,—to guide our feet into the path of life and to answer the inquiry, "What must I do to be saved?"[58]

Jay was critical of those who presented the people with long arguments. These, he believed, would not work with "ordinary people". Arguments should be broken down and applied with words that will be understood. The use of words was important to Jay and he argued that they should be like "nails" that fix an argument in the hearers' mind. There are two words that often appeared when Jay wrote about preaching; these are, "Strike and stick". He worked hard at his sermons so that they would do just that: strike and stick in the hearts and minds of men and women. For it to do this it had to be preached in a certain direct and creative way; something Jay always worked at.

On one occasion he wrote of having heard that day:

> a discourse which was very fine in its way, all ornament, all show, all parade, some pretty figures, to be sure, but there was no power, it did not tell; there was no effect. I asked, what is the impression by all this? Such glittering sermons, I confess, are very poor things, I feel it. Give me the plain, manly, forcible discourse, which impresses me at once and the sentiments and the impressions of which I can never loose.[59]

Of these "glittering sermons" Jay once remarked, they "glitter… with frost."[60]

Jay often appealed for brevity in preaching, seeing this as something that can and should be achieved by preachers. Writing of Richard Cecil, Jay quoted Lamont,

> There is no excuse for a long sermon; if it is to be good it need not be long and if it be bad it ought not to be long.[61]

Jay argued that brevity was the fruit of hard labour in the study. He quoted an

incident where Queen Anne commented to Dr South after hearing him preach,

> "You have given us an excellent sermon Dr South; I wish you had time to make it longer." "Nay please your majesty" replied Dr South, "I wish I had time to make it shorter.[62]

Such clear preaching required great effort and Jay devoted himself to this hard work. Thomas Wallace in his book *A Portraiture of William Jay of Bath* wrote,

> He never gave God, or the people, that which cost him nothing… this was the secret of his popularity and success—of his long enduring and efficiency.[63]

He read regularly and widely. There was nothing particularly unusual about his method of study, except he sought to avoid study on a Saturday and considered this time to be spent with the family. He never worked after nine at night and always sought to be flexible in the time he gave to study. He employed all the usual methods that aid a preacher's preparation. He kept a book of texts to preach from, another with the skeleton outlines of sermons that could be worked on at a future date.[64] There is no secret to his success in the study except to say he spent much time there, and when he was there he worked hard. He once wrote,

> My motto ever has been, I will, by the help of God, improve. I will not remain stationary. Hence I will read daily, have a subject always before me and be seeking to get my mind enlarged.[65]

In particular he worked hard at the construction of his sermons. It mattered to him that they flowed in an ordered and structured way, as this was vital to making his sermons "strike and stick" in the minds of the people. For Jay, sermons were not to be given in a vacuum. They were to be preached to people who were to be helped by what they heard. He worked at producing divisions that were short and simple, easy to follow and remember. These divisions he would memorise—he only began to use notes when he was seventy and then, it appears, very reluctantly.[66] For Jay the structure of a sermon mattered and it was at this point he was to influence many preachers. CH Spurgeon was struck by the "pith"[67] and "plan and method"[68] of Jay's sermons. When speaking of the time he heard Jay at Cambridge, Spurgeon recalled the "dignity and simplicity"[69] of his preaching and was able to remember, in some detail, the content of that sermon. This was possible because of the thoughtful structure of Jay's sermons.

Above all, his "love of arrangement and delivery"[70] was out of his concern to bring God's Word to the people. He calls his own style "textual" (what we probably know as expository). Because of his concern to convey the data of Scripture clearly, Jay became very impressed by the system of lecturing that he

saw practised during a preaching tour of Scotland. This lecturing took place on the Lord's Day morning services in both established and secession churches. By *lecturing* Jay is referring to a very specific form of preaching. In writing on this issue he was clear to state that, "I never considered an essay a sermon or a sermon an essay".[71] This lecturing refered to a regular approach that aimed to

> seize the spirit or design of the whole passage and bring it to bear upon the audience in practical application.[72]

Such was his commitment to this approach that he purposed to write a book on it. However he noted that the good people of Argyle Chapel urged him to press on with printing *The Christian Contemplated* instead, which was to be probably his most helpful work.

It was as a result of these convictions that Jay was one of the finest and most effective preachers of his day. A preacher of whom Charles Haddon Spurgeon was to say,

> O for more Jays. We would give some two or three dozen of the general run of Doctors of Divinity for one such a Master in Israel as William Jay of Bath.[73]

Conclusion

Well that is who William Jay was. He was an extraordinary man; extraordinary in terms of the degree of gift and success that attended his ministry. The danger of considering extraordinary men in our ordinary age is that we tend to dismiss them. We say, "they were then in days of special blessing". If we do this with William Jay we will be guilty of, at best, antiquarianism and, at worst, neglect. We will be denying our hearts and minds exposure to principles that present a vital challenge to our day of small things. It is the principles from which this man operated that should be of concern to us.

The question "and does it matter?" is, I believe, one Jay would have us ask. The main reason that finally persuaded him to write his *Autobiography*, its editors tell us was, "that it would bear usefully upon the rising ministry".[74] In other words, that it might help another generation to do what he did—reach men and women with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

As in William Jay's day we live in a time of great spiritual need. The majority of people in the United Kingdom appear to have very little interest in the Gospel. But unlike Jay, we are told that we now live in the age of the visual. The spoken word is only of significance when it comes as a sound bite, and the evidence for this shift in society is compelling. As a result of this, preaching (we are informed by some) has had its day and must give way to the visual, the aesthetic and the dramatic. Objective, deductive preaching that treats Scripture as the inspired and infallible Word of God must give way to the subjective and

inductive. In some places services are now more concerned to produce subjective feeling in the worshipper rather than present the objective truth of Scripture. In other words, in terms of our needs at the end of the twentieth century, as far as many are concerned, William Jay is dead and buried.

However, there are still many who are convinced that when God says, "How can they hear without someone preaching…?" Romans 10:14, and when it says, "…God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believed," 1 Corinthians 1:21, it means just that. It is the clear teaching of the Bible that preaching is the primary way God has chosen to reach the world. Granted, the pattern of Jay's ministry of sixty-two years in the same pastorate must be considered unique,[75] and the language of a man who died one hundred and forty four years ago outdated today. But is that all William Jay leaves us with? A long service record and a collection of ancient sermons? William Jay left us with principles that are as relevant to the needs of the twentieth century as they were to the eighteenth and nineteenth—principles that under God may be as equally effective now as they were then.

Hard Study

For all this to be achieved, hard study was essential. It is said that a young man once went to Jay and said, "Mr Jay, I need more faith when I preach". "No Sir," replied Jay, "You need more hours in your study!" For all his giftedness, Jay grafted in the study. How much did this contribute to his effectiveness?

Ministerial Training

The life of Jay, I believe, raises important questions about the training of men for the ministry. Which made the greater impact on Jay, the lecturing or the piety of Cornelius Winter? The full extent of Winter's influence on Jay will never be known but it was certainly considerable. Writing about John Newton, Jay said,

> I deem him the most perfect instance of the spirit and temper of Christianity I ever knew—shall I say with the exception? No, the addition of Cornelius Winter.[76]

The Primacy of Preaching

A further principle was his commitment to the primacy of preaching as God's means to convert men and women. The weakness of his pastoral visitation, his "one vice", was out of his concern to be, above all, what he believed the Church needed—a preacher. To what extent was it Jay's commitment to this conviction that made him the preacher he was? To what extent was it the

conviction of the people of Argyle Chapel that made it the church it was? These are important questions to raise.

Evangelistic Preaching

Another was his understanding that the primary thrust of preaching was to be evangelistic. Above everything the preacher was to "do the work of an evangelist". Is it possible to be committed to the centrality of preaching, but in a vacuum? For preaching to be the end in itself? That is to fail to grasp what preaching is really, in essence, to achieve. Can exegetical detail ever be more important than reaching the eternal souls of men and women with the eternity changing Gospel of Jesus Christ? For William Jay preaching was primarily the preaching of the Gospel.

Clear Preaching

Preaching must be clear and understood. Jay worked hard at being exegetically accurate but harder at being understood. For Jay preaching was to do something to people. It was more than just stating the truth; it was to bring the truth to real people, with real needs. He worked at being constructively provocative so that his messages "struck and stuck".

But to what extent had Whitefield influenced Winter? As well as Winter, what about Newton, Wilberforce, Rowland and Ryland, men who made themselves available to the young Jay? What does this say about the development of preachers today? What does it say about the humility and concern of the men who showed such kindness to Jay as a young man? How much of the training of a real preacher is caught from other preachers, as well as taught in a college?

Does William Jay matter today? Perhaps there is little more needed today than the challenge to the Church of the example of the pastor and preacher, William Jay.

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Madagascar: Pioneering Missionary Work 1818–1843

Noel Gibbard

Preparation and ordination of missionaries

Brian Stanley identifies "insularity" as one of the characteristics of the life of the church in the eighteenth century, but makes the important qualification that it was not "absolute".[1] In terms of mission overseas the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel and the Moravians had opened up the way for further gospel work abroad. At the same time, the journeys of Captain Cook, and others, enlarged the world for the people of Britain, and also made it possible to strengthen British interests abroad. The boundaries of the mind were being stretched as conservatives and radicals clashed, as they did in America in 1776 and in France in 1789. The church, emerging from the Evangelical Awakening, responded to this new situation. Andrew Fuller and William Carey (Baptists) realised their obligation to take the gospel to other countries and argued that the time was ripe to do so. In 1792, when the Baptist Missionary Society was formed, David Bogue, the Independent, was encouraging his fellow Independents to consider the work abroad. When the London Missionary Society was formed in 1795, one link in the chain was David Bogue's reading of a report from William Carey, which John Ryland shared with the pastor from Gosport.

Most of the founders of the London Missionary Society were influenced by the Awakening. For example, George Burder was converted under Whitefield, Thomas Haweis influenced by him; John Eyre was a product of the Countess of Huntingdon's College at Trevecca, and the Methodists moulded the early life of the Welshman, Edward Williams. These men, and their fellow workers, had not only the vision, but also the faith to find means to "evangelise the heathen", and venture forward to claim the world for Christ. "Means" is one of the key words in Carey's and Bogue's writings. Both argued that a society had to be formed and supported, not only by the rich patrons in London, but by the members of the churches.

The London Missionary Society, with great enthusiasm, and sometimes misplaced optimism, turned its attention to the South Seas, but other countries, including France and Madagascar, attracted their attention. Vander Kemp in South Africa drew their attention to the island and his appeal was noted by Thomas Charles in *Trysorfa Ysprydol (Spiritual Miscellany)*, during

1799. In 1814, Le Brun, of Jersey, one of David Bogue's students at Gosport, was sent to Mauritius, which was under British control from 1810. This made it possible to work in Mauritius itself and to make it a base for venturing to Madagascar.

In Wales the lead was taken by the ministers, not only in their churches, but also through their preaching, discussions and decisions at their assembly meetings. The Assembly of 1798 authorised Morgan Jones of Tre-lech, Carmarthenshire, to write a Welsh version of the formation of the Missionary Society. One of the prominent men was the Rev. David Davies who suggested that a missionary meeting should be held in 1814, and it took place in the church where he ministered, that is, Ebenezer, Swansea. Two representatives came down from London, Matthew Wilks and Samuel Tracey, and after the meetings travelled in south west Wales. During his visit to Carmarthen, Wilks met with John Evans, who had a desire to be a missionary under the auspices of the Missionary Society. It was at Carmarthen that the first annual missionary meeting was held. It was here that the Rev. David Peter ministered, who was also the principal of the Presbyterian College. Another man who figured prominently in the ministers' and missionary meetings was the Rev. Thomas Phillips of Neuaddlwyd, Ceredigion. These men, and many others were brought together at the 1815 meeting at Carmarthen.

These developments deeply influenced the first two missionaries who went to Madagascar, Thomas Bevan (1795?-1819), and David Jones (1796–1841). Both of them knew of the meetings at Carmarthen; both of them sat under the ministry of Thomas Phillips who was also their teacher at his preparatory school, and both received further instruction under David Bogue at Gosport. In addition both had a brief period in the Academy in north Wales under Dr George Lewis, another advocate of mission, who was brought up in Tre-lech. All these influences were referred to at the ordination of the two young men, held at Neuaddlwyd, Ceredigion, on 20th-21st August 1817.

The two candidates for missionary work overseas were questioned in detail during the ordination service, concentrating on four aspects; spiritual experience, how they were led to the work, what were their aims and what was their belief.[2] When asked concerning their religious experience both David Jones and Thomas Bevan acknowledged their debt to their respective homes and to the church at Neuaddlwyd. The father of the former would read the Scriptures to the family and would comment on the passage for the day. It was in the home that David and the other children were taught to read. Thomas Bevan said that he had been given an awareness of eternity in the religious atmosphere of his home, and his parents in their instruction would remind him that he had a soul. Thomas did not learn to read until he was eight years

of age, but this success opened up the new world of books for him, especially the Bible. The young lad became more and more aware of his sinfulness, but did not have a grasp of the way of salvation.

David Jones' family were members at Neuaddlwyd chapel and benefited from the faithful ministry of Thomas Phillips. Apart from the services there was a Sunday school in which David Jones received instruction in the Scriptures. Thomas Bevan went into service near Neuaddlwyd, and, like David Jones, was greatly helped by the pastor and the Sunday school, where he was catechised. Thomas Bevan was struck by the minister's earnestness in presenting the gospel, and one sermon in particular, on 1 Peter 2: 7–8, reached the young lad's conscience. Mr Phillips warned the hearers that this could be the last time for them to hear the gospel, and urged the people to trust Christ, pointing them to the cross. Thomas was broken in spirit, sought and found salvation in Christ, which led to church membership on 19th November 1810.

David Jones became a member after a great deal of heart searching. He met with an accident, and was also ill for a while, both events impressing on his mind the reality of death and eternity. When he recovered from his illness he had a desire to be a church member and a preacher of the gospel. The final step was taken after a communion service, when a relative of his was received into membership. The young convert realised that he was still in the company of the ungodly and that he was reluctant to own Christ publicly. Deeply hurt, and weeping, he shared his feelings with his mother, who advised him to remain behind after the meeting on Sunday. He did so, and regarded this as one of the most important events in his life, in spite of the fact that he was ridiculed by many of his fellow youngsters for joining the fellowship of the church.

When asked how they were led to accept the challenge of work overseas, both expressed their debt to the Rev. Thomas Phillips, and Thomas Bevan acknowledged help from the example of John Evans, who was ordained at Carmarthen in 1814 to go to Latakoo, and his friend David Jones. Both David Jones and Thomas Bevan were sensitive to the spiritual needs of others, and after returning from a preaching tour, David Jones saw "in the vision of the night", the wretched condition of those without Christ: "I thought often of the great number of pagans going to eternity every day, who would appear naked and guilty in judgement because they had never heard of Christ as Saviour". Particular Scriptures helped both men. In the case of David Jones they were James 4:17, 2 Timothy 2:12 and Matthew 19:28–29. Thomas Bevan referred to Romans 10:13–16, confirmed by 2 Corinthians 11:23–27 and Romans 8:18. Both read the *Diary* of David Brainerd, Thomas Bevan being urged to do so by Thomas Phillips, and David Jones expressed his feelings after reading

the book, "I cannot express the joy, the pleasure and desire created in me to do the same work as he".

It was David Jones who answered the questions regarding aims and methods, Thomas Bevan signifying his agreement. The responses can be summarised in point form:[3]

1. Prayer and meditation in the Scriptures, and consecration of the Sunday.
2. To be active in presenting the gospel; visit from house to house.
3. Learn the language of the people; gain more knowledge of the original languages of the Bible.
4. Translate and publish books.
5. Establish churches and schools.
6. Read the account of missionaries.
7. Be careful of expenses.

David Jones closed his response by making an appeal to all Christians to pray for him.

When questioned on doctrine it was Thomas Bevan who replied, David Jones signifying his agreement. The answers were concise and reveal clearly their doctrinal framework. All the main doctrines of Scripture were covered briefly. Starting with creation and the fall, David Jones proceeded to deal with the covenant, God's electing love, the incarnation and obedience of Christ, whose righteousness is the only basis of acceptance with God. In dealing with the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, David Jones maintained the absolute necessity of the work of the Spirit to apply the work of Christ to the sinner. The same Spirit gives persevering grace to the believer. The law has been fulfilled as far as justification is concerned, but the moral law still has its demands on believers. At the coming of Christ as judge, there will be a final separation between the righteous and the unrighteous. One clause dealt with the doctrine of the church, and David Jones made two points in this context, that there are two sacraments, baptism (infant), and the Lord's Supper, and that he believed in Congregationalism.

Neither Thomas Bevan nor David Jones went out to Madagascar alone. The former married Mary Jones, who was also a member at Neuaddlwyd, while David Jones married Louisa Derby, a member of David Bogue's church in Gosport. Although it was the husbands who were called and commissioned, their wives played a crucial part in mission work. Apart from their own particular contribution, the wives also ministered to their husbands and relieved them of many worries. Farewell meetings were held in Neuaddlwyd, and both Thomas Bevan and David Jones composed poetry to express their feelings as they were ready to embark on the journey to Madagascar, unlike Abraham knowing where they were going, yet needing the same faith as the

patriarch of old. Both missionaries belonged to a new period in the history of the church in Wales. They were part of a group of men, fourteen or fifteen altogether, from all denominations, during the period from 1800 to 1820, who faced the challenge of taking the gospel overseas. Thomas Bevan and David Jones were the first missionaries to settle in Madagascar, and they opened up the way for many more to follow them.

Frustration and expectation

Before leaving for Madagascar, David Jones and Thomas Bevan sent to the LMS Directors, requesting books "recommended by our tutor", also books on geometry and medicine, carpenter's chest and household furniture.[4] The missionaries wanted to make sure that they were as educated as possible and as practical as possible. The ship, the Swallow, sailed on 9th February 1818 and arrived at Mauritius on 3rd July, where they were welcomed by Le Brun. It was not until 18th August that they reached Tamatave in Madagascar. They had arrived in the land of the "heathen".

Madagascar was divided into twenty-two kingdoms, each governed by a chief. Slowly, Radama, the chief of the Hova, in the kingdom of Imerina, gained the upper hand and was regarded as the king of the island. His success was accomplished as a result of an agreement with Sir Robert Farquhar, governor of Mauritius. Radama agreed to suppress the slave trade in the island, and in return Farquhar promised arms, military dress and ammunition to the chief. Such a provision enabled him to overcome the other chiefs, and he became supreme ruler in the island. It was a large one, bigger than the British Isles, with a third of the land covered in forests, rich in resources, especially iron, lime, cotton, rice; pigs, cats, dogs and monkeys were wild, and horses, mules and sheep were being introduced from Europe.[5]

Linguistically there was one language with many local variations. They were kept alive orally, in terms of speaking them everyday, by stories handed down from generation to generation and public addresses in the meetings of the different kingdoms. Religiously the people were superstitious, having idols for the whole country, for different areas and for different classes in society, like the rich and the poor. The greatest respect was paid to the "little famous one", who guarded the royal household. He would determine the fate of those who regarded or disregarded the "fady", that is, the prohibited things, which included pigs, cats, snails, powder and meat distributed at funerals. Acceptable offerings included oxen and money and they were supervised by the priests, who would sprinkle the people with holy water to safeguard them from ill-health. "Sikidy", that is divination, determined the destiny of a new-born child. If the birth was on an unlucky day, the child was laid at the entrance of a cattle-

pen, the cattle set free, and if they did not trample the child he was freed from his bad luck.[6]

When the missionaries arrived in Mauritius, the governor was away on furlough, and his replacement was hostile to mission, a spirit expressed by other Europeans and many natives. He had also broken off relationships with Madagascar. Care had to be taken even with the servants, and David Jones had a very unpleasant experience, as he related in one of his letters that, "Joseph, the servant of Mr Bevan has given Mr Bragg [English trader], myself & Mrs Jones poison".[7] He was immediately put in chains for it was dangerous for him to be free. In spite of this the early pioneers crossed to Tamatave to observe the land and decide on their plan of campaign. As in Mauritius, there were tensions between the natives and the Europeans. On the one hand the leaders, and many of the people, wanted to enjoy the privileges of education, trade and crafts, while on the other hand they did not want to betray their own way of life. The king himself was tempted to follow a western fashion, and had his hair cut short, but the women especially did not like it, and between 4–5,000 women rose up in protest against such a habit. Their opposition was crushed and many of the leaders were executed.[8]

Thomas Bevan and David Jones had to establish good relationships with the people and find means to support themselves in a strange country. One thing that was essential was learning the language and they immediately settled down to that task. David Jones cultivated his garden and Mrs Jones made butter. Together with the natural resources of the island it meant that they would not be in want physically. This must have been a great comfort to them because financial support from London took such a long time to reach them.

The two families only stayed for a few weeks in Tamatave and returned to Mauritius. Mrs Bevan was unwell and David Jones decided to go back to Madagascar without the Bevans. In a matter of weeks Mrs Jones and her child were gripped by the fever which led to their death. When the Bevan family arrived, the three of them, father, mother and child also died as result of the fever. In a few weeks, from the end of December 1818 to the beginning of February 1819, there had been five deaths, and David Jones was left alone: [9]

Mrs Jones's child	Decr 13	[1818]
Mrs Jones died	29 Decr of the milk fever	
Mr Bevan	Jany 31 in the morning	[1819]
Mrs Bevan's child	Jan 20	
Mrs Bevan	Feb 3rd	

David Jones himself was unwell and the other deaths had a profound effect upon him. He almost lost heart but struggled on at Tamatave and was able to open a school there in May 1819, "I have commenced my school yesterday

with five children, being sons of the chiefs". This was an encouragement but his health was failing and in weakness he returned to Mauritius, "His severe disorders have left behind considerable debility and occasional depression of spirits".[10] By August 1819, however, David Jones was teaching the children of slaves, had started a Sunday school and was preaching in French. Two important aspects of the work were hymn singing and catechising. The missionary was concentrating on what was familiar to him at Neuaddlwyd.

David Jones had been called to Madagascar and wanted to return to that island as soon as possible. The opportunity came when Mr Hastie, the Government agent employed by Robert Farquhar, had to leave to discuss the slave trade with king Radama. David Jones joined the agent. They arrived at Tamatave and commenced the long journey of 300 miles to Antananarivo, through vast forests, deep rivers and steep hills, which reminded the Welshman of North Wales. On their journey they passed groups of slaves, varying from a hundred to a thousand, on their way to Tamatave to be sold, of whom many would be exported. David Jones looked at them and felt deeply hurt that human beings were being sold like animals in London's Smithfield.

Mr Hastie and David Jones were received by the king at 4 o'clock in the afternoon, 3 October 1820. It was an auspicious occasion. As the two arrived a canon was fired, and as they walked into the courtyard between two lines of soldiers the drums were played, the king came forward to receive them and led them in to the palace, where they dined together. The following day the serious discussions commenced, and Hastie outlined the benefits of abolishing the slave trade. The king listened patiently, and seemed to respond positively, but when he conferred with his advisers they were not so enthusiastic. They eventually accepted a treaty, and the king laid down a condition that 20 boys should be educated, 10 in Mauritius and 10 in England. David Jones expressed his opinion that the LMS would be responsible for the 10 from Madagascar when they arrived in London, and explained to the king what had already been accomplished in some of the South Sea islands. As a result of the conference, a meeting (*kabar*), was called to make the official declaration. The news was received with great joy, the canons were fired and the people danced in the streets to celebrate the revolutionary change which had taken place. [11]

The agreement between Britain and Madagascar was a major step forward, not only in the relationship between the two countries, but as far as the work of the missionaries was concerned as well. If the king had refused the agreement it would have been doubly difficult to continue with Christian work. David Jones knew that he was in a stronger position now, and took advantage of it by renewing his effort with the school. He could report by 3rd November 1820 that the king was on the point of placing the heir to the

throne under his charge and also a few children of the royal family. He thought that it would be wise for him to concentrate on about 6 children until he had a better mastery of the language, but the king was anxious for the children of the royal household to be educated, and in a few months' time David Jones had 16 children under his care. They included 3 children of the king's sisters, one being the heir to the throne, and children of nobles. Four of them were already reading the Scriptures in English, and others making good progress.[12]

After many discouragements, David Jones could be more optimistic regarding 1821, and his hopes were further raised by two events. First of all, there were new arrivals, and he rejoiced exceedingly as he welcomed two fellow Welshmen to the mission field in Madagascar, David Griffiths and Thomas Rowlands. David Griffiths was from Gwynfe, Carmarthenshire, and like Thomas Bevan and David Jones attended Neuaddlwyd school under Thomas Phillips, moved to be under Dr George Lewis in the Academy in north Wales and then spent some time with David Bogue in Gosport. For three years he had struggled with the call to work overseas, but was greatly helped by the ordination services of John Evans at Carmarthen, especially by the questions put to him and the Rev. David Peter's preaching. David Griffiths had some difficulty with the Directors of the LMS, as they, supported by Le Brun in Mauritius, wanted Griffiths to go out unmarried. He insisted on getting married, and married Mary Griffiths from Machynlleth. He had his eye on her as early as 1817 because when he responded to one of the questions of the Directors concerning marriage, David Griffiths replied that he would like to know the mind of the Lord in the matter, "But my intention is to have a wife, and my mind is not entirely unfixed".[13] They sailed for Mauritius, and on the way were caught in a terrible storm at the Cape of Good Hope, but after a long delay arrived in Mauritius. On 14th April 1821 a baby boy was born to them, and when he was only seven days old, they ventured to Madagascar.

Rowlands was the son of Welsh parents from Shrewsbury, and he also arrived in 1821, hoping to make his contribution as a weaver, and by helping the other missionaries.[14] There was no demand for his products, but he was able to help in the schools until his early death in 1829, another victim to the fever.

The other significant event was that David Jones, in his loneliness, found company of a more intimate nature. During July of 1821 he was preparing to be married and in September informed the Directors that he was married to Mary Anne Mabille, a member of Le Brun's congregation in Mauritius, on 28th July. This was a timely provision for David Jones. After so many discouragements there was an opportunity for a fresh start, and that in the

company of a wife and fellow Welshmen. He was renewed in spirit to meet fresh challenges. The difficulties were not removed but he was better equipped to meet with them.

Translation and distribution

Even after the death of Thomas Bevan, David Jones was determined to continue with the work of translating the Scriptures, in spite of the fact that he would have to work alone. When David Griffiths arrived, hopes were renewed, and both of them settled down to the enormous task of forming a written language and to study the necessary material for their project. David Jones' determination is revealed in the fact that he had already studied a number of languages, Hebrew, Greek, Persian and Malagasy, and had approached the king to discuss the matter. Sharing with the king was crucial because nothing could be done without his permission, and the situation was made more complicated as he was learning the French language. If that language was accepted it would be the basis for the translation of the Word of God, and would also mean that the Roman Catholic faith rather than Protestantism would be rooted in Madagascar.

The two Welshmen shared their suggestions regarding the formation of the language, and David Jones informed David Griffiths of the agreement made with Thomas Bevan. The two pioneers had drawn up a number of points which would govern their work, the first three being:[15]

1st That we adopt the Roman characters in writing the Malagash language.

2ndly that we imitate no particular language whatsoever written in the above characters, in forming the Orthography of the Malagash tongue. See Murray.

3rdly That we therefore proportion the number of letters to that of the sounds, and let every sound have its own character, and every character a single sound in the formation of the Orthography of the Malagash language. See Johnson on the subject.

This was a sound approach based on an awareness of the work of specialists in their respective fields, Alexander Murray (1775–1813), a linguist, who became lecturer in Eastern languages in the University of Edinburgh and Samuel Johnson (1700–1784), the well known English author.

Both David Jones and David Griffiths were determined not to deviate from the pattern they had laid down for themselves, whatever the opposition might be. Apart from gaining the support of the king, they were anxious to be united as missionaries, but such unity was not easily gained, as John Jeffreys (who had arrived in 1821) especially disagreed bitterly with the other two. He would misrepresent the others to the king and gained the support of Mr

Hastie. The king proved himself to be quite wise in the difficult situation. He summoned the missionaries and Mr Hastie to a meeting, and in discussing the different proposals, noticed that David Jones and David Griffiths were writing the words in the same form. The king made a list of those words, asked Mr Hastie to write it out according to his method, and then gave both lists to John Jeffreys, who read out Mr Jones's list quite clearly but had great difficulty in reading that of Mr Hastie. The king had broken the alliance between the two opposers and gave his whole-hearted support to Jones and Griffiths.[16]

Very often a single letter would have to be discussed at length. A good example is the controversy concerning the letter "w". According to John Jeffreys the "w" was "a vowel used *only* in a *mean language* which is the Welsh", but the other two responded by saying that this was false and ridiculous, and that this should have been clear to Jeffreys as he was an Englishman. He, however, had gained the sympathy of the Directors of the LMS in the linguistic debate, and they criticised the two Welshmen, quoting the opinion of Samuel Greathead in their support. Jones and Griffiths responded angrily and defied the Directors, who had with "papal infallibility" made sarcastic remarks and had given them orders, "They would better take it gently or else we shall soon bid them a good bye as we know what we can do independent of them. We are afraid that a fire will break out between us and them".[17]

It was in 1823 that the missionaries really settled down to the work of translating the Scriptures, and David Jones was convinced that it would be completed in spite of all the other demands on the missionaries, including teaching and preaching through the medium of English, Malagash and French. They had to be exceptionally disciplined and succeeded in devoting two days a week, plus an occasional hour, to this particular task. David Jones and David Griffiths divided the work between them, making sure that they were working on a portion of the Old Testament and the New Testament. By September 1824 they were able to give a most encouraging report of what had been accomplished. David Jones had finished translating the Book of Genesis and the Gospel of Matthew, and was far advanced with Acts, John and Samuel, while David Griffiths had translated Exodus, Mark and Luke, was far advanced with the Psalms and had covered the first three chapters of Romans. In a matter of weeks substantial progress was made in both Testaments, and the pace of translation quickened again. David Jones and David Griffiths were able to report, on 17th March 1825, "The New Testament is translated and a great many books in the Old Testament—and getting on with revising some books".[18] Further help was at hand because David Johns arrived in 1826, JJ Freeman in 1827 and Edward Baker in 1828. Johns was another Welshman

who had been to Neuaddlwyd under Thomas Phillips, had attended the Academy in north Wales and had spent some time in Gosport with David Bogue.[19]

The work of revising was a laborious process. The missionaries would, individually, consider portions of translation, come together to compare their corrections and would often work sentence by sentence. David Griffiths was appointed supervisor of the press, and he, and the others, were encouraged by the fact that Edward Baker, who had taken the place of Charles Hovendon, had been apprenticed to a printer. While the revisers were making good progress the king died. They wondered who his successor might be and what would be the attitude to missionary work in general and translation in particular. They tried to work as quickly as possible, and a welcome bonus was a gift of £1,000, an unusually large sum, from the Bible Society. For one period the revisers, and all concerned with the press, worked from morning until evening. Even when David Jones was taken ill, he could not bear to be left out completely from the discussions. The revisers would meet in his home, three of them would carry out the work to be done on that day, and when necessary would go to his bedside in order to receive his advice.

The revision was completed in 1830, the year in which David Jones had to return to London because of ill health, and also having lost his six year old boy. The other missionaries persevered, and Edward Baker rejoiced in his spirit as he sent six copies each of the New Testament to the LMS and the Bible Society. It was with "more than ordinary pleasure" that he wrote to London, and called to mind, "That the first Testament in this Language has been printed in a period, perhaps the most eventful in the history of the Island,—and certainly the most threatening in its aspect upon our Missionary prospects here".[20] Two years after the death of the king the missionaries were becoming more aware of the changes that could endanger their work, especially the queen's influence on education.

By 1832 the Government was threatening to stop missionary work, and therefore all the missionaries took part in the revision work in order to finish it as soon as possible. A page would be given to each of them, and a page to every two supervisors of the schools. When that work was finished it was sent to David Griffiths and Edward Baker, who would scrutinise every page, a task which often kept them up until 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning. Such a work drained them physically and weakened David Griffiths' eye sight. Progress was made and in 1833 a summary of the work was sent to London, relating how 1,500 copies of Luke's Gospel were printed in 1828, 3,000 copies of the whole of the New Testament in March 1830, and separate editions: 700 copies of Mark's Gospel; 1,000 of John; 1,000 of Galatians with the Decalogue; 1,000 of Ephesians; and 1,000 of Genesis

and Exodus to chapter 20. Almost immediately afterwards 750 copies of Genesis to 1 Samuel were printed, with 50 extra copies for separate distribution and 3,000 copies of the Book of Psalms up to number 115.[21]

Most of the Old Testament had been translated and revised but further progress was difficult because there were tensions between David Griffiths and his colleagues. Consequently, most of the work was shouldered by David Johns and JJ Freeman. A darker cloud appeared on 1st March 1835 when the queen announced her policy to prosecute and persecute the Christians. By this time the Old Testament was almost complete and the first copy came from the press on 21st June 1835. The very year that persecution really started was the year that the people of Madagascar had the complete Bible in their own language. Because of the changes in the land David Griffiths and JJ Freeman had to leave in 1835, followed by David Johns and Edward Baker in 1836. David Jones, who had returned in 1830, was able to continue with revision work in London, and when David Griffiths and JJ Freeman arrived home they were able to do revision and translation work. The former continued after Freeman's death, and a revised New Testament appeared in 1854. He almost completed the Old Testament but the Bible Society did not think that it was practical to print it and send it to Madagascar. In a short time a great deal had been accomplished, which was to be for the good of Madagascar during the time of persecution, but, also, the foundation had been soundly laid for future translation work.

Translation work had to be done in order to preach and teach. The missionaries made the Bible central in both aspects. They never regarded the task as a mere academic exercise. It was their desire, rather, to make it a book for the people. They made use of their own translations before any of them were printed, and after 1828 it was possible to distribute copies as well. A list for 1830 reflects the concern the missionaries had to give the Scriptures to the people. It records that a total of 450 New Testaments were distributed. The highest number of 127 was sent to Mauritius, and given to Europeans and members of the Mission, while the second highest number of 66 went to teachers and proficient scholars. A number of copies were given to wives whose husbands had taught them to read. The army was all-important to keep Imerina in order and keep it strong from any attacks from outside. The Government realised that it needed the best men to enlist, and they were those who had been educated. The missionaries also saw the significance of the army in Imerina and made sure that copies of the Scriptures were presented to the officers of the highest rank, inferior officers and soldiers. Another group which which had made a substantial contribution to the well-being of the country, and had improved relationships between the missionaries and the natives, was

that of the artisan workers. The apprentices of Mr Canham and Mr Chick received the New Testament, as well as those with Mr Cameron who were learning the art of soap-making.[22]

In this area of their work, as in all other areas, the missionaries could see clearly the hand of God in providence. The early losses had been made up for, the language was in a written form, the king had given his support to mission work and the work of translation was finished in a short period of time. All this had been accomplished before the beginning of prolonged suffering in 1835.

Education and evangelisation

In close fellowship with each other, David Jones and David Griffiths were determined to organise the schools and make them more efficient. When the ranks were strengthened by the coming of Mr and Mrs John Jeffreys, Mr Canham, a cobbler, Mr Chick, a smith, and Mr Brooks, a carpenter, they felt more confident. Mr Hastie had returned with them and had brought with him horses, cats, greyhounds and plants. David Jones was already settled in the house built in the king's courtyard, a house was being built for David Griffiths, and David Jones and Hastie had bought ground to build three houses, one each for the artisan workers, who were important in terms of self-support, in contributing to the economy of the town and in helping with the work in the schools.

The king was pleased with the missionaries and the gifts, and expressed his desire to see the country benefiting socially, and educationally. He encouraged the parents to send their children to the schools of the missionaries. A good number of the younger people had a deep thirst for knowledge and would assemble at the homes of the missionaries before sunrise to inquire about the classes. Consequently it was possible to include more children, which was, especially to David Jones, an important step forward. He had started out by teaching the children of the royal house, but it was his conviction that children of all ranks should be taught, not only in English but also through the medium of the native language. The missionaries prepared spelling-books, but they only had a lithographic-press, and looked forward to having a printing press to supply them with the necessary books. There was also a great need for paper and slates.

A few weeks after his arrival, John Jeffreys sent a report of the work to the Directors in London. On 16th June 1822 he had visited David Jones' school at 7 o'clock in the morning to listen to the teacher catechising the children. He was helped by a monitor, according to the Lancastrian system, and he was responsible for beginning the day by teaching the class to repeat a hymn. It was

an efficient method because the monitor, a senior pupil, taught a small group and could help with discipline, so there was no need to find another teacher. At 10 o'clock an English service was held in the home of David Griffiths, when he preached from Acts 8:38, the children were catechised and they practised singing. On the following day the king visited the school for the public examination. First of all, David Jones was visited and then David Griffiths. The children were examined in reading, spelling, writing and the first rules of arithmetic. The needlework of the girls was also examined. In both schools a total of 85 were examined. To end the day a dinner was held in the house of Mr Hastie, "when the social intercourse and good humour of old England was enjoyed in the capital of Madagascar".[23]

More detail is provided for 1824. The three existing schools in the town were formed into one, but the boys and the girls were separated. The Boys' School was divided into five classes and concentrated on learning to read the Scriptures, arithmetic, spelling, writing, catechising; and some of the class translated from English into the native tongue. There was a wide range in terms of age, extending from the seniors to those of "a tender age" in class five. The Girls' School was divided into three classes with a similar curriculum, but they were also taught needle-work, and various branches, "advantageous to themselves, and beneficial to the country".[24]

The missionaries were responsible for the teaching, but gradually they were able to make more use of more senior pupils. These were not Christians, and would leave the teaching of the Bible to the teachers. The catechism had an important part in the curriculum of the schools. David Jones used Dr Watt's Catechism; David Griffiths used Watts on Scripture Names and translated Brown's Catechism into the language of the people. One report refers to the fact that the children had "learnt almost the whole of a large Catechism of Dr Brown". In teaching English the missionaries made use of a Sunday-school Spelling Book and Murray's Easy Lessons. Another useful book was Goldsmith's Geography. For the first few years especially there was a lack of facilities and the children had to write on a piece of wood covered with fat and ashes, using a piece of wood to write with, but slates were introduced, and some of the children used paper.[25]

Work in the capital was strengthened by the formation of the School Society, on 14th November 1825, patronised by Radama. The Society made it quite clear that the main aim was to spread the principles of the Christian religion, providing books for the schools and clothing for those who could not attend the school because of their poverty. From the capital the missionaries worked into the interior. They themselves, including the artisans, pursued the work, and also taught many from the main school to do the work. Apart from

David Jones and David Griffiths in the capital, John Jeffreys, Canham and Rowlands had oversight of schools in rural areas. Jones and Griffiths, however, would visit the schools in turn, every Sunday, in order to catechise the children, and the pupils from the main school assisted them. In five months during 1824, 22 schools were opened. A school with 80 scholars would have four teachers, two on alternate weeks, so that they were free to attend the main school for a week at a time.

The school in the capital made good progress, and a report, made just after the union of the three schools in the capital, gives a clear insight into its nature,[26]

> The school hours of the Royal Missionary College, on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, are, in the morning, from six to half past eight, and in the afternoon, from 2 to half past four. On Wednesday and Saturday mornings they are from six to half past eight; but in the afternoon of those days we have no school. We teach in the Missionary College the reading and writing of the English and native languages, with grammatical lessons, &c. in each; arithmetic, trigonometry, short-hand, and the use of the globes. To these are added exercises in translating English into Malagash, and Malagash into English.

Teaching and supervision of the schools had to be related to the other activities of the missionaries, especially preaching and translating.

Whatever the level of teaching in the different schools, an attempt was always made, not only to give information, but also to evangelise and be as practical as possible. The Bible in English and the parts already translated into the native language was the basis of the teaching. The children were taught the meaning of important passages, including those on creation and the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, leading eventually to the message of salvation by grace. The children would go home and relate to their parents what they had heard in school. Because the teaching was Bible based, it meant that the work in day school and Sunday school complemented each other. In both establishments catechising and learning to read the Scriptures were the main activities. It is interesting that the missionaries from Wales attached so much importance to day schools, while back in their native country the church leaders were reluctant to do so, and concentrated on Sunday schools.

Another way to make education practical was to arrange informal meetings. Mr Canham would invite his workers to come to him, at specified times during the day, to ask questions and discuss them with him. Informal meetings would also be held to discuss specific problems. In one such meeting a converted man, who was previously a diviner, related his experience in order to help other believers to talk to such a man. In another meeting slavery was

discussed, and what was the responsibility of slaves who became Christians. Another relevant consideration was how to be honest in a dishonest society. The king himself realised that there was a significant difference between those who attended the schools and those who did not. The educated ones would be better citizens, and could serve their country in different ways, especially in the army. In 1825 he selected eighteen youngsters from the schools for military service, knowing that he could depend on them, and they would be able to communicate with him in writing. Apart from filling the ranks of the army, the scholars had opportunities for jobs in the royal household. The more efficiently the country was run, especially the capital, the more highly regarded would be Radama's reputation.[27]

The schools increased year by year. The growth can be illustrated in two ways. First of all the growth of schools and scholars from 1822 until 1828:[28]

1822	boys and girls in the capital	85
1824	14 schools	1,200 scholars
1825	23 out-schools	2,000 scholars
1826	29 schools	2,049 scholars
1828	32 schools	2,309 scholars

Most of the schools were in the kingdom of Imerina, but a number were found beyond the boundary of that kingdom. Another set of figures can be given, and they reflect the problems in the schools in Madagascar:[29]

1830

North	Scholars on books	2,353
	Of regular attendants	1,560
South	Scholars on books	1,361
	Regular attendance	937

A high percentage of children could not attend regularly, because of the indifference of some of the parents, open opposition in some cases. The priests of their religion would also threaten parents with suffering if they sent their children to the schools of the missionaries.

As with the translation of the Bible, the years from 1828 to 1835 were also crucial for the schools. Until 1831 they were the mainstay of missionary work in Madagascar, and as the missionaries themselves said, "Without schools, we labour, translate, print, and preach in vain". During this period the queen restricted the freedom of the schools, although some were re-opened in 1832. Slowly but surely her iron hand was becoming more and more oppressive, but as her opposition became more cruel the different aspects of the missionary work in Madagascar had a new lease of life. The schools had produced a new generation of scholars, chapels had been opened, the New Testament completed and most of the Old Testament, and *Pilgrim's Progress*, translated

by David Johns with the help of one of the natives. A quickening spirit in worship and witness was experienced by the church.

The missionaries reported that, "The two principal circumstances which we wish to notice in connection of these meetings, are, first, that a spirit of prayer actually exists and increases among the natives; and second, that these meetings are convened and conducted by the natives themselves".[30] The believers were being prepared for a long period of suffering. They had a bitter taste when four "syncretistic" Christians were cruelly put to death. A piece of cloth was tied over their mouths, they were led to the north of the town, placed head downward in a pit and boiling water poured over them. The pit was then filled with earth. Persecution from 1835 was to be general, intense and prolonged.

Persecution and expansion

The queen marshalled all her forces during the week from 21 February until 1st March 1835. During the first Sunday the sewing women were gathered together in the courtyard, knowing that they wanted to go to worship, and they were treated with contempt. During that day the chapel at Ambatonakanga was full, with all the worshippers very conscious of the need for enabling grace. On Tuesday the queen gave an order to draw up a list of houses used for prayer, and the names of those who had been baptised. When she read the list she was astonished at the high numbers, and swore that she would soon end such activities. On Thursday a letter was sent to the Europeans forbidding them to teach the Christian faith. It was supposed to be delivered to David Griffiths' house, but there were so many people present that they had to go into the chapel. On the Saturday, the queen's representatives, the soldiers and the judges encamped near the centre where the crucial meeting was to be held the following day.[31]

The 1st March 1835 was a dark day for the Christians in Madagascar, but their hope was that they believed in a God who governed the darkness as well as the light. They desperately needed such faith because on that fateful day all Christian activity was proclaimed to be illegal. All prayer, reading of Christian books and the teaching of the faith were prohibited. An opportunity was given to all believers, and those who had attended Christian meetings, to accuse themselves, confess their guilt, deny the foreign religion, and enjoy freedom. If they were unwilling to do so they had to face the consequences. The Christians realised the seriousness of the situation, and there were examples of those who gave in under threats and persecution. The majority, however, continued to pray and read in secret. They valued their books and managed to hide complete copies or parts of the Scriptures, catechisms and copies of *Pilgrim's*

Progress, translated by David Johns with the help of one of the natives. Many copies were buried in the earth and the believers would bring them out secretly during the night, when it was difficult for them to be found by the queen's men.

Illegal books were confiscated, gathered together and deposited in a centre in the capital. The officers responsible for doing so took great delight in their task, scoffing at the books and ridiculing the believers. The only concession was the permission given to gather David Griffiths' books together and deposit them in the Repository. The queen had a number of the books read to her and if any of them contained dangerous words they were condemned immediately, and those words included "darkness" and "Jesus". Nothing would prevent the queen and her men from accomplishing the work with thoroughness. There was a danger that the rats would eat the books, and, therefore, cats were used to guard them.

The queen was determined to get rid of the missionaries and make all her people loyal subjects. Freeman, Cameron, Chick and Kitchin had to leave in 1835, followed by Johns and Baker in 1836. Her own people soon felt the bite of her tongue and the lash of her whip. Those unfaithful to the queen could be fined, tortured, kept in chains for a long time or put to death cruelly. One of the most awful aspects of the persecution was the *tangena*, or trial by poison. An accused person would be given poison to drink, and was then given some food to eat. If he vomited it was a sign that he was innocent, and if he did not he was guilty. The official in charge could increase the pain of the sufferer by giving unripe fruit to him, but could also lessen the pain if the sufferer was willing to give a bribe. If a person was found guilty, all his property would pass to the officer in charge. There is no doubt that the queen had a real desire to see her subjects loyal and faithful to the traditions of the island, but she was unwise and cruel. If she loved her own country she hated Europeans, including missionaries. By adopting the *tangena* method she drove the believers underground and gained the implicit obedience of her officials, as they would gain personally.

During the early years of suffering two of the native believers can be chosen to represent the heroic suffering of the church in Madagascar. Rasalama had, unintentionally, revealed the names of fellow believers, and this fact made her more determined than ever to stand up for her Saviour. She was confined for a period in the house of an officer noted for his cruelty, and she suffered severe beatings. One of the men who supervised the torture was a relative of hers, who openly renounced the family tie, stating that his allegiance was to the queen, and to her alone. The day before she died as a martyr, "She was put that afternoon into irons of a peculiar construction, not intended so much for

the security of the prisoner as for cruel punishment. The irons consist of rings and bars, and are fastened around the feet, hands, knees and neck as to confine the whole body in an excruciatingly painful position, forcing the extremities together, as if the sufferer were packed into a small case". Next morning she was led to her death, singing hymns on the way, and as she passed the house of David Griffiths, she gave thanks to God because it was there she had first of all heard the words of the Saviour. When they arrived at the appointed spot she had permission to kneel down and pray, and as she was in that position was speared to death.

Rafaralahy had been brought up in good circumstances, was taught by a native Christian and became a believer, but when the persecution broke out in 1835, wavered in his faith. When his brother was put to the *tangena* test, Rafaralahy realised how futile it was to obey the queen and was determined to do everything to further the Christian cause in Madagascar. He built a house not far from the capital, where he could hide the persecuted Christians and divided his rice fields in such a way that he could support the needy believers as well as his family. He was deceived by his former teacher who, under the guise of friendship, informed on the believer. Rafaralahy was taken into custody and put in irons. At the place of execution, he was allowed, like Rasalama, to offer prayer, interceded passionately for his country, laid himself down on the ground and was put to death. The government officials immediately apprehended his wife, who, when tortured, made known the names of some believers.

One person who had found shelter in Rafaralahy's home was Rafaravavy, one of the very few who escaped from Madagascar. She, with six others, were hunted like dogs for a period of eight months, hiding in homes of fellow believers, in caves, in tall grass and bogs. Throughout the period she was most careful not lose the Bible she carried on her back. They heard that David Johns was in Tamatave with a friend, arranging their escape to Mauritius. They took the hazardous journey to the coast in great danger every step of the way. They were welcomed by David John's friend, but Johns himself had left for Mauritius. The seven reached their destination on 14th October 1838; six of them left for England in December, accompanied by David Johns, and arrived in London in May 1839. Mrs David Johns took care of Rafaravavy and Razafy, while the four men lived with the master of the British and Foreign School in Walthamstow, where they also found a spiritual home in the church pastored by JJ Freeman.

David Johns had returned in order to help the suffering believers of Madagascar. David Jones and David Griffiths were also permitted to return for a specified time. David Griffiths did not go as an agent of the LMS, and took

goods with him in order to support himself and help the persecuted Christians. During one of their visits to Madagascar he met Dr L Powell, a fellow-Welshman, who was on his way to Mauritius to collect medicine for the queen. He joined with the others in order to help the suffering Christians. David Jones spent most of the time in Mauritius, but did visit Madagascar and provided the believers with New Testaments, parts of Scriptures and helpful magazines. He continued to do so until his death in Mauritius in 1841. Griffiths and Powell kept a Journal for the period 1838 to 1840 giving a full account of events in Madagascar and Mauritius. Powell had already helped the eight believers who had crossed to Mauritius and then to England, and decided to work in close collaboration with David Griffiths. Griffiths had a willing helper in his old servant, Raminhay. On one occasion she saw a believer trying to escape, who could not because of a disease in her hip-joint. Raminhay carried her on her back, hid her in a ditch until midnight, took her to David Griffiths' house, hid her in a loft and removed her to a safer place. This was typical of the behaviour of the believers during this period of persecution.[32]

David Griffiths and L Powell made arrangements for sixteen believers to journey to Tamatave, and then cross to Mauritius.[33] Griffiths made plans in the capital, while Powell left for Tamatave to meet with their contact, Mr Berbyer, and finalise arrangements. The company left on 23rd May 1840. They travelled by night and hid themselves during the day, because they knew that they were being hunted by the queen's soldiers. These succeeded in discovering the fugitives, who were kept for about a fortnight at Beforona, and then taken into the capital on 19th June 1840. They were interrogated for long periods, not only concerning their own activities but those of Griffiths and Powell as well. A few managed to escape and David Griffiths arranged to send them rice, clothing and financial support to build hiding places.

Of the sixteen who were captured, two escaped and five had to face the ordeal (*tangena*), and nine met their death on 9th July 1840. According to Griffiths there were about eighty thousand people present on the occasion. He and his son Ebenezer witnessed the procession which passed the house about 9 o'clock in the morning. The soldiers were fully dressed and a band of musicians in attendance as they made their way to the Plain of Mahamasina. As they passed his house David Griffiths could see the face of Ramanisa (Joshua), and some of the others, and they were shining like angels. The nine were carried on poles, naked, but for the hand breadth of Jabo cloth, and the procession stopped for ten minutes outside the house of the missionary, a sight that overwhelmed the young Ebenezer, and the father had to take him inside to rest on a bed. David Griffiths left as soon as possible to describe the scene to

David Jones. The proclamation on behalf of the queen was made by Raiminaharo, her right hand man, making clear that she would not tolerate any opposition to her policy, and that nine believers were to be put to death. They were taken to the place of execution and speared to death. They were well known to David Griffiths, and he mentions some of them them by name, Lot, Noah, Joshua, Paul, whose head was cut off and fixed on a pole, and Raminahy (Flora), who had nursed one of his children Mary Ann, the future wife of Griffiths John, the LMS missionary to China.

David Griffiths himself was the next person to face his accusers. The queen's men entered his house on 22th July 1840, and also summoned all the other Europeans to be present. He was accused of "taking my people away", and providing them with rice, meat, blankets and money. He was found guilty and ordered to pay twenty dollars for his life, thirty dollars to his accusers and a two hundred dollar fine. He appealed for a reduction of fines, and the sum due to his accusers was halved and the fine cut by a third. It was made quite clear that he should leave the island never to return, but he was given permission to collect his debts. David Griffiths left the capital at 2 o'clock in the afternoon on 4th August 1840. He crossed to Mauritius, but could not forget the Christians in Madagascar; he defied the judgement of the queen and returned on two occasions. When he returned to Mauritius after the first visit he met with David Johns, who had just come from Britain, and with David Jones, who was ill in bed. When David Griffiths returned after the second visit, he was told that David Jones had passed away and that David Johns was in Madagascar. David and Ebenezer Griffiths left Mauritius on 4th November 1841.[34]

David Johns was left to visit Madagascar alone. He went there in 1841, twice in 1842 and was making plans to go again in 1843. During his first visit in 1842 the only literature he had to distribute were three or four copies of *Pilgrim's Progress*, but during the second visit he had many more books. He also collected money for the sufferers, and one of the sources was the profit from writing the history of the persecution. One place he visited was the island of Nosibe, and while he was there suffered from the fever which eventually led to his death on 6th August 1843.[35]

The story of these early years in Madagascar remind us forcefully that the word of God is not bound. When blessed by God it will not return to him void but will accomplish that which he purposes. For about ten years there was no great blessing on the preaching of the word in Madagascar, but during that time the Bible was taught in the schools, and a firm foundation was laid for the time of blessing from 1831 to 1835. During the terrible suffering of the believers, Scripture, or parts of it, gave them courage, patience and wisdom.

Their faith was purified, because it is of the nature of faith to overcome. Some wavered and were restored, a few denied the faith, but the majority stood the test. Another source of comfort was the books prepared by the missionaries, especially *Pilgrim's Progress*. The Christians could live out those characters in their situation in Madagascar. The work was translated into the language of the people, and this is another reason for the success of missionary work in the island. Many Europeans were there for personal gain and never learned the language, but the missionaries were there for the spiritual benefit of the people, and in spite of failures, this was always uppermost in their minds.

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