
A table of contents for the *Congregational Studies Conference Papers* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_congregational-studies-conference_01.php

Origins, Theology and Unity

Congregational Studies
Conference 2000

Origins, Theology and Unity

Ian Harrison, Bryan Jones
and Kenneth Brownell

Congregational Studies Conference
Papers 2000

For information on EFCC and previous
Congregational Studies Conference Papers, contact:

The Administrative Secretary,
The Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches,
PO Box 34,
Beverley,
East Yorkshire,
England
HU17 0YY

e-mail: efcc@cix.co.uk
Visit the web-site: www.efcc.org.uk

Except where stated, the paintings and photographs reproduced with the papers are courtesy of the Evangelical Library. The Library is a source of most of the books referred to in the papers, many available for loan to members. Details are available from The Evangelical Library, 78a Chiltern Street, London W1M 2HB. Telephone: 020 7935 6997.

Contents

Foreword
Rev. John Semper 5

John Wycliffe, Father of Congregationalism?
Rev. Ian Harrison.....7

John Owen's Evangelical Theology
Rev. Bryan Jones 27

Robert and James Haldane and the Quest for Evangelical Union
Rev. Dr Kenneth Brownell.....49

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.

Rev. Ian Harrison is minister of Blurton Free Baptist Church, Stoke-on-Trent.

Rev. Bryan Jones is minister of Oldbury Congregational Church.

Rev. Dr Kenneth Brownell is minister of East London Tabernacle and editor of the British Evangelical Council's theological journal *Foundations.*

Foreword

The excellent support given to the Congregational Studies Conference at Westminster Chapel on 11 March 2000 is testimony to the valuable place it fills in the life of our churches and individual church members. I would suggest that most of us who gather on these occasions are not merely interested in the past for its own sake, or for a glimpse of the glories of former days, but have a real desire to learn from past mistakes and to build on previous successes. That is why we try to make time for discussion of each paper, not with a view to crossing every "t" but in order to elucidate any helpful application of the material to our present situation.

Once again we are grateful to the Rev. Derek Swann for planning such a varied yet balanced programme, prior to his retirement from the office of chairman, which he has so ably and spiritually filled for many years. We are indebted to him for all his contributions and for his leadership and guidance of the Conference.

Ian Harrison made us ponder whether the principles of Congregationalism are to be found in embryonic form in the Lollardcongregations which met in secret, following the death of Wycliffe. Bryan Jones drew out the great richness and depth of John Owen's biblical evangelicalism, demonstrating his place as one of our greatest theologians. Finally, Kenneth Brownell both challenged and stimulated our thinking on the subject of evangelical union and the failure of the Haldane brothers' attempts to achieve it. We want to express our thanks to them for all the research and time involved in the preparation of these papaers.

Next year's Conference will be held, God willing, at Westminster Chapel on Saturday, 17 March 2001.

John Semper

Wigtown

John Wycliffe

Wycliffe memorial tablet inside Lutterworth Parish Church

John Wycliffe: Father of Congregationalism?

Ian Harrison

Introduction

John Wycliffe was born c.1330 in North Yorkshire.[1] By 1370 he had become Oxford's leading philosopher and theologian, becoming a Doctor of Divinity in 1372. His theories and pamphlets concerning "Dominion" proved to be of significant value to the parliamentarians of 1371 in their argument with Rome and led to a short career in politics. This theory was far more than a theory of political or social rights. It is arguable that, though used in this way both by Parliament in 1371 and by some participants in the Peasants' Revolt in 1381, Wycliffe's dominion theories were far more concerned with ecclesiastical authority. We will need to examine them further at a later stage.

In 1374 Wycliffe was given the rectory at Lutterworth.[2] At the university and in the pulpit he preached the authority of Scripture. As a result, three years later he was placed under an injunction against preaching his doctrines. In 1380 Wycliffe completed a translation of the Vulgate into English.[3] The impact of the work outstripped his expectations. D'Aubigné asserts that,

> the voices of the "poor priests" had done little in comparison with this voice; something new had entered the world.[4]

One contemporary writer claims,

> you could not meet two persons on the highway but one of them was Wickliffe's disciple.[5]

Even the criticism of his enemies holds high praise:

> Master John Wickliffe, by translating the gospel into English, has rendered it more acceptable and more intelligible to laymen and even women, than it had hitherto been to learned and intelligent clerks!"[6]

---

1 Probably the village of Wycliffe which is approx. 8 miles north of Richmond and 8 miles west of Darlington.
2 Historians disagree as to when in 1374 Wycliffe received the rectory and as to whether or not it was a reward for his political duties.
3 There is some debate as to the exact nature of Wycliffe's involvement in this project.
4 JH Merle d'Aubigné, *The Reformation in England*, vol. 1. (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1994), p.90.
5 *Ibid.*, p. 90.
6 *Ibid.*, p. 91.

The following year, Wycliffe was condemned in Oxford for declaring the doctrine of transubstantiation to be unbiblical. He was banned from teaching and threatened with imprisonment. In May 1382, a synod condemned him on the basis of ten propositions ascribed to him. Shortly after these events he was summoned to appear in Rome. He was too frail to go and in his refusal he set out the authority of scripture and denied the authority of the Pope:

> No faithful man ought to follow the Pope, but in such points as he hath followed Jesus Christ.[7]

Wycliffe's last years were spent writing. Knowing the end to be close, he expected to die in prison or at the stake. He wrote,

> Why do you talk of seeking the crown of martyrdom afar? Preach the gospel of Christ to haughty prelates, and martyrdom will not fail you. What! I should live and be silent?… never! Let the blow fall, I await its coming."[8]

On 29 December 1384, whilst ministering in the Church at Lutterworth, John Wycliffe suffered a stroke which left him paralysed. He died two days later. In 1415, the Council of Constance condemned and posthumously excommunicated Wycliffe and in 1428 his body was exhumed and burned.

The question before us is: was John Wycliffe the Father of Congregationalism? To answer this question we will need to establish a number of things. First of all, we need to determine whether or not Wycliffe was himself Congregationalist or whether his teaching was beginning to move in that direction. In either case, we will then need to attempt to trace the impact of this teaching on those who followed him. In order to examine these areas, this paper will first need to come to a working definition of Congregationalism. With this definition in mind, it will then be necessary to examine what we know of the teaching and practice of Wycliffe himself and of his theological descendants.

However, before embarking on this examination, a word of caution is necessary. Wycliffe has been widely recognised as the "Morning Star of the Reformation". As such, people of different views have attempted to prove that he was the forerunner of their own understanding. In his book, *Congregational History 1200–1567, John Waddington clearly believes Wycliffe to be Congregationalist in his understanding. He writes:*

> The organisations devised by men to promote religious fellowship as an improvement on the Christian Church, in its Congregational form, were now weighed in the balance, and found wanting.[9]

---

7 *Ibid.*, p.96.
8 *Ibid.*, p. 97.
9 John Waddington, *Congregational History 1200–1567* (London: John Snow & Co., 1869), p. 98.

Waddington seems to assume that anyone coming to a biblical understanding of Church order is a Congregationalist and it is this assumption which forms the basis of his handling of Wycliffe. Whilst we will all heartily agree with Waddington's sentiment, his historical method at this point is questionable and would cause some consternation amongst our Presbyterian brothers. If this paper is to avoid this pitfall, it is vital that such assumptions be put to one side and nothing be assumed about Wycliffe's understanding.

A definition of Congregationalism

For many evangelically minded Congregationalists, the great definition of Congregationalism is the Savoy Declaration of 1658. Those who gathered at the Savoy Palace on 29 September 1658 included Thomas Goodwin, John Owen, Philip Nye, William Bridge, Joseph Caryl and William Greenhill. These men were asked to form a committee to draw up a confession that would distinguish orthodox Independents from the extreme and sometimes heretical sects that were flourishing at the time. The committee purposefully based their confession on the earlier Westminster Confession in order to emphasise their orthodoxy. Changes were made by the Savoy committee, but most of these took the form of minor improvements. It was in the statement of church polity that the Savoy was significantly different from the Westminster Confession. Interestingly, in 1677 the Particular Baptists, trying to establish their essential unity with both the Presbyterians and the Congregationalists, drew up the Second London Confession. In the matter of church polity this confession followed the Savoy. Only on the subject of baptism did the Second London Confession significantly distinguish the Baptists from the Congregationalists.

The reasoning behind these confessions is significant. Both the Congregationalists and the Baptists wrote their confessions, not to outline their distinctives, but to express their essential unity with churches that were recognised to be evangelical in nature. The Savoy Declaration was written to establish the similarities between Congregationalists and Presbyterians and likewise the Second London Confession was written to establish the similarities between Baptists, Congregationalists and Presbyterians. Each confession does define the distinctives of the three groups, but in the seventeenth century this does not seem to have been the chief purpose of the confessions. It would seem, therefore, that the Baptists and Congregationalists were seen to be one in their understanding of church polity in the same way that Presbyterians and Congregationalists were seen to be one in their understanding of the administration of baptism. In seeking a definition of Congregationalism, it is important to establish whether or not our seventeenth

century forefathers understood this distinction to be inherent to the nature of Congregationalism. In 1651, the *Declaration of divers Elders and Brethren of Congregational Societies in and about London* appeared. Its purpose is not of significance to this paper, but what is of significance is that the declaration was signed by a number of Baptist ministers. It would appear that, in London at least, the two groups were happy to define themselves as branches of Congregationalism as opposed to two distinct groups. Geoffrey Nuttall comes to a similar conclusion in his work, *Visible Saints*. He writes:

> By this date [1654] the churches which insisted on believers' baptism had become a separate and self-conscious community; but in 1652 Richard Baxter still recognised only "4 differing partyes (Episcopall, Presbyterian, Independent and Erastian)" and thought of "Anabaptists" as differing solely "in pt of worship".[10]

Nuttall goes on to cite the declaration of Congregational Societies in London already mentioned and concludes that many of the Baptist congregations "regarded themselves as fundamentally at one with the Congregational men."[11]

The adoption of so much of the Westminster Confession by the Savoy Assembly is a good indication to us of the way in which seventeenth century Congregationalists defined themselves. They clearly saw themselves as standing alongside their Presbyterian colleagues in all but their understanding of church government. From the attitude of the London churches, it would also appear that seventeenth century Congregationalism was not understood to be exclusively paedo-baptist. For this reason, this paper will assume the definition of Congregationalism to be that form of church polity set out in *The Institution of Churches, and the Order Appointed in them by Jesus Christ* at the end of the Savoy Declaration. In summary, it is perhaps helpful to repeat Iain Murray's outline of the distinctives of Congregationalism:

1. Full spiritual power and authority resides in a particular local congregation (IV–VI).

2. The essence of the call of a minister is his election by the congregation. Formal ordination is a ratification of this, and is normally to be performed by the eldership of a local congregation (XI, XII, XV).

3. Synods are expedient for the discussion and resolution of difficulties, but they have no power over churches and individuals. The system of standing synods subordinate to one another is rejected (XXVI–XXVII).[12]

10 Geoffrey Nuttall *The Visible Saints 1640–1660* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1957), p. 120.
11 *Ibid.*, p. 120.
12 Iain Murray, *The Reformation of the Church* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1987), p. 275.

With this definition in mind, we can now return to the theology of John Wycliffe.

Wycliffe's Theology

Wycliffe wrote extensively on a number of subjects. Unlike the writings of many of his contemporaries, a significant number of his works were written for general consumption. Of those that were aimed at an academic readership, the bulk are in Latin. Unfortunately, that leaves the writer of this paper dependent on the research of those skilled in that language. There are two particular areas of Wycliffe's thought that need to be considered at this point. The first is Wycliffe's dominion theology and the second (and perhaps more obvious) is his writing on the nature of the church.

We begin with the less obvious. To understand Wycliffe's theory of the dominion of grace, we need to take a moment to familiarise ourselves with the feudal system of the Middle Ages and the seigniorialism that resulted. During this period very few people actually owned land, and fiefdoms were given in return for political and military support. Those freemen granted such land rights appointed others who lived on the land to act as "tenants in chief". These were the upper management, as it were, and they in turn appointed "mesne" tenants who dealt directly with the actual holder of the land. According to Margaret Deanesley, this strict hierarchy "had become applied to spiritual office: grace was conceived of as derived from God through the Pope and hierarchy."[13] This understanding has God pouring His grace out through what is, in effect, an inverted funnel. According to this theory, only the Pope ever receives grace directly from God. The Pope dispenses this grace to the archbishops, through whom the bishops receive grace and so on until it is finally received by the layman.

Wycliffe challenged this view and taught that every man was God's "tenant in chief". He insisted that the Bible taught that each individual received grace directly from God and owed nothing to any other man. Each individual was directly responsible to God to keep his law, that is to live according to the Scriptures. Those who fulfilled these responsibilities were possessed of dominion. Equally those who did not live according to God's law, even if they are popes and bishops, are by that very fact dispossessed. It was this theory that caught the attention of the king and his parliament and led to Wycliffe's short career in politics.

However, as has already been noted, Wycliffe saw more than a social

13 Margaret Deanesley, *A History of the Medieval Church*, 9th ed. (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 223–4: it is arguable that the feudal system is based on the hierarchic structures of the Church, the latter predating the former.

application for this understanding. The sins of the Pope, of the church hierarchy and of the friars had removed their right to any form of dominion. In the church, all men are equal before God and directly responsible to Him. Summarising Wycliffe's dominion theology, Professor Gotthard Lechler writes:

> Every individual devout Christian owes all that he possesses in his inner life to the regeneration which is the fruit of election.[14]

It is not hard to see how this could develop into a Congregational understanding of church government, with godly members governing together, using the Scriptures as the sole rule of faith. In his dominion theology, there is one point that rings clear over all: Christ is head over all things spiritual and temporal and every individual is responsible directly to Him.

The issues of personal and direct responsibility to God and personal and direct reception of grace are echoed by the Savoy Declaration:

> These particular churches thus appointed by the authority of Christ, and entered with power from him for the ends before expressed, are each of them as unto those ends, the seat of that power which he is pleased to communicate to his saints or subjects in this world, so that as such they receive it immediately from himself.[15]

It is as Wycliffe deals more directly with the church that a picture begins to form of the way in which Wycliffe's dominion theology could be applied to the church. Having spoken of the church as having three parts, Wycliffe defined the church as follows:

> all these make one Church and the head of this Church is Christ, both God and man; and this Church is mother to each man that shall be saved, and contains no member but only men that shall be saved.[16]

According to Lechler, this understanding of the church as consisting of the elect "runs like a scarlet thread through the whole system of Wycliffe's thinking."[17]

This equality of all believers is the foundation of an understanding of the priesthood of all believers. According to Anne Hudson,

> Hints of such an idea are to be found in Wyclif, but Netter seems to be accurate in perceiving it to be more fully developed in his followers.[18]

---

14 Professor Lechler, *John Wycliffe and his English Precursors* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1904), p. 316.

15 *Savoy Declaration of Faith and Order*, in *Evangelical and Congregational* (Beverley: An Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches, 1995), p. 87.

16 John Wycliffe; *Of the Church and her Members,* in *Wycliffes Three Treatises on the Church 1384*, ed. James Henthorn Todd (Dublin: Hodges and Smith, 1851), part iv. My own translation from original Middle English.

17 Lechler, *op. cit.*, p. 315.

18 Anne Hudson, *The Premature Reformation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p. 325.

One such hint is found in Wycliffe's pamphlet, *The Power of Popes,* in which he denied the biblical origin of the episcopacy. Wycliffe wrote:

> So it seems safe to say that it would be better for the Church to have none such, and that we should live as before the endowment of the Church, when its government was in common.[19]

The intriguing question raised by such statements is: what did Wycliffe understand by the government of the church being in common? Unfortunately, the answer is that we cannot be sure from an examination of Wycliffe himself. We can say that such a comment almost certainly suggests an understanding of the priesthood of all believers, but we cannot say exactly how he understood that doctrine to work out in church government.

GHW Parker suggests that,

> Simply and logically from the fundamentals which he posed there followed the conclusion that the individual Christian—layman no less than the cleric, if such a distinction were made—could commune face to face with God. No mediating priesthood remained necessary, for implicitly there was a priesthood of all believers in the Church in which none could lay claim to binding authority.[20]

Anne Hudson comes to a similar conclusion when she writes:

> As effectively as later Protestant theology, Wyclif's view forced the individual Christian into making his own judgements.[21]

Was Wycliffe suggesting a form of Congregationalism? It is my opinion that it is at least possible that this is the case. However, it would be only fair to note that Douglas Wood comes to a different opinion:

> Wycliffe's teaching smacked too much of presbyterianism—government by elders—as used by the early church, and this was anathema to the hierarchical system that the pope headed.[22]

We can assert with some confidence that Wycliffe denied the authority of the Papacy and that he understood each individual to be directly responsible to God. It is possible to see within his work an understanding of the priesthood of all believers. If we are to determine what exactly Wycliffe meant by *government in common*, we need to pursue two other areas. We need to consider Wycliffe's understanding of the offices of the church and then go on to consider the practice of the Lollards, who sought to live out Wycliffe's understanding.

---

19 John Wyclif, *De Potestate Papae* (London: The Wyclif Society, 1907), p. 186 cited in Anthony Kenny, *Wyclif* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 76.
20 GHW Parker, *The Morning Star* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1965), p. 39.
21 Hudson, *op. cit.*, p. 316.
22 Douglas C Wood, *The Evangelical Doctor* (Welwyn: Evangelical Press, 1984), p. 60.

The Offices of the Church

There is no room for doubt as to Wycliffe's opinion concerning the number of offices in the church. In *Trialogue*, he wrote:

> I boldly assert one thing, viz. that in the primitive church, or in the times of Paul, two orders of the clergy were sufficient, that is, a priest and a deacon. In like manner I affirm that in the time of Paul, the presbyters and bishops were names of the same office. This appears from the third chapter of the Epistle to Timothy and in the first chapter of the Epistle to Titus. And the same is testified by that profound theologian Jerome.[23]

In his pamphlet *Of the Church and Her Members*, Wycliffe wrote:

> Christian men believe that Peter and Paul and other apostles took power of Christ but not but to edify the church; thus all priests that be Christ's knights have power of him to this end and which of them has most power… we suppose of priests deeds that he that profits more to the church has more power of Christ.[24]

Wycliffe's argument here is that the apostles had power from Christ to build the church and that the same can be said of all God's people. In answer to the question concerning which of God's servants has most power, Wycliffe replies that the priests who do most good for the church demonstrate that they have the most power from Christ. This, of course, stands in radical opposition to hierarchical church order and especially to the claims of the Pope. Wycliffe clearly believed that individual ministers received power directly from Christ for the sole purpose of building up the church. This is reflected in Wycliffe's understanding of the role of the minister. According to Douglas Wood,

> Wycliffe constantly reaffirmed that the first duty of the clergy was to preach. This, he said, was of more benefit to the people than any sacrament. He emphasised the centrality in any service of the pulpit and the sermon… Not only the sermon but the content mattered. His preachers were not to amuse people, as did the friars, but to call them to repentance and faith.[25]

Perhaps the strongest hint of Wycliffe being Congregationalist in his understanding is found in Robert Vaughan's *The Life and Opinions of John De Wycliffe, DD.* In volume two of this work, Vaughan argues that Wycliffe saw the move to ecclesiastical hierarchy to be a move away from

> the judgement of the church…, of the body of the faithful… that modest deference to general opinion which was observable in the conduct of earlier ministers of the gospel.[26]

---

23 Cited in Robert Vaughan, *The Life and Opinions of John De Wycliffee, DD*, 2 vols (London: Hatchford and Son, 1828), 2:309.
24 Wycliffe, *Three Treatises*, *op. cit.*, p. xliv.
25 Wood, *op. cit.*, p. 88.
26 Vaughan, *op. cit.*, p. 312.

Wycliffe clearly understood Papal and Episcopalian government to be unwarranted by the New Testament. I have been unable to find any reference in Wycliffe's own work, or in works about Wycliffe, to the form of government in which deacons and elders functioned. GM Trevelyan suggests that Wycliffe cannot be said to have put forward a new scheme of church government. He writes:

> … he proposed to abolish the existing forms of Church government. But he never devised any other machinery, such as a presbytery, to take their place.[27]

However, Trevelyan raises an interesting possibility in that he also speaks of "Wycliffe's free Church of all Christian men" and states that Wycliffe "pleaded for greater simplicity of organisation, greater freedom of the individual, and less crushing authority."[28] Is it not at least possible, given Wycliffe's emphasis on the responsibility of the individual, that the reason historians have failed to find a form of church government in Wycliffe's work is because they are looking for a denomination when his teaching lends itself far more readily to independency? Such a suggestion would certainly be in line with Workman's analysis:

> We note the individualism of Wyclif's system. The organic whole finds little or no place; every man stands face to face with the Will of God; individualism permeates every act of his life. All his judgements and obligations are determined by this supreme fact. Calvin starting from the same premises rectified this individualism by his conception of the Church; with Wyclif there was no such antidote. The only check upon the individual judgement is the conformity of the same with Scripture. Popes and curia may err, but the scriptures will unerringly guide us… As a result of this individualism, with its negation of sacerdotalism, we may allow that no one, not even Luther, gave the laity such a place in his church system.[29]

Taken the wrong way, such an emphasis on individualism could be equated with the self-centred individualism that has all but destroyed Congregationalism in many independent churches of our own time. It is, therefore important to note two points. Firstly, Workman is very clear that this individualism is checked by submission to God's word. Secondly, as Anthony Kenny notes,

> if each Christian has lordship over all, it can only be on condition that he shares his lordship with all others who are likewise in a state of grace.[30]

---

27 GM Trevelyan, *England in the Age of Wycliffe*, (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1900), p. 182.
28 *Ibid*., p.181.
29 Herbert B Workman, *John Wyclif*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926), p. 19–20.
30 Anthony Kenny, *Wyclif* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 46.

It is generally agreed that only Presbyterianism and Congregationalism could survive Wycliffe's attack on church structure. Workman and others clearly see a very definite leaning to the latter. As has already been stated, it is impossible to go further than this in a study of Wycliffe's ecclesiology. Thus, any attempt to define his church polity further needs to be based on a study of those churches that sprang up through the work of the Lollards.

The Lollards and their Descendants

Whilst there has been a concerted effort on the part of some scholars to detach Lollardy from Wycliffe, Anne Hudson has made a very good case for what she describes as the *ideological inheritance* that demonstrates a link between Lollardy and Wycliffe. Interestingly, she suggests that where divergence is found in opinions amongst Lollards, this can be shown to be the result of coherent development of Wycliffe's thought.[31] This is an important point that will need to be remembered. Lollardy, especially in its later form, was not a coherent movement. Different groups emphasised different aspects of Wycliffite thought and imbibed new doctrines from a variety of sources. This divergence should not, however, be allowed to muddy the waters of theological descent amongst those Lollards who clearly held and developed Wycliffe's understanding of the church, which we have already outlined. After all, the fact that many Congregationalist churches now hold an Arminian understanding of the gospel does not prevent us from tracing a clear theological lineage back to the Congregationalists who gathered at the Savoy Palace in 1658.

Before considering the teaching and practice of the Lollards, it is perhaps important to note a change in the nature of our source material. After the death of Wycliffe, the universities were purged of all Wycliffite thinkers. Wycliffe's ideas disappear from the history of English academia. Lollardy became a popular movement, with the result that Lollard ecclesiology developed in practice rather than in written form. The vast majority of the information we have of this development is in the form of records of heresy trials conducted by the church.

John Wycliffe died in 1384. In 1388 the Leicester group of Lollards were maintaining the understanding of the priesthood of all believers and in 1401 John Purvey clearly enunciated the same view.[32] Both Purvey and the Leicester group agreed that laymen were able to administer the sacraments. Although this latter position was not held by all Lollard groups, Hudson is able to state that,

31 Hudson, *op. cit.*, p. 62, see also p. 278–390.
32 *Ibid.*, p. 325.

> there is complete unanimity amongst the Lollards about the primary function of all the clergy: this is the preaching of the gospel to all and, in so far as it contributes to that but not further, the study of the Bible and of aids to its understanding. This duty is imposed on all Christians, according to Lollard thought, but the obligation falls particularly on the clergy.[33]

This sounds remarkably like the statement of the Savoy declaration, in which it is stated that

> Although it be incumbent of the pastors and teachers of the churches to be instant in preaching the Word, by way of office; yet the work of preaching the Word is not so peculiarly confined to them, but that others also gifted and fitted by the Holy Ghost for it, and approved (being by lawful ways and means in the providence of God called thereunto) may publicly, ordinarily and constantly perform it; so that they give themselves thereunto.[34]

This statement is similar to one found in the *Larger Catechism* with only one significant change. Question 158 asks:

> By whom is the word of God to be preached?
>
> A.—The Word of God is to be preached only by such as are sufficiently gifted, and also duly approved and called to that office.[35]

It is not insignificant that the Presbyterian standard speaks of a call to office within the church whilst the Congregational standard speaks of a call to exercise a gift. With its emphasis on the congregation, the latter clearly sees no need to introduce the concept of office and has far more in common with the Lollard view than does the Presbyterian standard.

There is clear evidence that Lollard ministers were set aside for the task of preaching God's word. Although this duty did not deny the responsibility of others to preach, it recognised the role of the eldership to lead through the exposition of God's word. In *Jack Upland's Rejoinder*, which probably dates to the early fifteenth century, we find this statement:

> Priests' office is to preach the gospel truly and to pray in heart devoutly, to minister the sacraments freely, to study God's law only, and to be true examples of holy men's life continually, in doing and in suffering.[36]

It would appear significant that whilst it is possible to find many such references to the role of elders in the church, I have not been able to find one document which makes reference to any authoritative assembly. It is possible

33 *Ibid.*, p. 353–54.
34 *Savoy Declaration of Faith and Order*, in *Evangelical and Congregational*, *op. cit.*, p. 89.
35 *The Larger Catechism*, in *The Free Church of Scotland Confession of Faith and Subordinate Standards* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood & Sons, 1973), p. 99.
36 Hudson, *op. cit.*, p. 351–52, quoted in Middle English by Hudson.

that this omission may be accounted for by the fact that those being tried did not want to be forced to identify members of an assembly. However, this possibility is made less likely by the fact that those Lollards who did recant and were prepared to identify other Lollards did not, as far as I am aware, acknowledge the existence of any assembly.

In 1415, John Claydon was burnt at the stake for Lollardy. During his trial he stated a number of opinions concerning the nature of the church, which he defined as "the congregation of the faithful."[37] Whilst it would be possible to read too much into this brief definition, it remains an interesting statement and perhaps an indication that the Lollards understood local congregations to be churches in their own right. If this can be shown to be the case, it would suggest that Wycliffe's teaching was developed not into Presbyterianism, in which the national assembly is understood to be the greatest representation of the church, but into Congregationalism.

During these early years of Lollardy, the teachings of Wycliffe were kept alive by travelling preachers. This does not preclude the existence of Lollard conventicles, but historical evidence for the period speaks more of the activity of the preachers than the congregations. Historical evidence suggests that, in the late fifteenth century, the work of maintaining Wycliffite teachings was taken up by settled communities. According to Hudson,

> In these house churches the implications of the Wycliffite belief in the priesthood of all believers had, whether by choice or by necessity, been absorbed.[38]

The texts would suggest that, from a very early stage, this ideal of settled communities of believers had been an aim if not a reality. Henry Knighton lists a number of Lollard views dated at 1388. Amongst these is the view that the ministry should be resident.[39]

Anthony Kenny suggests that,

> The most persevering of Wyclif's disciples were working class folk led by simple priests who gathered in conventicles in town and countryside, read and studied English Bibles, and kept alive the Wycliffite tenets on Church and Sacraments.[40]

To this we may add RW Dale's analysis of Lollardy:

> It is not contended that these secret assemblies, which were probably held in

37 John AF Thomson, *The Later Lollards 1414—1520* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 141.
38 *Ibid.*, p. 451.
39 Henry Knighton (fl. 1363), *Chronicon Henrici Knighton vel Cnitthon, Monachi Leycestrensis,* ed. JR Lumby, 2 vols (London: Eyre & Spottiswood, 1889–1895) 2:263: cited by Hudson, *ibid.*, p. 357.
40 Kenny, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

> many parts of England from the time of Wyclif to the time of Luther, were regularly organised Congregational Churches, or that their members held the Congregational theory of Church polity. But the devout men and women who met together for common worship and for mutual instruction in Christian truth had discovered that "the communion of the saints" was necessary for the satisfaction of some of the deepest and strongest cravings of their spiritual nature, for their enlargement of their knowledge of God, the discipline of their strength, and the perfecting of their faith and joy; and they had also discovered that such communion was not to be had in the corrupt institution which claimed to be the Catholic Church. They had discovered that where two or three are gathered together in Christ's name, though not in consecrated walls and without a priest, Christ Himself is among them; and it was their experience of the peace and blessedness which His presence in their assemblies imparted to them, that drew them together at the peril of life itself. They had discovered that devout men on whom the Bishops had conferred no mysterious powers could instruct their brethren in Christian faith and duty and lift up the hearts of the assembly to God in prayer. Their teachers were men in whom they themselves had recognised the light and power of the Spirit of God. The only justification of their secret meetings, and the only explanation of the spiritual benefit they derived from them, was to be found in the principles of Congregationalism.[41]

Given the evidence of what could be termed "Congregational style" thought (that we have seen in both Wycliffe himself and his followers), it is my opinion that Dale is underestimating the understanding of the Lollards by insisting that these groups could not have held to Congregational theory, but rather came to a position only defendable by that theory by a process of pragmatic development. Equally, there are those like Geoffrey Nuttal who would emphasise the communion of the saints as inherent to the definition of Congregationalism. Dale himself concludes his chapter on Congregationalism under Elizabeth with the statement:

> Congregational Churches, though imperfectly organised, had existed in England long before Browne and Barrowe formally developed the Congregational polity and demonstrated that it had the sanction of apostolic authority and the practice of the apostolic age.[42]

When addressing the subject of "the first Congregational church," Dale comments:

> In earlier times there were secret Christian societies in England which were really Congregational Churches.[43]

41 RW Dale, *History of English Congregationalism* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1907), p. 59–60.
42 *Ibid.*, p.63.
43 *Ibid.*, p.95.

If many of the Lollard conventicles understood themselves to be churches in their own right, as would seem to be the case given the understanding we have already demonstrated to have existed, one would expect that areas renowned for Lollardy would later become the early strongholds of Congregationalism. What we need to establish, therefore, is whether or not this was actually the case. WH Summers provides an intriguing first step in this search when he relates the letter, written by Wentworth Webster, published in the *Academy* of 15 April 1893. In the letter, Mr Webster recounts how in 1849 or 1850 he had been forced, by an accident, to stay at a farm between Chalfont St Giles and Chenies. The elderly lady who cared for him described herself as an old Methodist. He writes:

> I soon discovered that she looked upon the reformed Church of England as a comparatively modern sect, and asserted the body to which she belonged had received the Gospel long before, and that they were descendants of the old Lollards. She indignantly repudiated any connection with Wesley's Methodism… This small sect had then some kind of chapel or meeting-room in Chalfont and in Amersham, and was said to be more numerous in the counties bordering on Wales.[44]

Summers admits that he could not verify this account and considers that Mr Webster may be confused in some details, but claims to have traced the elderly lady and discovered her to be a member of the Congregational church at Chalfont St Giles. Summers suggests that the term "old Methodist" belongs to Mr Webster's confusion, but this may not be the case. Samuel Green referred to the Lollards as "these truly Primitive Methodists".[45]

In his study of *The Later Lollards: 1440–1520 John Thomson identifies Bristol, the Chilterns, the Kennet valley (Newbury and its surrounding area), the counties of the Midlands, East Anglia, London and Kent as the centres of Lollard activity.*[46] We will need to establish that a number of these areas became important for early Congregationalism. There is need for care, however. London, for example, has been an important centre for almost every religious movement in England and unless we can trace direct influence, which is unlikely, any connection with Lollardy must be considered too general for the use of this paper. The time allowed here will allow for only a very limited exploration of this area of study. We will limit ourselves to look at three areas in any detail and otherwise are forced to make do with generalisations.

---

44 WH Summers, *The Lollards of the Chiltern Hills* (London: Francis Griffiths, 1906), p. 183–4.
45 Samuel G Green, DD, *Wycliffe Anecdotes* (London: The Religious Tract Society, nd), p. 127.
46 Thomson, *op. cit.*

Given the lead from WH Summers, we will begin in the Chilterns, the area Thomson refers to as the mid-Thames Valley. Summers suggests that the Lollardy of this area was directly linked with Lollard activity out of Oxford. In the fifteenth century it produced a large number of Lollards for trial.[47] Of particular interest are those whom Summers refers to as "The Justfast Men". This independent community of believers was found in Buckinghamshire, in 1521, some 12 years into the reign of Henry VIII. This district has an established Lollard background. These "Justfast Men" were also called "Known Men", a name of old standing amongst Lollards which relates back to Wycliffe's understanding of the church as the body of the elect. Summers also refers to a family by the name of Harding who in 1906 were "still mindful of their Lollard descent."[48] This family had built the "Old Meeting" or Upper Baptist Chapel in Amersham during the eighteenth century. Church records show members of this family being convicted of Lollardy in 1506. Summers makes a clear connection between the Lollards and seventeenth century Baptists when he writes:

> There was every likelihood that some of the Lollards would join the new sect, whose more moderate leaders held views very similar to their own. And this may account for the fact that in some of the districts where Lollardy had been strongest, and notably in South Bucks, we find Baptists numerous in the next century.[49]

In his book, *Heresy and Reformation in the South-East of England, 1520–1559, John F Davis points to a group of sectaries discovered in Bocking, Essex, in 1551. This group was almost certainly of Lollard descent, a fact indicated by the number of places mentioned that were old Lollard centres. Most interestingly, this group demonstrated what Davis calls "the mentality of a gathered church,"*[50] in that it exercised discipline amongst its members. Similarly, the record of the trial of Thomas Haukes at Fulham on 9th February 1555 makes mention of a number of local congregations and preachers. Haukes was executed at Coggeshall and Davis suggests "he was a prominent member of Essex dissent."[51] However, before drawing any general conclusions from the Essex Lollards it must be noted that Davis, commenting on the Lollards of Mendlesham in Norfolk, writes:

> It is likely that the Lollards of Mendlesham found Edwardian religion fully

47 Summers, *op. cit.*, p. 1.
48 *Ibid.*, p. 113.
49 *Ibid.*, p. 161.
50 John F Davis, *Heresy and Reformation in the South-East of England, 1520–1559* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1983), p. 103.
51 *Ibid.*, p. 132.

> satisfying, believing as they did in clerical marriage, the royal supremacy, and in the Bible as their sufficient doctrine.[52]

An interesting confession is made by Robert Smythe the London painter. His trial of 1555 is recorded by Foxe. Though revering Edwardine church order, Smythe defined the church as "a congregation knit together in unity."[53] On 23rd June 1557, eighteen people were committed to the flames for their heresy. According to Davis, the views expressed by these martyrs recall Lollard beliefs. Three of the eighteen, from Much Bentley in Essex, had forsaken the services of their local church in favour of underground meetings. The majority of the others are described as "artisans of Colchester". Davis concludes:

> It is clear that the tradition of Lollardy in the Colchester parishes had continued.[54]

One might add that it is also clear that this Lollardy continued to survive in the form of conventicles or churches and that these churches, though clearly in fellowship with one another, show no sign of any denominational organisation but would appear to exist as independent bodies in their own right.

Turning to an area not identified by Thomson, there are further hints at the possible connections between Lollardy and early Congregationalism. In his groundbreaking work, *Lollards and Protestants in the Diocese of York 1509–1558, AG Dickens successfully analysed the progress of reformation in this conservative diocese by studying popular life and religion, as opposed to official reformation. In a book which gives quite detailed accounts of heresy trials, Dickens concludes:*

> The communities which displayed the most marked Lollard-Protestant tendencies before 1558 proceeded in each case to develop puritan tendencies in Elizabethan and Jacobean times. The fact cannot be purely coincidental; at the very least, the social atmosphere and connexions of the Yorkshire ports and weaving towns showed themselves equally hospitable to both ideologies. It might be rash to call the Lollard wing of the movement the ancestor of Independency, yet the two appealed to the same sorts of people for similar reasons.[55]

On the basis of evidence already presented, it is my opinion that the suggestion that Lollardy is the ancestor of independency, whilst not certain, is far from being rash. Dickens himself acknowledges a more general ideological inheritance which passed from Lollardy into the English Reformation. It would seem reasonable to conclude that Lollard ecclesiology is part of that inheritance. Dickens writes:

---

52 *Ibid.*, p. 117.
53 *Ibid.*, p. 134.
54 *Ibid.*, p. 137.
55 AG Dickens, *Lollards and Protestants in the Diocese of York 1509—1558* (London: Hambledon Press,1982), p. 247.

> Scholars who seek an historical understanding of the English reformation would be wise to think a little less about Bucer, Bullinger, and even Cranmer, and somewhat more in terms of a diffused but inveterate Lollardy revivified by contact with continental Protestantism. This hypothesis finds powerful support in the records of the diocese of York. Here, it may be reasonably suggested, we witness the later repercussions of that Lollard revival which had manifested itself in southern England during the first three decades of the century. Several well documented heresy cases of the late twenties and thirties were indistinguishable from those of the early years, when Luther and Zwingli had not yet begun to formulate their doctrines. In substance and in name, Lollardy continued into the reign of Mary, increasingly merging with the newer Protestant doctrines, yet continuing throughout the diocese to colour the heresy with unmistakable tints.[56]

These unmistakable tints include sacramental heresy, the most common heresy amongst those brought to trial, anti-clerical sentiment, in which the insistence of direct accountability to God is dominant, and what Dickens refers to as "heresy directed against the supposed ministerium mechanicum of hierarchic Christianity."[57] It is interesting to remember that Wycliffe lost significant support and faced heightened opposition when he questioned the doctrine of transubstantiation. Following in his footsteps, the Lollards and their descendants found that this remained the subject most likely to bring them before the authorities. The connection with these sacramental heresies, the insistence of direct responsibility to God and, perhaps most significantly, attacks on the hierarchic nature of the church, are all typical of reformed thinking. The insistence by Dickens that, in Yorkshire at least, all of these can be shown to pre-date the influence of the continental reformers would suggest a home-grown way of thinking. All three of these ideas can be shown to be present in Wycliffe and the Lollards.

It would seem, then, that there is some evidence in the Chilterns for a connection between Lollards and later Congregational churches, although much of this evidence is anecdotal. In Yorkshire, the case is stronger thanks to the careful research of AG Dickens. As for the South-East, John Davis has provided some quite compelling, if incomplete, evidence that during the mid-sixteenth century, Lollard conventicles existed as independently organised and governed fellowships of believers. What of the other areas mentioned by Thomson? Within the limited scope of this study I have been unable to unearth anything more than circumstantial evidence. In his book "*Visible Saints*", Geoffrey Nuttall lists 113 English Congregational churches, many of

56 *Ibid.*, p. 243–44.
57 *Ibid.*, p. 244.

which had their beginning before 1658. Of these, some 75 were in the areas designated by Thomson as strongholds of Lollardy. Those familiar with non-conformist history will not be surprised that 33 of these congregations were in East Anglia, but it is worth noting that this area was strongly Lollard before it was non-conformist.

Conclusion

Without further studies of the type and depth of those carried out by Dickens in the diocese of York, it seems unlikely that the connection between the Lollards and early Congregationalists will ever be more than circumstantial. It is impossible for a paper of this nature to establish definite links. However, the correlation between areas in which both Lollardy and early Congregationalism thrived is pronounced and would certainly point to the need for further study.

Ideologically, the Lollards were, in my opinion, the forebears of the later Congregationalists. The Lollard understanding of the church is clearly a development of Wycliffe's thinking. The latter's understanding of the nature of the church, the role of the minister and the individual's direct responsibility to God combine very neatly, and one might argue inevitably, into an understanding of Congregational church government. It is significant that even those historians who have been inclined to play down Wycliffe's impact on history have come to conclusions similar to that of KB McFarlane:

> Their feeble protest was ultimately drowned in the louder chorus of protestant nonconformity. Their heirs were, in short, not the Anglicans but the Brownists and the Independents.[58]

It would appear that there is a general consensus that there is an ideological similarity between those who kept alive and developed the teachings of Wycliffe and those who would later leave the Church of England to form independent congregations.

Was John Wycliffe the Father of Congregationalism? It seems unlikely that he himself practised anything that could be described as Congregationalism. After his death, the Lollard congregations were almost certainly congregational in their organisation, but it is impossible to prove any link between them and those who would come later, although it appears that such links are very likely to have existed. In the sense that Wycliffe and the Lollards pre-empted that which would later be defined as Congregationalism, he can be said to be the father of Congregationalism.

In closing, it is important to add one last comment. If Wycliffe were the

58 KB McFarlane, *Wycliffe and the Beginnings of English Non-Conformity* (London: English Universities Press, 1955), p. 170.

father of Congregationalism, it must be remembered that he too had a father, who had a father, who had a father… In his book of 1604, *Reasons taken out of God's Word and the best human testimonies proving a necessity of reforming our churches in England*, Henry Jacob argued that for two hundred years after Christ the churches of Christ were not diocesan churches but congregational.[59] Jacob's argument is at this point similar to that made by Leonard Verduin concerning those he refers to as the stepchildren of the reformation:

> What erupted at the Second Front was a resurgence of those tendencies and opinions that had for centuries already existed over against the medieval order; it was connected with ancient circles in which, in spite of the persecutions, a body of ancient opinions and convictions was still alive… The dissent against the medieval order was in 1517 already a millennium old and extremely widespread.[60]

It can be fascinating and thrilling to realise that those before us drew the same conclusions about the organisation of the church, but we miss the whole point if we fail to notice that, whoever influenced our forebears, all of them acknowledge one source of inspiration above all others: the Bible. Wycliffe and all who have followed him would have been clear about one thing. If our Congregationalism is not built on the Word of God, it is worth nothing. As always, the great challenge of those who risked life and limb for the sake of biblical truth is to live not for historical tradition but for Christ.

59 DM Lloyd-Jones, *The Puritans: Their Origins and Successors* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1987), p. 155.

60 Leonard Verduin, *The Reformers and their Stepchildren* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), p. 14–15.


OWEN. D.D.

John Owen's Evangelical Theology

Bryan Jones

The aim of this paper is to let John Owen speak, and perhaps in doing so address today's theological issues, as well as those of the 17th century, which upon reflection may not be too dissimilar. In stating this aim it is right to make you aware that I have abridged and re-worked the text, using a sprinkling of selected direct quotes from Stephen Westcott's translation.

In doing so I trust that John Owen has not been misrepresented.

Evangelical Theology

This is to be found as Book 6 in John Owen's volume *Biblical Theology*, which was published in Latin at Oxford in 1661 as a contribution to international reformed scholarship. The English translation is by Stephen P Westcott, the whole volume being made available to the public in 1994.[1] An old gem in a new setting. Before bringing to you John Owen's thoughts on Evangelical Theology let me summarise what precedes it.

Book One speaks of the Natural Theology of the First Man and traces his fall and loss, showing also its insufficiency for salvation. After an interesting digression on universal grace Owen concludes with Natural Theology under total depravity.

Book Two deals with the renewal of Theology after the fall, and after considering the principle of Post-lapsarian Theology, he deals with the second Antediluvian Reformation of the Church.

Book Three traces theology from Noah to Abraham, and describes the Noahchian covenant and the Noahchian Church. After examination of the original language, the confusion of languages and the sibyline oracle, Owen deals with the "Origin and Progress of Idolatry".

Book Four continues theology from Abraham to Moses. There is a discussion of the theology of these two great men of God and, in the midst of studying Moses, two digressions, one on the origin of writing, the other on the antiquity of Hebrew.

Book Five carries theology from Moses to Christ. After ten chapters on the Corruption and Solemn Restoration of Mosaic Theology, Owen comes to a major point in his understanding of the subject, the final abolition of Mosaic Theology. Ezra's reformation of the Jewish Church takes up two chapters, with

1 John Owen, *Evangelical Theology,* tr. Stephen P Westcott (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1994).

a digression on the Hebrew vowel points. The final apostasy of the Jewish Church (another of Owen's major themes) is interspersed with three digressions on the Septuagint (the Greek version of the Old Testament), another on the Origin of the Targums and a third on Jewish rites and Christianity. Some of the study is out of date; most of it is not. This is particularly true of Book Six: Evangelical Theology.

Dr James Packer in his foreword writes that this book,

> where Owen characterises evangelical theology as a gift of the Holy Spirit generating faith in Christ, holiness through Christ and worship of Christ is pure gold.

This "pure gold" is discovered in eight chapters, followed by a digression on the philosophic corruptions of theology, and a chapter on the study of theology.

Chapter 1: Christ the Specific Object of Theology

Owen states that he has been hastening toward his objective, practically his sole purpose, to set forth the theology of Christ.

This comprises not just the teaching of the Gospel but also the disposition of mind which alone can embrace it.

This purpose has always been in his mind; now in this final book of the volume, due mention can be made of Christ who is the specific object of theology. When Owen comes to such matters as these, he feels like a novice unable but to "stammer pitifully" because the subject matter could never be fully grasped by the human intellect (1 Corinthians 8:2). Some have presumed, particularly youths, to have given themselves to this study, reading three or four volumes and considering themselves experts. What self-conceit. One can learn a little of the nature of things from philosophy but the issues of theology necessitate a new heart, a different frame of mind, a disposition of character quite different from human learning.

Taking the lead from Hebrews 1:1–2 with the downfall of the Jewish Church based on Mosaic Theology (that phase of theology that ceased to have the power to bring people to God), Owen describes the final capstone of revelation being put into place by God. The Church had been taught in various stages of the spiritual economy and was now adult enough

> to be transformed into her eternal state, perfect in its nature, and thenceforward immutable.

For this task the Son of God came from heaven.

The author of Gospel or Evangelical theology is the only begotten Son of God. True theology is Gospel theology; its object and initiator is God. The Apostles, and holy men of God, moved by the Holy Spirit, preached Christ. In

past times he showed himself in human form to the patriarchs and as that "Angel of the Lord" to the Church in the wilderness (Acts 7:38); now he taught personally through words heard in heaven from the mouth of God. His coming in the flesh meant a new covenant administration being set up. He alone was the perfect and final revelation from God (Owen refuses to be drawn into a dispute on chronology). When considering the timing of his coming to convey this new revelation, Christ is said to have come in the fullness of the time (Galatians 4:4) and also "in the last days" (Hebrews 1:2). Galatians 4:4 reads "But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law." Fullness describes two situations, two periods of the world, as measured by time, which were concluded simultaneously in God's plan. Christ came in the precise fullness of time.

First, a time had come in the world's history, when the long-suffering of God could defer no longer. Idol worship was common-place. The full fruition of superstition held sway everywhere. There were the wicked cults of false gods. Idolatry had reached a peak. There was a measure of glory and splendour attached to these pagan rites, which were destined to pass away.

Second, human wisdom had attained a peak of perfection—in so far as anything human and flawed can be said to be perfect. Philosophy based on study of the properties of the universe had been brought to a degree of elevation

> more profound, more sublime, more beneficial, and expounded with great distinction than at any time before.

The Apostle Paul points out that the highest point of human philosophy was but a sign of the fullness of the times: "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe (1 Corinthians 1:21).

> Whatever could be desired by ambition, luxury, greed, lust, or intellectual pride, in short, everything which is desirable to fallen human nature had, as it were, been compacted and concentrated in a single city and there set out openly before the eyes and hearts of all civilised men.

The Jews, at this time, looked for the coming of the Messiah. The Gentiles, no less eagerly, looked for the dawning of the fabled golden age. Consideration must be given to the term "end of days". Certainly the "fullness of time" and "end of days" denote one and the same time. Many centuries have elapsed since his coming, yet the Apostle affirms in Hebrews 1:1–3 that Christ came in the "last days". Is this period to be understood in a relative or an absolute sense? Some take it as the final stage of God's revelation from Christ to the

consummation of all things, and that spoken of inclusively. No valid reason can be offered as to why its meaning cannot properly be taken, despite the passing of time, in the absolute sense. There is no firm evidence or convincing need to take this phrase to refer to the final phase of the revelation of the divine will. Surely that period is "the world which is to come" not the "last days" ("in these last days" as some ancient manuscripts read). The coming of Christ marked the dissolution of the Jewish Church which was still in operation at the time of the writing of Hebrews, and could be still pleasing to God. Gentiles were pronounced free from the requirement of Mosaic ceremonies (Acts 15). Faithful Jews continued solemn Mosaic worship for some time (Acts 21:20–22,26). "Last days" has reference to the pastoral function of Jesus which he undertook on earth, in relation to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel." He is spoken of as "the minister of the circumcision", Christ the Son and heir sent to the vineyard where the prophets had suffered (Matthew 21:33–44). So he came to the Jewish Church in the "last days" when it was all but lost. Jacob prophesied in (Genesis 49:1) concerning the last days. "Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days". See also Numbers 24:14 where the Holy Spirit uses the same words to refer to the same time period. This was probably the text used by Paul in the quotation in Hebrews.

> Christ, therefore, the Author of gospel theology, came in the fullness of time and he came in the last days since, in God's plan, the last days of the Hebrew Church were the fullness in which he could send Messiah.

Chapter 2: "Apostle of Our Profession"—Revealer of God

Certain introductory premises are set out at the beginning of this chapter. After quoting Hebrews 3:1 "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus", due consideration is given to

> the teachings of the gospel and our acceptance and confession of them.

All Christians agree that Christ came forth from his Father in heaven full of all the knowledge of the will of God, so that when he revealed it, from his store of truth, to his disciples in completing his teaching ministry, "there was lacking nothing absolutely new" (Ecclesiastes 2:12). The eternal Word of God always had an unlimited knowledge of all things wedded to a perfect agreement in the Divine will. It is inherent to his nature, and an attribute of his Deity. It was only in his authorised function as Head and Mediator of the Church, speaking as the "Apostle of our profession"

> that he could be said to know only the things revealed to him by his Father.

Only in clothing himself with our humanity could he perform his work of mediation. In this sense it can be said that there were specific things he did not know (Mark 13:32),

> or that his knowledge was limited to the things revealed to him by his Father (John 5:30; 7:16–17).

After his resurrection and ascension to the right hand of the Father this arrangement still continued (albeit concerning the human nature of Christ). Revelation 1:1 says "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants."Owen states:

> He received from the Father that solemn unveiling which he proclaimed to his servant by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and by a living voice from heaven.

John 1:18 is the explanation of the foundation of Christ's knowledge of his Father's will. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him". These words

> declare Christ to be the same essence as the Father having the same divine being, and having all of the infinitely perfect attributes and comprehensions of truth which are latent in the Godhead. Therefore, he alone is equipped to expound God perfectly. He alone has seen God. He alone dwelt in the bosom of the Father. He shared all of his thoughts and mysterious secrets, and he was now to carry out the foreordained proclamation of the Divine will for accomplishment of which he was endowed with the Holy Spirit, and that "not by measure" (John 3:34). Christ knows the Spirit without limit for wisdom regarding how God is to be worshipped and known (Isaiah 2:3); and in him were "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3).

This is how he appeared to men as God's mediator, armed with all knowledge to set up the kingdom, to organise worship, to gather the Church, to call and train and comfort the elect of God; he revealed God's will to men. A great contrast exists between Christ and others (even Moses). The deepest thought in the ineffable mind of God is Christ's as well, nor can the most minute topic with regard to the worship of God (that is, to please him) not make its way through his wise heart.

Christ communicated the whole of God's plan for his Church (the plan was co-equally his) to his disciples, who were commissioned to spread the Gospel by word of mouth to all nations, with the co-operation of the Holy Spirit whom Christ would send after his ascension by the authority of the Father. Christ is the "faithful servant" (Isaiah 42:1), the builder of his Church (Hebrews 3:2), the unique lover of his people (Ephesians 5:25,26). Nothing can be compared to his love (Romans 5:6–8), so it is impossible that he would

not expound perfectly the benefits of salvation received from his Father and enjoyed by his people.

Let us now turn to the principal heads of Evangelical Theology.

Firstly, no one can apprehend evangelical theology by human reason or dependence on the intellect. These things cannot bring a person to realise the salvation to which this theology directs the human mind. It is so different from all human learning. "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (John 6:44). This theology demonstrates the fact that men outside of Christ are dead in their sins, deaf, blind and dull, incapable of raising even a finger to accept and receive his saving truth.

Secondly, it teaches that if a man does wish to apprehend this saving theology with all its benefits for him, he must be born again. The most cultivated man can never understand theology in a way that leads to salvation. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3).

> This theology expounds the kingdom of God.

Thirdly, only by the activity of the Holy Spirit is anyone born again, brought from death to life (John 3:5–6; John 1:13; Titus 3:5).

Fourthly, to be introduced to a saving knowledge of theology and to understand how the doctrines of the Gospel may be perceived unto salvation, is the Holy Spirit's work (John 16:13; 1 John 2:20; 1 Corinthians 2:10–16; 2 Corinthians 4:6). Moreover those who endeavour to gain this theology must learn to distrust their own abilities and seek God's aid by incessant prayer (Luke 11:3; James 1:5; Ephesians 1:17–18).

Fifthly, this theology institutes the worship of God which is spiritual worship. Its glory is not seen by carnal men nor open to fleshly intellect (2 Corinthians 3:6–10; John 4:21–24).

Sixthly, those who worship God in Christ, in the light of this evangelical theology, are separated from the world and because they have received the Holy Spirit are hated by the world, and will continue to be (2 Corinthians 6:14–18, John 15:18–19; 14:16; Galatians 1:4).

Now we must look at the theology that flows from these governing principles.

Chapter 3: Theology, as any other Discipline, Can be Taught, But …

> I have shown that evangelical theology is that teaching revealed by Christ in the Gospel, and that, therefore, knowledge of his teaching is knowledge of theology, for he is theology's main and great subject.

Theology has something in common with other sciences in its division of

doctrines and the various ways it can be communicated. This may allow it to be classified into various heads. A natural mind (without the aid of the Holy Spirit) may grasp Gospel teaching, although this is not the norm for obtaining knowledge of God and must therefore carry a warning.

> The gospel is the teaching about the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and about the worship and obedience due to God. This teaching stimulates the consciences of men to wish to offer due obedience to him (Titus 1:1; 2:12) and, in addition, it excites the soul to expectation of, and desire for, the enjoyment of God;

so that all its prepositions are put forward in such a plain manner of expression that it is open to human understanding and reasoning. God has by his Holy Spirit made known in the perfection of his wording the marrow of theology, even employing frequent repetitions so that the meaning of these things cannot be hidden except from persons who want to be wilfully ignorant.

Theology can be classified in order and method as any other philosophical science. It does not go beyond the intellectual ability of natural man. Although theology is thus able to be put into a systematic form it

> still lacks the hallmarks of theology in its narrower and inner signification.

A knowledge of Hebrew and Greek is useful and, for some, vital. A student must be instructed thoroughly in the correct method of using language.

The Holy Spirit uses the highest logic. If this cannot be brought down within dialectical rules then the fault lies with the restriction applying to the human intellect and methodology.

> True theology may be called that knowledge of the divine will and mind which God himself expects from his people (Psalm 119:27; Jeremiah 22:15–16; John 17:3–4; John 2:3–4,7). Such awareness of him and his will is well-pleasing to God (1 Chronicles 28:9; Hosea 6:6).

Men who are of this disposition are pleasing and acceptable to God; those who do not love and practice true theology are not and no amount of earned degrees or the passing of examinations will alter that fact. True theology is solely the product of the saving action of the Holy Spirit (1 John 2:20–27; Ephesians 1:17–18).

To have true theology is "light in the Lord" (Ephesians 5:8). He who has it has been called "out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9). By contrast, to those who have human wisdom it still remains foolishness; they are blind (2 Peter 1:9) having "the understanding darkened"(Ephesians 4:18). It renders none fit to obey God. It does not prepare any to have fellowship with God and his Son and does not lead any to the eternal home and enjoyment of God.

A study of theology without the Spirit may or may not lead to attending

the duties of religion or certain works of virtue but will not lead to a holiness of life. It will lead to a hostility towards those upon whom he has bestowed his gracious gifts. They become fierce and fiery antagonists; but when it comes to giving soul-nourishing sermons they reveal an emptiness of life, knowing nothing of the Gospel. Jerome strikingly states:

> I say nothing of those who come to the Holy Scriptures after immersing themselves in secular literature, and then fill the ears of the people with their own well-ordered eloquence, and verily believe that what they have delivered is the law of God. Never do they stop to consult what the prophets or Apostles have said on the matter; they simply show off incongruous schemes of their own devising. This is a game for very charlatans—to profess to teach others what you yourself are ignorant of, and publicly pretend to know what you do not know!

Chapter 4: Two Great Classes of Mankind: Unregenerate and the Regenerate

This concerns Evangelical Theology as it engages peoples' minds. As people live their lives before God they may be divided as to their present pursuits and eternal destinies into two great classes—the unregenerate and the regenerate. As the scripture divides all into these two states it draws attention to the command of our Lord Jesus to be "born again". Spiritual rebirth is a reality that divides the human race. The "born again" are still in the realm of sin and may from time to time sin grievously, but never place themselves beyond the limits of pardoning grace. As to their spiritual state, they are still justified and have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in spite of their occasional backslidings.

By contrast, the unregenerate may give themselves over to many religious duties and rites but are still unregenerate—those "who are in the flesh cannot please God". Aristotle banished young men who had evil sentiments, considering them unfit to even hear him. It is even more important for the Christian to pronounce men who are subject to sin and vice to be unfit to enter the realm of evangelical theology. They may have deeply read philosophy and be able to discuss it with cleverness and deep powers of understanding, but if a man like Aristotle would not have such villains near him, then such people cannot be regarded as genuine theologians and the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. However loudly they proclaim the doctrines of Christ it is those who conform their lives to their confession, Christ teaches, who are the saved.

Justin Martyr states:

> Those who are found not to live as Christ taught are not Christians. That is proof enough of their state, however loudly they profess the doctrines of Christ with their tongues, for Christ teaches that not those simply making profession, but rather those conforming their lives to the confession, are the saved. Indeed,

> we demand that those whose lives are clearly out of harmony with Christ's teaching, however much they may claim to be disciples, be subject to discipline. (Justin Martyr, Apology, chapter 2)

"That the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God" (1 Corinthians 2:14) is unambiguous. The natural man being unregenerate is unable to receive the wisdom of God, particularly the teaching of the Gospel. The meaning of "receiveth not" is explained in the following verse where the apostle says "neither can he know them", that is, he is incapable of knowing them, they are foolishness to him "because they are spiritually discerned". A man who cannot understand spiritual matters is no Gospel theologian and any who have a contrary position are either mistaken or do not believe the Gospel.

Our Lord Jesus Christ was very clear when he underlined the truth "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). "Seeing" is the same as "understanding": no one can possibly understand the teaching of the Gospel without being born again. Our Lord rebuked the unbelieving Pharisees when he said, "He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God" (John 8:47). Being "of God" is the same as having been "born again" of the power of God, and one who is not cannot hear God's words. The Pharisees heard but they did not hear; they saw but they did not see. Consequently, how could they interpret what they could not see or hear. Such people are blind (2 Peter 1:9; Isaiah 42:7); in darkness (John 1:5; 1 Peter 2:9; Acts 26:18; Ephesians 5:8) and dead (Ephesians 2:5).

Conversely the teaching of the gospel is light (Matthew 4:16; 1 Peter 2:9; Hosea 6:5; John 9:9; Psalm 43:3) sheds light on recipients (Psalm 19:8–9; John 1:5; Psalm 36:9; 2 Peter 1:19; John 12:34–46; 1 Peter 2:9; Ephesians 5:8,14), and gives light to those enlightened by it (John 6:33; Philippians 2:16; John 17:3,25). Every believer is "God taught" (Isaiah 42:7; Acts 26:18; Romans 12:2; Ephesians 4:23, Isaiah 54:13; 1 John 2:27) and cannot therefore have fellowship with unbelief (2 Corinthians 6:14–15; Ephesians 5:7). The Holy Spirit enlightens the minds of those who believe but those who are unregenerate are still in darkness.

Justin Martyr wrote:

> Unless a man receives understanding of the words and deeds of the prophets out of the abundant grace of God, it will benefit him nothing that he can recall to mind the actual words and phrases written (Dialogue with Trypho).

Without the Spirit of Christ it is impossible to know and do the things commanded by Christ. Unbelievers, be they ever so learned, cannot know or do his blessed will and are his enemies.

A further end of evangelical theology is to enjoy fellowship with God and

his Son the Lord Jesus Christ (1 John 1:3). Indeed, it is for the restoration of the true communion which the first man enjoyed, that true theology was instituted. The ultimate end is the praise of God, to give him all the glory and honour in the salvation of sinners.

Chapter 5: Who are Reborn?

In his earlier writings, Owen established indications

> for the state and privileges of true believers to detect and prevent false claims.

Great differences of opinion still exist as to who are "reborn". Some claim that anyone sprinkled with the water of baptism is regenerated.

> Certainly evangelical baptism is the outward sign of rebirth, and so there is one sense in which the baptised might be generally called the "reborn".

As this is capable of being understood in more than one way it produced serious error in the early church. Because their situation was different from that of today, all who were baptised were considered "born again". They were taken from a pagan background and would make a public profession of faith, an undertaking to live a life of sincere repentance and consider themselves to be regenerate. Therefore, it was not an error to class these people as "reborn" and "baptised" considering the missionary status of the Church and unbroken transmission of the gospel. Justin Martyr states:

> All who accept and believe as true the things taught and preached by us, and undertake to live accordingly, are taught to fast and petition God for the forgiveness of their sins. Then we bring them to the water, and there they are re-born in the same manner in which we were reborn, making ablution in the water in the name of God the Father, our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit (Apology, chapter 2).

Since then infant baptism has been the rule throughout the world, so the same statement cannot now hold good for all who are baptised.

For adults being baptised, an undertaking to live in newness of life is wholly Scriptural. Therefore the symbol corresponds to the inner reality. Much later did the theory appear that in the mere performance of the rite of baptism a person could he born again; to use Owen's words,

> through some innate and automatic efficiency in the administration.

This loose understanding of baptism is, says Owen again,

> dangerous, for its very antiquity has been perverted by our modern apostates until it reached the point of absolute necessity of baptism for salvation, of baptism by midwives, and the doctrine of a *limbus infantum* for unbaptised infants on death.

This is a parting of company with the Spirit of God. The early Fathers do not

support this heresy, which leads to another equally serious one, that is the falling away of the regenerate. See Owen's *The Perseverance of the Saints* (Works, volume 2).

The point made here is that certainly a person who is baptised according to the mind of Christ can be called born-again, but the mere observance of baptism without the active agency of the Holy Spirit in the person's heart provides no basis for anyone to consider that they have been regenerated. It is a dreadful thing to be deceived into thinking one is born-again when in reality one is in bondage to sin and Satan.

The Papists advocate, still, that everyone they baptise is reborn, but that would make them "saints" because all who are reborn are "saints". However the Papists will hardly concede that!

The administration of baptism is constantly associated with a reformation of character, the adoption of a different lifestyle, the abandonment of besetting sins, a profession of the true faith, a fidelity to orthodox doctrine, a heeding of Christ's laws and much more. It is plain that without these things no rebirth has taken place; but those who are regenerate know from experience that these things can be present without the new birth. Many disciples of the philosophers of old changed their old habits for the better.

> Just as belief on its own, without the evidence of good deeds, will never justify a man in the sight of God, so good works performed without real faith will never certify a man to be born again.

Unbelievers are persons who live in the dark realm of Satan. Conversely believers are men and women who are removed by the grace of God in regeneration to the glorious kingdom of Christ, where only light is known. This removal is also called a new creation, being a new creature in Christ.

> The Spirit irradiates the mind with the light of the gospel, and so they are called "enlightened" (Hebrews 6:4).

They were "illuminated" by the instruction they had received in the doctrine of the gospel, and this by a special gift given by the Holy Spirit.

The effective working of the Holy Spirit, by means of God's Word, on the hearts of men not yet born again is a means to an end, so that they are pricked in conscience and filled with grief over their sins and see the need for repentance.

Who then are those who are born again'? We are plainly told by the Holy Spirit in Scripture,

> that all men are born into a state of sin marred by the defect of a corrupt nature and devoid of any inherent righteousness, and so justly liable to the punishment due for sin, which is the eternal experience of the unending wrath of God.

Some may deny original sin, but this denial points to the ignorance of their polluted hearts before God, of the nature of the law of God and of the gospel graces.

> The entire structure of saving, evangelical theology is built on the fact of a completely wretched state of all mankind by nature, and that theology cannot be understood or practised without a clear sense of that natural wretchedness. Why so? what will follow without it? The healthy feel no need of a doctor, do they? The righteous feel no need of repentance.

Total depravity has produced two characteristics into which all men are born: (1) sin has caused the removal of any communion with God as well as producing our desolate state; and (2) made us incapable of any spiritual good. This lamentable condition has made us prone to all evil, and wilfully ignorant of our true condition. Such persons imagine their condition to be admirable, and that if there are any blemishes of character these can be put right and the character reformed whenever the need arises.

In times when there is freedom to preach the gospel, persons of this persuasion place themselves under a teacher of their choosing who will soothe their conscience, confirm their state and deprive them of any hope of obtaining eternal salvation. The teacher, like them, would be without any saving knowledge of the grace of God. Both would violently oppose any who would direct them otherwise.

God, by His Word, requires the sinful soul to examine seriously itself, in the light of its condition before his holy presence. At first, if the encounter is genuine, God reveals the awful spectre of death and eternal punishment which correspondingly produces a fearful dread in the sinner. It is a major task to arouse a man, who is totally self-centred, dead in his sins, chained to his vices, with no thought for eternity, to an examination of his condition in the light of the Last Judgement. Before the Scriptures were made available, the regular practice that God employed to give knowledge of his righteous ways and his terrors was by divinely originated dreams. An example of this is Job 33:15–17:

> In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction, that he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man. He keepeth back his soul from the pit, and his life from perishing …

(Also Psalm 78:33–34; Isaiah 26:10–11; 1 Corinthians 14:24–25; Hosea 6:5.) As he considers all this, the sinner begins to wonder if God is his enemy. "It is an evil thing, and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God" (Jeremiah 2:19). Then the memory of old sin long buried and forgotten comes flooding

back to trouble his conscience. What shall I do? To whom shall I turn? What if I should perish?

> Nevertheless, many who are thus shaken into some realisation of their real state and condition are at length overcome by the power of: (1) Their own innate blindness, preventing spiritual realities from shining forth in their true light and splendour; (2) carnal desires; (3) lust for wordly things; (4) the temptations of Satan; or (5) bad company and so they relapse again into their previous stupor. Recovery now to a God-pleasing way of life is a matter of extreme difficulty, and frequently the last state of such persons is worse than their first (Jeremiah 8:9).

This is only the beginning of the Spirit's work, as he probes the inner darkness of the sinner, bringing to light the nature, the guilt, the power, and the degradation of sin to the consciousness of the soul.

In conversion the special work of the letter and teaching of the law—"I had not known sin, except by the Law" (Romans 7:7)—brings an awareness and conviction of sin. As a heavy sledge is dragged over grains of wheat in threshing, so the law is hauled over the soul to bring a knowledge of sin. The law is not only pure and holy but also burning and powerful. "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came sin revived, and I died" (Romans 7:9), which is to say, "I once saw myself as a good righteous man, but then the law came and killed me." Then there comes a great desire to be delivered from this awful state of despair over one's sinful condition. "But Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. Why? because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone"(Romans 9:31–32). There can be a pursuing with tears, prayers, strict observance of ceremonies and attention to the duties of God and men, but even at this stage persons are still in need of conversion. It is still possible for them to draw back, to wallow again in their vices and to experience everlasting death.

"For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them" (2 Peter 2:20–21). Some will only come so far, then go back, without discovering true righteousness. The Holy Spirit of God comes to impart and impress upon their minds the need to discern God's will. To some it will lead to repentance through a conviction of sin and to a desire for the Word, to obedience and a fond hope of the heavenly blessedness to come. To others it will bring bondage, a fear of death and hell and an experience of concern for their souls. It leads to the strict keeping of ceremonies, rituals and rules, the

promise to pursue righteousness, the pledge of obedience, and a desperate search for any means of relief, and yet with an inclination towards apostasy and final lostness. Despite passionate intensity, there is no submission to the righteousness of God (Romans 10:3). There is still a need of conversion. (Please refer to John Owen on Hebrews 6.)

This is a far cry from those whom God chooses to bring to a true saving knowledge of Christ. Firstly, the Spirit's work is to bring home to the sinner that God passes a true and righteous verdict on his corrupt nature and actual sins so that "every mouth may be stopped" (Romans 3:19–20). If God should destroy them, there will be no disagreement on their part or a desire to abandon him. Days may pass under this intense and awful burden of sin. He hopes in God, because God is rich in mercy, but believes his case to be too vile to even approach the mercy-seat.

Secondly, when the Law has done its convicting work and torn down all the barriers that a man can erect in his heart, the Spirit of God lifts him up to take his stand at God's side. The Spirit abundantly supplies hope and endurance to the soul which is now renewed, and

> has to face the darts of conscience against the "judgement of the Law", and against the temptations of Satan.

Though the sinner feels cast down, God surrounds him with grace and friendship lest Satan should cause him to stumble and so gain an advantage. But to oppose this, the Holy Spirit is continually supplying,

> suitable aid and remedies, among which are:
>
> (1) Proclamations (Isaiah 55:1; John 7:37)
>
> (2) Declarations (John 3:16; Psalm 130:4)
>
> (3) Exhortations (Acts 2:38)
>
> (4) Invitations (Matthew 11:28–29; Revelation 22:17) and
>
> (5) Promises of the gospel.

These are the ways and means the Spirit uses to deliver the sinner from the realms of darkness and its power to hold, to the light which is to be found in Christ. God in Christ is their Saviour, Reconciler, Refuge and Sure Support.

> Now they gladly acknowledge that in his blood alone lies propitiation, in his punishment is demonstrated God's justice in the remission of sins (Romans 3:24,25).

As a consequence the believer experiences the fruitfulness of a converted life (Galatians 5:16–26). The operations of the Holy Spirit bring new life. Whereas before there was a deadness, blindness and deafness, now light and life has appeared imparting a new heart, seeing eyes, and hearing ears to the

things pertaining to Christ and the gospel. New spiritual life being realised, the believer is created in Christ unto evangelical obedience and good works (John 14:16–17; Romans 6:2–7; Ephesians 2:10; Titus 2:11–12; 1 John 3:23). "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6).

> However, there is no constant or unvarying pattern for regeneration.

The Spirit blows where he will and does what is necessary to bring about salvation in men and women. Some he may painfully bruise and crush into life; others he may deal with more gently. He knows best!

Chapter 6: Evangelical Theology is a Grace Gift, "A Charisma"

Owen insists that:

> the basis of evangelical theology is the rebirth of human personality by the operation of the Holy Spirit.

Evangelical theology is a spiritual grace, a charisma. Spiritual gifts being either extraordinary or ordinary, it is the purpose of this work to examine here the ordinary gifts not the extraordinary. These ordinary gifts are common to all believers, in varied measures and degrees; they are given by the Holy Spirit to enable persons to understand spiritual things and apply them to spiritual uses and purposes. Some extraordinary spiritual gifts are particularly pertinent with regard to the Gospel ministry, of which they form a foundation (1 Corinthians 12:7; Ephesians 4:8–11). However, it is the ordinary gifts that are considered here.

As a consequence of Christ's exaltation to the right hand of the Father, he has the authority to confer gifts on the Church. "Thou has ascended on high, thou has led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men" (Psalm 68:18). Paul, quoting this Psalm in Ephesians 4:8—"Wherefore he saith, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive and gave gifts to men"—departed from the most usual meaning of the word Laqach in order to bring out the inner meaning and force of it. Laqach often means to receive benefits with the purpose of passing them on. Compare Hosea's "Take our iniquity … receive us graciously" (Hosea 14:2) and the Lord saying to Moses, "Of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering" (Exodus 25:2). So the word means receiving with the intention of passing it on. Peter on the day of Pentecost interpreted Psalm 68:18 like this: "Being at the right hand of the Father exalted, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear" (Acts 2:33). "This" referred to the gifts of tongues and prophecy, the sight and

sound of which so amazed the hearers. Peter not only records the act of receiving but the great promise to bestow them by the Holy Spirit.

All spiritual gifts Christ has received from his Father, that he may bestow them on men. "It is given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 13:11), to know evangelical theology. "If any lack wisdom, let him ask God" (James 1:5), that is, to ask for true theology. Theology embraces all things. "Every good and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights" (James 1:17), "and we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him who is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 5:20). To know the true God in his Son is evangelical theology; if it is not, then I do not know what is. Consult Ephesians 1:17–29. Evangelical Theology, then, is a charisma, a spiritual gift (1 Corinthians 2:7–9) and the Spirit of God, who is all-powerful, so works as to make this gift distinct from his general operations:

> Saving gifts are a direct creation in the minds of men by the Holy Spirit.

To understand the genesis of all things, creation, nature, life, one needs the saving light which only God can give, to be able to come to an evangelical theological discernment. As one applies oneself to understand these things one sees with increasing clarity, and appreciates what God has done; but such application is only useful in so far as it strengthens spiritual light, and no further!

> Being absolutely convinced that the Holy Scripture teaches the state of the reborn mind in a way infinitely better than the rules of human wisdom,

or indeed philosophy, a look at the force of Biblical words is vitally necessary:

> "Wisdom", "prudence", "science", "the quality that distinguishes good from evil", "doctrine", "light", and "fear of God".

It is true that philosophers may impart a different meaning to these terms, but to consider the Biblical meaning is the point here; the opposite terms by contrast are

> "ignorance", "blindness", "stupidity", "vanity", "mental darkness", "depravity of heart", "love of sin", "conformity to the world".

Those born of God know what these terms indicate; others do not. Believers understand the mystery of holiness. Evangelical theology is to this end, the rebirth of the sinner by the Holy Spirit working in and among men on Christ's behalf. He makes them wise to the mysteries of the gospel, bringing them into union with Christ in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. So believers have spiritual wisdom (Deuteronomy 4:6; Colossians 2:3;

2 Timothy 3:15; Daniel 12:3; Psalm 119:99–100). Paul wrote to the Colossians (3:16), "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom". There is an enormous gulf between evangelical wisdom and secular knowledge. "We have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God" (1 Corinthians 2:12). 1 John 2:20 declares "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things", and in verse 27, "ye need not that any man teach you: but the same anointing teaches you of all things",

> all things, that is, which are needful for our obedience, consolation, salvation, and acceptable worship of God. This is the same as "all truth" in John 16:13.

A most striking passage in Job, "But where shall wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding? Man knoweth not the price thereof; neither is it found in the land of the living. The depth said, it is not in me: and the sea saith, it is not with me. It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. The gold and the crystal cannot equal it: and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold. No mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls: for the price of wisdom is above rubies. The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure gold. Whence then cometh wisdom? and where is the place of understanding? Seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the fowls of the air. Destruction and death say, We have heard the fame thereof with our ears. God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof" and, "Unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding" (Job 28:12–23,28). Paul provides a striking link between spiritual wisdom and the practice of holiness (Colossians 1:9–10). The Holy Scriptures are a collection of written texts of the knowledge of God with nothing lacking. God alone can grant progress in this knowledge as he bestows spiritual graces. As a believer faithfully and diligently uses this means of grace, duly considering his present level, he will grow. However, such growth will vary with each individual.

Chapter 7: The Church Need—Regenerate Members

Owen continues:

> In each developing phase of theology the revealed Word of God has been the source and pattern for the instruction of the Church in the right celebration of God's worship.

It contains also the various stages of God's revelation. Through God the Son, who is ever at one with his Father, the deep mysteries of the unfolding plan have been made known, especially Christ's glory in the salvation of sinners and

his empowerment of them to come before God in acceptable worship. The Church Christ founded will continue until the culmination of the ages. Therefore we need to know what should be the spiritual state and condition of the Church in this gospel age.

> Evangelical theology requires that the true church consist of none but the regenerate.

Its foundation is Jesus Christ who is the true and "living stone". Therefore Christ only permits "living stones" to be built upon him and into his spiritual house. From his own lips fell the requirement to be born again (John 3:3) and no one can be his disciple without it. Owen uses two arguments to enforce this. God required this of his Church in Old Testament times: "The Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are on the face of the earth" and "Thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God" and again "An holy people unto the Lord thy God, as he hath spoken" (Deuteronomy 7:6; 14:2; 26:19). The Old Testament ordinances were typical and the holiness granted to and demanded of the people was a type of the spiritual holiness which the Church enjoys as conferred by the Spirit of Christ. These ordinances lasted until the dawning of the gospel age, pointing forward to their fulfilment. In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit refers to the permanent and everlasting state of the Church, its inner and spiritual reality. With regard to the prophecies concerning the Church, nothing is more frequently and emphatically demanded

> than the absolute necessity for personal righteousness on the part of its members (Psalm 2:6; 24:3–4; 45:13, 68:13; Isaiah 11:8–10; 35:8; 54:11–14; 60:21; Ezekiel 47:9; Zechariah 14:20,21; Malachi 4:1–2).

When confronted by men who prided themselves on their descent from Abraham and the privileged position they had in the congregation of Israel, John the Baptist told them that such things were of no value. To be in the kingdom of Christ, there first had to be a true repentance, a rebirth into holiness (Matthew 3:2; 3:9,10).

The Old Testament prophets foretold a great trial at the time of Messiah's coming, with dreadful punishment for those who turned their back on true repentance and holiness (Malachi 3:1–5; 4:1–4). Malachi and John the Baptist preached the same message (Matthew 3:10). The Lord Jesus Christ, in laying the foundation of his Church by his ministry, invited all to come to him, pointing out that none could unless the Father drew them to him (John 6:44).

None would be received by him unless they experienced a genuine repentance. The righteousness of his disciples must exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees—which means that the most strict and scrupulous

observation of professing religion is nothing without repentance. None could be his follower without a deliberate denial of self (Matthew 10:38; 16:24; Luke 9:23). Under the Apostles, people came to Christ under a powerful holy calling (Acts 2:41–42,47; 4:32; 8:37; 10:47; 13:48; 16:14–15; 19:18–19; Romans 1:7; 12:1–2; 1 Corinthians 1:2,9,30; 16:1; 2 Corinthians 1:1; 8:5; Ephesians 1:1,2,13; 2:5,9,10; Philippians 1:1,6–7; Colossians 1:2–5; 1 Thessalonians 1:1–10; 2 Timothy 3:5; Hebrews 3:6; 1 Peter 1:2–5; 2:4–5; 2 Peter 1:1–4; 1 John 2:20,27: Jude 1). As time passed hypocrites found their way into the Church although the greatest care continued to be used to admit only those who were truly Christ's.

Evangelical theology as to its external form requires that the Church be truly Catholic as regards its outlook. It was not to be confined to a single region or town of the earth, not to a single race, nation, tribe or family, but must embrace all kinds of men and women wherever they are to be found in the earth. In the Old Testament God was pleased to appoint certain specific centres for worship but no suggestion was given that worship could only be performed there. Places of worship were found throughout the Roman Empire even when the Temple in Jerusalem existed as the centre of Jewish faith. The New Testament, however, is silent concerning a centre for worship.

The Lord Jesus Christ gave the Apostles instruction that evangelical worship must be openly, spiritually and regularly carried out in this world to God's glory. Brotherly love and mutual charity must characterise the fellowship as they live and meet together. Leaders to be appointed must be men of spiritual worth, and the Church meeting voluntarily and gladly together must come under the discipline of Christ. The faithful must meet and submit themselves first to Christ, then to one another.

The worship must be wholly spiritual, prompted by the presence of the Holy Spirit. The Scriptures, his Word, must be the standard of evangelical worship and the sole rule for judging all matters of faith, obedience, and worship (Luke 12:10; John 3:5–6,8; 4:24; Romans 7:6; 8:1; 9:13,26; 1 Corinthians 2:4; 12:13; 2 Corinthians 3:8; Galatians 5:16–25; Ephesians 2:18; 4:3; 5:18; Philippians 1:19; 2:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:19).

Chapter 8: The Worship of God by Regenerate People

Firstly, the wisdom of Jesus Christ who is the way, the truth, and the life, is seen in his wise organisation of his Church, which will continue until the end of time. The plan of the kingdom which was given by the Father to Christ requires this and was taught by Christ himself.

> The evangelical Church is catholic—not restricted to any locality, worship centre, clan, race or culture.

> Wherever worshippers of the Lord God meet in Christ Jesus through the Holy Spirit, there is the Church, and that factor is abundantly sufficient for the preservation and the continuity of the Church.

However such an individual assembly of those called together and meeting in a particular place may cease to exist after some time, because of their departure from the true faith (Revelation 3:1–4,16–20). The Spirit indicated that there would be a falling away from Christ; this was true, even when the apostles were alive (2 Thessalonians 2:3, 7–8). John and the book of Revelation carry much information concerning the origin, progress and inevitable outcome of such apostasy. The "church" of Rome is a glaring example of apostasy with its idolatrous practices, gross superstition and many errors. Churches must free themselves from criminal defection from the Lord by holding to evangelical theology, for there is always a very real danger of becoming ensnared. Churches can neglect and deliberately desert basic evangelical theological principles. The first element in evangelical theology concerns church membership. A true church can unquestionably only consist of people who are regenerate and display a reformed character in their lives, holding the truth and living without blame before men. This vital principle was neglected and as a consequence churches were pushed along the way to apostasy. In the early church many pastors understood this but there was no lack of rulers who admitted unbelievers into membership. Secular attractions were employed to draw many into the churches without them first being touched with a sense of spiritual and heavenly things. Many called themselves Christian who were still unconverted, although admitted to church membership by churchmen.

Augustine states:

> There are those who want to be Christians, either to propitiate people from whom they expect some temporal advantage, or because they do not wish to offend those whom they fear. And for the time being the Church carries them' (Catechism, chapter 21).

The doctrines of faith, particularly that of the new birth, were sadly corrupted in the churches, with separation from the world being held in contempt. The importance of the glory and holiness of the gospel was diminished. Superstitious practices flowed in along with unbelievers until at last

> the Christian church discipline was remodelled on the fashion of the pagan secular state.

To maintain discipline, the Church has to remain spiritual because Christ instituted spiritual discipline. For its continued power and efficiency it is vital that the members are spiritually regenerated. Carnal persons cannot be subjected to Christ's discipline because it has no effect on them. The neglect of

spiritual discipline allows wicked men to gain control of the churches and that leads to the eclipse of Biblical doctrine and the imposition of substitutes, for example,

> the worship of angels, prayers for the dead, images, purgatory, monasticism, holy virgins, priests, the sacrifice of the mass itself, the consecration of temples, the observance of the fast days, and the erection of those little shrines to the saints which they had before been wont to dedicate to the gods of the underworld.

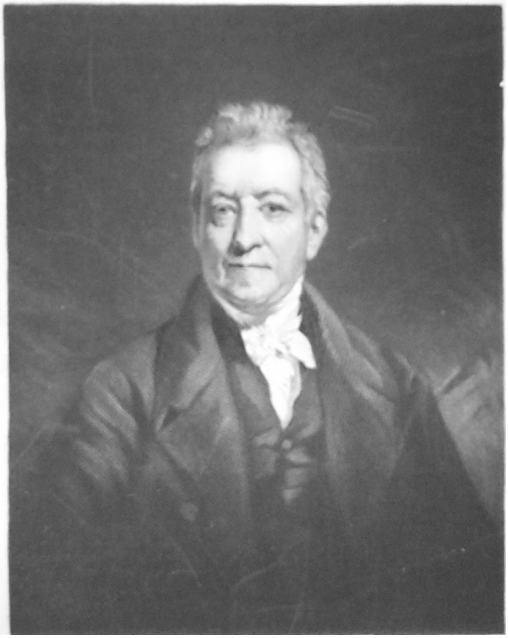
Secondly, Evangelical Theology and ecclesiology demand that the Church be truly Catholic. The Apostles were commissioned by Christ to teach all nations.

Thirdly, local centres for worship were set up. No major geographical church centres were commanded.

Fourthly, the glory of worship is internal and spiritual, insists Evangelical theology. External elegance and ornate ceremonies detract from true heavenly worship.

Fifthly, the apostasy of the Church came about when it turned away from the Scriptures to tradition. Beginning in the early church there was a turning to traditions which had been passed down from earlier generations by means of uncertain rumours. These came to occupy a place in public worship which has no warrant in Holy Scripture. Tradition gathered more reverence and authority, and to encourage the worldly supremacy of some, outwardly ornate worship ceremonies were introduced. Satan offered a potent poison which, once taken, would lead the Church to abandon the established authority and rule of the Word, and to an inevitable falling away into errors, heresies and idolatry.

Sixthly, Christ undertakes a continual oversight of his Church; the Spirit must therefore not be held in contempt.



James Alexander Haldane

Robert and James Haldane and the quest for evangelical union

Kenneth Brownell

At their best Protestant evangelicals have always dreamed of union and worked to see it realised, but tragically it has remained an elusive dream in spite of good intentions and hard work. Already at the Reformation the danger of fragmentation was recognised and leaders such as John Calvin sought unity among the forces of Protestantism. This unitive thrust within Protestantism has appeared in subsequent generations, especially in times of revival and renewal. In the 17th century men such as Richard Baxter, John Dury and Amos Comenius worked long and hard for the visible unity of God's people. In the wake of the revivals of the 18th century in Britain and America there was a similar desire on the part of many Protestants for evangelical union. It seems that when the central concerns of the gospel are pre-eminent there is a hunger on the part of God's people to unite as far as possible in its interests.

The purpose of this paper is to explore this tension between unity and division as seen in the lives of those remarkable Scottish brothers, Robert and James Haldane. The Haldanes lived at a time of significant spiritual awakening in Protestant churches in Britain. Born in the 1760s and converted in the 1790s, the Haldanes lived and worked at a time when Protestant evangelicalism was expanding rapidly in the wake of the Great Awakening of the mid-18th century. Both brothers were actively involved in many of the evangelical enterprises that emerged in this period and characterised it. They were both leading officers in the great evangelical army that was transforming so much of British society. Across denominations evangelicals united together to advance the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Yet active as they were in what has been called, to change the metaphor, "the evangelical empire", the Haldanes also contributed to its fragmentation. In many ways they exemplified the centrifugal and centripetal forces at work in late 18th and early 19th century evangelicalism, forces that at the same time united it and threatened its fragmentation. The Haldane legacy is an ambiguous one that shows both the union that evangelicals long for but also the divisions to which evangelicals are too often prone. For this reason I think that the Haldanes have much to teach evangelicals today.

By any standard the Haldane brothers are remarkable for what they were able to achieve in the course of their full and active lives. They were born (Robert in 1764 and James in 1768) into a wealthy family with aristocratic

connections. The family estate, Airthrey, was what is today the location of Gleneagles Hotel in Perthshire. After being privately educated both brothers entered naval service, Robert with the Royal Navy and James with the East India Company in which he became a captain. After leaving the navy in 1783 Robert studied at Edinburgh University and then spent the next ten years attending to the family estate as a country gentleman. After a short flirtation with scepticism and radical politics (inspired by the French Revolution), Robert was converted as was James shortly afterwards. David Bogue, the well-known Independent minister in Gosport in Hampshire, was instrumental in James's conversion and had a profound influence on both the brothers. The robust, experimental Calvinistic evangelicalism that characterised Bogue came also to characterise the Haldanes.

After their conversions the brothers sought to go to Bengal as missionaries along with several other like-minded men. Robert was particularly inspired by the example of William Carey and was willing to sell his estate and devote his life and fortune to this enterprise. Unfortunately the East India Company was unwilling to grant them permission to enter India, in spite of the pulling of many strings in high places. The Haldanes saw this disappointment as a providential indication that they were to focus their evangelistic concern on Scotland. From 1796 to 1800 the brothers undertook six evangelistic tours of the Highlands, Orkney, the west coast and the Borders. On several of these trips they were accompanied by such prominent English evangelicals as Charles Simeon and Rowland Hill. They preached in the open air and in whatever churches would welcome them. Wherever they went they had a significant impact, with many people being converted and a number of Sunday schools being established. They also met considerable opposition from moderate ministers in the Church of Scotland. They did not help themselves in this by occasionally criticising the non-evangelical preaching they often heard, and not surprisingly they were the object of a Pastoral Admonition passed by the General Assembly over Evangelical objections in 1799.

In order to facilitate their home evangelism the Haldane brothers established the Society for Propagating the Gospel at Home in 1797. Soon afterwards they were establishing new churches where there were significant numbers of converts and they began to train evangelists. The principal church was at the Circus in Edinburgh where James became pastor. Founded in 1798 the church moved in 1801 to a purpose built Tabernacle on Leith Walk that seated 3,000 people. Until the founding of the Circus church the Haldanes remained loyal if somewhat critical members of the Church of Scotland. Even afterwards they did not see themselves as opposed to the Established Church, but only as supplementing its ministry and trying to reach people without Christ.

Nevertheless the founding of the SPGH and what became known as the "tabernacle" churches was effectively the beginning of the Congregational denomination in Scotland. The Haldanes themselves also began to develop a number of distinctive views of their own, culminating in their conversion to what was then called the anti-paedobaptist position. Their conversion split their movement and was a boost to the emerging Baptist denomination in Scotland.

Beyond Scotland Robert Haldane was particularly active. He sat on the committees of a number of key evangelical societies and like his brother he was a prolific author and did not shy from controversy, as we will see. He had a sharp theological mind that was put to good use when he visited Geneva in 1816–17 during an extended tour of the continent. There he lectured privately on Romans to a number of theological students who were wonderfully converted, to the chagrin of their rationalistic professors. Among these students were men who would subsequently become leaders in a revival of the Reformed churches in Switzerland and France—men such as Merle D'Aubigne, Frederic Monod, Cesar Malan, Henri Pictet and others.[1] Robert was particularly involved in the Apocrypha controversy that wracked the Bible Society in the 1820s. James also was involved in controversy, especially about his views on church government and, towards the end of his life, on the atonement. Robert died in 1842 and James in 1851.

This brief biographical sketch gives us some idea of the significance of the Haldane brothers for understanding both the promise and the pitfalls of the quest for evangelical union. Using their lives as an illustration I would like us to go on to consider first the noble ideal of evangelical union, then the attempted realisation of evangelical union and finally the tragic failure of evangelical union. I trust that the result will shed some light on our own quest for evangelical unity today.

The *noble ideal* of evangelical union as illustrated by the Haldane brothers

By the end of the 18th century the ideal of evangelical unity was widespread. In the wake of the Great Awakening earlier in the century there was a desire for evangelicals to unite together to advance the gospel. In many ways George Whitefield epitomised this ideal in his willingness to associate with people from many denominations and his lack of concern for the particulars of church order. Although he had a considerable following he had no desire to establish a new denomination. These quotes illustrate his attitude:

1 AL Drummond, "Robert Haldane at Geneva, 1816–17", *The Records of the Scottish Church History Society,* vol. 9, no. 2 (1946); T Stunt, "Geneva and British Evangelicals in the early 19th century", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, vol. 32, no. 1 (1981).

> I truly love all that love the glorious Emmanuel, and though I cannot depart from the principles which I believe are clearly revealed in the book of God, yet I can cheerfully associate with those that differ from me, if I have reason to think they are united to our common head.
>
> Let my name be forgotten, let me be trodden under the feet of all men, if Jesus may thereby be glorified. Let my name die everywhere, let even my friends forget me, if by that means the cause of the Christ Jesus may be promoted. I want to bring souls not a party … but to a sense of their undone condition by nature, and to true faith in Jesus Christ. But what is Calvin, or what is Luther? Let us look above names and parties; let Jesus be all in all.—So that he be preached … I care not who is uppermost. I know my place … even to be the servant of all; I want not to have a people called after my name.[2]

Or here is William Seward, one of Whitefield's closest associates, reporting on the revival in Wales:

> I told them that I did not desire them to leave [their] church but to attend it closely—and that I only wanted to bring them to Jesus Christ and then if they were fully persuaded in their own mind let each remain in the communion in which he was called. If he was called a Churchman let him remain; if a Quaker, a Baptist, or Presbyterian let him remain so.[3]

This was the sentiment that animated many evangelicals in Britain. Even where there was strong denominational loyalty and theological convictions there was often a warm-hearted affection for fellow evangelicals. In spite of his theological differences with Whitefield and his dislike of Dissenters, John Wesley advocated "a catholic spirit" in relationships between Christians. This unity was not easy to maintain and there were bitter theological controversies. The differences between Whitefield and Wesley split the Methodist movement and the Calvinist-Arminian controversy of the 1770s and 80s was very bitter. Within all denominations there were people who were very wary of the suspected compromises involved in associating too closely with people outside their camp. Nevertheless there was still a strong evangelical consensus. People spoke of "the Gospel World", a world which, in the words of RH Martin, "for all its bickerings, was a cultural and ideological entity, rather like the 'left' in the modern political world".[4] Fundamental to this was a broad body of shared Protestant doctrine and an evangelical experience. With the obvious exception of the Wesleyan Methodists, most other evangelicals were broadly Calvinistic in their theology.

---

2 Arnold Dallimore, *George Whitefield*, 2 vols (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1980), vol. 2, p. 258.

3 Roger H Martin, *Evangelicals United: Ecumenical Stirrings in Pre-Victorian Britain, 1795–1830,* (Metuchen: Scarecrow Press, 1983), p. 3.

4 *Ibid*. p. 14.

This was the world in which Robert and James Haldane moved after their conversions. In practice and in large measure in principle they were committed to the Whitefieldian evangelical ideal. They had a wide network of evangelical friends and acquaintances with whom they cordially worked. I have already noted the influence of David Bogue who himself epitomised the catholic evangelicalism of many Congregationalists. It was Bogue who pronounced the death of bigotry at the first meeting of the London Missionary Society in 1795.

He said on that occasion:

> We have now before us a pleasing spectacle, Christians of different denominations, although differing on points of church government, united in forming a society for propagating the Gospel among the heathen. This is a new thing in the Christian church … Here are Episcopalians, Methodists, Presbyterians, and Independents, all united in one society, all joining to form its laws, to regulate its institutions, and manage its various concerns. Behold us here assembled with one accord to attend the funeral of bigotry: and may she be buried so deep that not a particle of her dust may ever be thrown up on the face of the earth.[5]

Sharing the same outlook, it is not surprising to find the Haldanes going on preaching tours with Charles Simeon and Rowland Hill, corresponding with William Wilberforce and other members of the Clapham Sect, and fraternising with evangelicals in the Church of Scotland and in the Secession and Relief Churches. Andrew Fuller and other English Baptists were welcome guests at Airthrey when on deputation in Scotland for the Baptist Missionary Society. Indeed until Robert sold it, his home at Airthrey became something of a meeting point for evangelical leaders.[6] As we will see, in their extensive activities they operated across a broad evangelical front and not in a narrowly sectarian corner.

Behind their pan-evangelical activities was a principle of evangelical unity that both brothers maintained throughout their lives. In 1805 James stated that his aim in writing a book was "to promote love and union amongst Christians and consequently the success of the gospel in the world". He went on to say that: "we ought to love the image of Christ wherever we see it; and if we confine our love to our own party, we deceive ourselves. If we love the Lord Jesus we must love those who are guided by his Spirit".[7]

5 *Evangelical Magazine* (1795), p. 425.
6 James Haldane, *A View of Social Worship* (Edinburgh, 1805), pp. iv, 114.
7 James Haldane, *Letters to a Friend, containing strictures on a recent publication upon Primitive Christianity* (Edinburgh, 1820), p. 29.

Fifteen years later he wrote in a similar strain concerning the basis of fellowship in churches:

> Into these societies believers only are to be received and from these societies (if they obey the Scriptures) no believer is to be excluded. The bond of union is the faith of Jesus and everyone who gives evidence of having received this precious faith is entitled to the privileges of Christian fellowship, although imperfectly instructed in many particulars… A church of Christ is a free school of *all his disciples*, and no man is warranted to exclude even the weakest and most ignorant.[8]

Robert makes the same point in his commentary on *Romans* when dealing with chapter 15, verse 7: "Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God". He wrote: "The manner in which Christians are to receive one another to church fellowship is as Christ received them… Christ receives those who are ignorant of many things—indeed of everything but faith in him. … If Christ receives his people notwithstanding their ignorance of many parts of his will, ought they to reject those whom He hath received?"[9] Robert was dealing here with the issue of church fellowship, but this was the principle upon which he and his brother sought to operate in all their activities. Towards the end of his life and long after he had adopted baptistic views, he turned down a request to support a Baptist cause on the grounds that it was too denominational. As his biographer and nephew wrote, "he altogether disapproved of any external ordinance being made a bond of union instead of faith in Christ and sound doctrine".[10]

The *attempted realisation* of evangelical union as illustrated by the Haldane brothers

The world of late 18th and early 19th century evangelicalism was characterised by a massive array of interdenominational activity, societies and institutions for almost every conceivable purpose. Committed as they were to the ideal of evangelical unity, the Haldane brothers actively sought to realise this ideal in practical ways. I would like to highlight four areas where the Haldanes tried to realise evangelical unity.

Foreign missions

Considering their original intention of going to India as missionaries it is not surprising that one of the societies with which the Haldanes were associated was the London Missionary Society, founded in 1795. Robert served as one of

8 Robert Haldane, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids, 1988), p. 621.
9 Alexander Haldane, *The Lives of Robert and James Haldane* (Edinburgh, The Banner of Truth Trust, 1990), p. 625.
10 Martin, *op. cit.,* p. 40.

its directors from 1796 to 1804. Two years before its formation, the Baptist Missionary Society had been founded in 1793 as a denominational agency, but there were a number of Anglican and Dissenting ministers who felt that an interdenominational missionary society was needed. One of these was Melville Horne who articulated this pan-evangelical vision in his book *Letters on Mission*, published in 1794 after his return from a visit to Sierra Leone. In advocating foreign missions Horne called on missionaries to cooperate without sacrificing their convictions:

> I would not have him indifferent to his own peculiarities, whether they respect the doctrines he receives as truth, or the points of ecclesiastical polity he considers most friendly to religion; but I would have him thoroughly sensible, that the success of his ministry rests not on points of separation, but on those wherein all godly men are united.

Missionaries had to be "far removed from bigotry, and possess a spirit truly catholic". He went on:

> It is not Calvinism; it is not Arminianism, but Christianity that he is to teach. It is not the hierarchy of the Church of England; it is not the principles of the Protestant Dissenters that he has in view to propagate. His object is to serve the Church Universal.[11]

In the course of 1794 what was initially called simply "The Missionary Society" was formed. The founding committee included Anglicans, Independents, Presbyterians, and Calvinistic Methodists. At its inaugural meeting in September 1795 David Bogue preached the "Funeral of Bigotry" sermon that we have already noted. His appeal for evangelical unity was greeted, according to the *Evangelical Magazine*, with a shout for joy. While the Haldanes were not involved in these proceedings they were enthusiastic supporters of the LMS and of its sister body, the Edinburgh Missionary Society. Robert was also particularly concerned with the state of Protestantism on the continent where he made several preaching tours. He supported the work of the Continental Society founded by Henry Drummond.

Home missions and church planting

Another pan-evangelical activity that engaged the interest of the Haldanes was itinerant preaching. In the late 18th century there was an upsurge of itinerant preaching in Britain. Whitefield and Wesley had established the pattern and there were many that followed in their train. When James Haldane founded the Society for Propagating the Gospel at Home in 1798 with John Aikman

11 Deryck Lovegrove, "Unity and Separation: Contrasting Elements in the Thought and Practice of Robert and James Haldane", Studies in Church History series (Oxford, Blackwell), p. 155.

and Joseph Rate he was clear as to its nondenominational character. The founding address said that "it is not our design to form or to extend the influence of any sect. Our sole intention is to make known the everlasting gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ". The new society was to be "composed of persons of every denomination, holding unity of faith in the leading doctrines of Christianity". Those involved in the SPGH would be required "to endeavour to strengthen the hands of all faithful ministers of Jesus Christ of whatever denomination, and as far as they [could] discourage all bitter party spirit, wherever they discover[ed] it among Christians".[12] In practice the Haldanes worked with a wide variety of like-minded evangelicals.

When it came to establishing churches they did so on a non-sectarian basis. There were in England at the time a number of what RH Martin calls "borderland churches" which inhabited the border between the Church of England and Dissent. Examples are Rowland Hill's Surrey Chapel, Union Chapel in Islington, the two Whitefield tabernacles at Spa Fields and Tottenham Court Road and those churches in the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion. A number of these churches eventually became Congregational. In Edinburgh Lady Glenorchy's Chapel had a similar broad Calvinistic evangelical ethos even though it was attached to the Church of Scotland. The churches that were planted as a result of the work of the SPGH evangelists initially were established on this basis. They were intended to be preaching centres from which evangelism would be done in a town or district. There was no thought, initially at least, of competing with the established churches. As Deryck Lovegrove has written:

> Though the new buildings soon acquired a quasi-denominational character, serving as homes for congregations of "tabernacle people", their existence, especially in the early stages of the movement, represented a genuine expression of the undenominational spirit. The substance of the message preached from their pulpits, as in the open air, was biblical and conversionary, and as such devoted little thought to the weightier matters of church order. [The tabernacles provided] a visible focus of unity and acheivement.[13]

Nevertheless, in spite of their intentions, or perhaps because of them, the Haldane movement was not looked upon favourably by the "moderates" in the Church of Scotland. The rise of itinerancy, and with it lay preaching, threatened the tradition of an educated ministry as well as impugning the

12 *Ibid.*, p. 157; see also CE Watson, "Whitefield and Congregationalism" in *Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society*, vol. 8, no. 4 (1922), p. 175; E. Welch (ed.), *Two Calvinistic Methodist Chapels, 1743–1811, the London Tabernacle and Spa Fields Chapel* (London: London Record Society, 1975).

13 *Ibid.*, p. 158.

spiritual condition of the national Church. Their fears seemed confirmed when the Haldanes established a seminary for training itinerant evangelists and when James was ordained as minister of the Circus church in Edinburgh. Some senior evangelical figures, such as John Erskine, shared some of the moderates' concerns. This was the background to the Pastoral Admonition and Declaratory Act of the General Assembly in 1799 warning congregations about the SPGH and forbidding its evangelists to preach in parish churches.

Literature publication and distribution

From the beginning the Haldanes were concerned about the publication and distribution of Christian literature. Their itinerant tours of Scotland had revealed the desperate need for the distribution of cheap Christian literature and not least of Bibles. Initially they published their own literature, but with the establishment of the Religious Tract Society in 1799 and the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1804 the Haldanes could join forces with other evangelicals in making Christian literature widely available. In many ways the Bible Society was the pan-evangelical society *par excellence*. The simplicity of its aim of circulating the Bible to as many as possible commended itself to a wide range of people. Whereas denominational concerns prevented some Anglican evangelicals and Baptists from involvement in the LMS, the Bible Society was supported by people from all denominations. Robert Haldane sat on the committee of the Bible Society until the split over the Apocrypha and thereafter sat on the committee of the Edinburgh Bible Society.

The *tragic failure* of evangelical union as illustrated by the Haldane brothers

Noble as the ideal of evangelical union was, and hard as the Haldanes worked to see it realised, in the end they failed. They were not alone. By the 1830s it was becoming apparent that earlier enthusiasm for evangelical union was waning. The Dissenters in England were agitating for their civil liberties. In 1828 the Test and Corporations Acts were repealed, but that was only the beginning of a long process of redressing English Nonconformist grievances. Not surprisingly, among Congregationalists in particular, there was a growing sense of denominational identity and the establishment of a number of denominational institutions, not least the Congregational Union in 1833. Independent churches on the borderland of the Church of England and Dissent became more distinctively Congregationalist, as did interdenominational agencies such as the London Missionary Society, the Village Itinerancy Society and the Home Missionary Society. In Scotland Dissenters challenged the advocates of the establishment principle in what

became known as the Voluntary Controversy. In both England and Scotland clergy in the established churches responded to this recrudescence of Nonconformity by reaffirming their own distinctive principles. It was noted at the time that Anglican evangelical clergymen were distancing themselves from their Dissenting brethren. It was not until the founding of the Evangelical Alliance in 1841 that a measure of cordiality was restored to relationships between evangelicals inside and outside the established churches. But the unity promoted by the Alliance was both more modest and negative than that of a few decades before. It was more modest in that it did not seek the visible union of churches and it was more negative because it was reactive to the growing threat of Catholicism, both of the Roman and Anglican varieties. The Haldanes were not immune to these developments. There are four areas where we can see tensions that led to the failure of their dream of evangelical union being realised.

Political tensions

In spite of sharing so much in common theologically and spiritually, many British evangelicals were divided on politics. In the early 1790s they had very differing views on the French Revolution. Someone like David Bogue initially welcomed the Revolution as a great boost for religious as well as political liberty, as did Robert Haldane.[14] Anglican evangelicals and to a lesser extent Church of Scotland evangelicals saw the French Revolution and radical politics as deeply subversive to the established order of which they were part. Writing to William Wilberforce in 1792, Thomas Robinson, the vicar of St Mary's, Leicester, said:

> I am sorry to observe that among the numerous class of dissenters, whose aim is to abolish every national establishment of religion among us, there are many of real piety. I know not how they can reconcile their conduct with the Scripture injunction to obey the magistrates & follow after peace … [T]hey seem to think, that while they are opposing our Church they are doing God service and promoting the cause of his truth.[15]

Even the revered John Newton who had many close Nonconformist friends, among them the Haldanes, thought that "all the Dissenters, even the orthodox not excepted, are republicans and enemies of government".[16] Not surprisingly many evangelical Anglicans were somewhat wary of associating too closely with Dissenters in pan-evangelical enterprises. Later in the 1820s and 30s when the established position of the Church of England and the Church of

14 James Bennett, *Memoirs of the Life of the Rev. David Bogue,* (London: 1827), p. 241.
15 Martin, *op. cit.,* pp. 27, 28.
16 *Ibid*.

Scotland was being challenged, political tensions again undermined evangelical union.

The Haldane brothers, particularly Robert, were affected by the climate of political suspicion. Before his conversion Robert Haldane had flirted with radical politics, but after his conversion it seems that what political views he held were kept to himself. However, this did not prevent his opponents from using his former radicalism against him. When with his brother he applied to the East India Company for permission to go to India as missionaries, his politics were one of the reasons his application was rejected. At the time it was feared that missionaries were subversive to civil order. One leading moderate minister in Glasgow wrote to Lord Dundas, the Lord Advocate, saying "that the whole of this missionary business grows from a democratical root". This was the light in which the Haldanes' home missionary efforts were viewed as well.[17] It was against this background that Robert Haldane sought to answer his critics on this point by protesting that he had never entertained the idea of subverting the established church, and avowing his submission to the state as commanded by Scripture.[18] While evangelicals within the established churches supported the right of the Haldanes and others to engage in itinerant preaching, some were nervous about their politics and less than enthusiastic in their co-operation.

Ecclesiastical tensions

It was in the realm of church life that the Haldanes' attempt to realise evangelical union came to nought. In spite of their desire to establish churches that were simply evangelical and non-denominational, the Haldanes ended up establishing a new denomination and dividing their own church. The problem was that, as they sought to make the church as biblical as they could, they inevitably alienated those who disagreed with them. What they saw as a sincere pursuit of an apostolic ideal of church life was seen by others as a restless love of novelty and innovation for its own sake.

When the Circus church was established in 1799 its pattern of church life was similar to that with which most Scots were familiar. As the minister James Haldane's position in the church was comparable to that of the minister in Presbyterian churches. The church was Congregational in polity for largely but not entirely pragmatic reasons. At this point there is not much evidence that Haldanes' had very distinct views on church polity except that they, with the other organisers, were concerned that the new church take church discipline

17 Lovegrove, *op. cit.,* p. 127.
18 A Haldane, *op. cit.,* pp. 275ff; Robert Haldane, *Address to the Public, concerning Politics and Plans lately adopted to promote Religion in Scotland* (Edinburgh: 1800).

seriously.[19] One of the lessons learned from their itinerant tours around Scotland seems to have been that discipline was too lax in the Church of Scotland. Other than that and the monthly observance of the Lord's Supper, the Circus church was not all that unusual. As I have already indicated it was basically intended to be an Edinburgh version of the Whitefieldian churches in England. The Haldanes' biographer sums up the situation in this way:

> For a long time after the formation of the Tabernacle Church, questions of ecclesiastical [order] never seemed to impede the hallowed object to which its pastor had consecrated his life. To use his own language, "It was, in fact, no separation from the Establishment. It was merely another place of worship for preaching the gospel without regard to *forms* of external arrangement or Church order, and where the pastor and many of the members showed their catholic spirit by going to the Sacrament of the Established Church. Add to this that the preaching was almost entirely addressed to the people of the world."[20]

That is how the church began, but whatever the original intention I suggest that the concern for church discipline indicated that the seeds of a more distinctive church polity had been planted and in time would begin to grow.

The first area in which James Haldane began to develop a more distinct ecclesiology was in relation to the Lord's Supper. By 1802 he was advocating the weekly observance of the Lord's Supper. Considering that at the time in Scotland the Lord's Supper was observed in many churches only annually, this was quite an innovation. Haldane had already concluded that the Lord's Supper was not a sacrament, but he had not altered its monthly observance at the Tabernacle. When weekly observance was introduced it met with considerable opposition. In a pamphlet on the subject Haldane said that:

> From the time of the formation of the church, I should have esteemed it a privilege to have shewed forth [our Lord's] death as often as I commemorated his resurrection. I thought, however, this would have been inexpedient.[21]

Some accused Haldane of having kept his views secret, but he protested his integrity. A further development in James' thinking that proved more divisive was in regard to eldership. Influenced by reading the works of the 18th century separatists Glas and Sandeman, James persuaded the church in 1806 to adopt a plural eldership. These elders were understood not to be ruling elders in the Presbyterian sense, but rather as fellow pastors with James. This innovation was not appreciated by many and it was noted ruefully by some

19 A Haldane, *op. cit.,* pp. 207, 218.
20 *Ibid.*, p. 354.
21 Lovegrove, *op. cit.,* p. 174.

critics that when James was not preaching the attendance dropped considerably.[22]

But these developments were relatively minor compared to what happened over the issues of mutual exhortation and believers' baptism. In 1808 James had come to the conclusion that Christians should have the opportunity in the regular worship meetings of the church to mutually exhort one another. Until then there had been mutual exhortation in some midweek meetings, but its introduction into the Sunday services caused a storm. Many people left the church over this. Many of those who stayed considered what was often said unedifying. But James was adamant. His convictions on mutual exhortation were closely related to his views on preaching and Christian ministry. Having repudiated the clergy/laity distinction he believed that every member of the church, or at least the male members, should have opportunity to speak for the edification of other members. In this way those who had a particular gift for preaching could be recognised and set a part for training and ministry.[23] Many of the Haldanes' associates who disagreed with them on this issue considered it, in the words of one of them, John Aikman, "destructive, both of the pastoral office and of all order in the house of God".[24] If that is how some in the Haldane circle felt it is not difficult to think what fellow evangelicals in the Presbyterian churches felt.

It was the issue of believers' baptism that finally split the Haldane movement and destroyed any pretence of evangelical union. Hard on the heels of the mutual exhortation controversy was first James' and then Robert's change of view on baptism. In a letter to his friend John Campbell, the minister successively of Whitefield's Tottenham Court Road Chapel and Kingsland Chapel in London, James confessed to having for some time entertained doubts about infant baptism. It was when asked to baptise a child in 1808 that he felt he could not conscientiously do so, even though he had not at that point come to clear conclusions. James did not want the issue of baptism to divide the church, but in fact it did. About 200 people agreed with James and stayed with him while many others departed to other churches.[25] The division at the Tabernacle spread through the Haldane movement with most churches choosing to maintain the practice of infant baptism. This was in effect the beginning of the Congregational denomination in Scotland.

On all these issues both brothers said that they did not intend to divide the church or the movement. Perhaps because he was a pastor James was

22 *Ibid.*, pp. 170, 175.
23 *Ibid.*, p. 171.
24 A Haldane, *op. cit.,* p. 361.
25 *Ibid.*, p. 360.

seemingly the more flexible of the two in the application of their convictions. As their biographer says, James's views "were never intended by him to have been prematurely forced into practice at the risk of fomenting division". But that is what happened. Somewhat naively both brothers believed that they should be able to state their views plainly and then work through their application in the life of the church. Writing to John Campbell, James said:

> If we are all acting on conviction and both desiring to know the will of Jesus in this and in all other respects, I have no apprehension of disunion. Of one thing I am sure, that all who love the Lord Jesus should, so far as they are agreed, walk by the same rule and mind the same things; and if it be improper for Baptists to be in fellowship in the same Church, it must be equally improper to have occasional fellowship in private.[26]

But this ideal did not work out in the life of the Tabernacle or in the wider Haldane movement. Perhaps the reason for this was in part the inability of both brothers to see that in churches there will always be loose ends. In his book *A View on Social Worship* in which he propounded some of his convictions on the nature of the church, James made these revealing comments:

> The religion of Jesus in its doctrines, precepts and institutions, is one connected whole; in proportion as one part is overlooked, the force of all is weakened … The genuine and sincere union is absolutely impracticable while professors neglect to inquire, to understand and to practise the directions of God's word respecting social worship… The apostles were most anxious to promote unity of sentiment as well as of affection in all the saints.[27]

James then went on to propound his views, hoping that his readers would agree with him but warning them of the danger of resisting the conviction of truth. Such an approach to changing the church is not calculated to maintain harmony and keep people on board. For the Haldanes the issues were black and white and had to be accepted in total or not at all. In an article on the Haldanes, Deryck Lovegrove describes well the difficulty of their approach to changing the church while maintaining its unity:

> In their quest for purity of order the innovators showed that they were prepared to jettison any realistic chance of harmony for the sake of adherence to the letter of Scripture. Still more destructive was the missionary zeal with which they pursued that goal. In spite of their awareness of the dangers of Glasite intolerance, the Haldanes failed to apply to their own context the historical

26 Alexander Haldane, *The Lives of Robert and James Haldane* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1990), p. 359.
27 J Haldane, *A View* …, pp. iv, 29, 462.

> lesson it offered concerning obsession with detail, and the resulting sequence of strife, debility, and ultimate irrelevance.[28]

That said, it is interesting to note that there were limits to the Haldanes' innovations. For example, they opposed the novel ideas about the restoration of the miraculous charismata propounded by Edward Irving, as well as the premillenialism that was gaining acceptance in some circles.

Theological tensions

However much the Tabernacle was divided on church practises, it was united in its essential evangelical doctrine. This was not the case in the wider evangelical movement in Great Britain nor even within the Haldane movement itself. There were two doctrinal issues that the Haldanes were particularly concerned about which made them, depending on your views, either unhelpful dividers or stalwart defenders of evangelicalism. Either way the involvement of the Haldanes in theological controversy was the cause of some tensions that strained the unity of the movement.

In the 1820s Robert Haldane was at the centre of a massive controversy within the British and Foreign Bible Society concerning the Apocrypha. The details of the controversy need not concern us, except to say that it involved objections by Robert and other Scottish members of the Society to the inclusion of the Apocrypha in continental editions of the Society's Bibles. Robert had discovered this when in France in copies of the French Bible of which he had actually underwritten the costs of publication. The argument of the London committee was that the Society's Bibles would only be acceptable in predominantly Roman Catholic countries if they included the Apocrypha. Robert and others thought that this was an unwarranted compromise that God could not bless. Moreover it contravened the fundamental principle of the Society that said it existed for the circulation of the Scriptures alone. Since the Bible Society was the evangelical society *par excellence*, Robert's protests were seen by some as unnecessarily dividing evangelicals, but by others as defending a fundamental pillar of evangelicalism. Robert himself saw his stand as a necessary one against a false liberality that tolerated departures from the truth in the name of love. As he put it:

> Bigotry has had a long and gloomy reign, and over the greatest part of the world is still enthroned, but among Protestants it has in most cases lost its sway, and is daily declining in influence. Its rival has mounted the throne and in the opposite direction threatens to do equal mischief. A spurious liberality has succeeded to

28 Lovegrove, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

> intolerance, and aims at promoting to propagation of divine truth by compromising its distinguishing attributes.[29]

It seems to me that Robert Haldane was justified in his behaviour and as John Macleod pointed out, it was largely because of him that the Apocrypha is not in our English Bibles.[30]

The other theological issue that attracted the attention of the Haldanes was the doctrine of the atonement. Towards the end of his life James Haldane was involved in a controversy over the doctrine of limited or definite atonement. Like his brother, James was a thorough going Calvinist all his life. By the 1830s there was a considerable shift taking place in British evangelicalism away from the Calvinism that had characterised non-Wesleyan evangelicalism to a highly modified Calvinism. Among other things the traditional understanding of limited atonement was being challenged, not least within the Congregational churches that had emerged from the Haldane movement. In a series of pamphlets and books James locked horns with a number of antagonists, including the eminent Glasgow Congregationalist Ralph Wardlaw. Again our concern is not with the details of the controversy, but with the fact that James thought he had to do battle on this point. While he rejoiced that true Christians united in evangelistic efforts and missions, he regretted that sometimes the "promoting of union among believers" was "at the expense of zeal for the truth". While no doubt many saw James as a troubler in Israel, he saw himself as a defender the historic doctrine of the atonement against theological innovators.[31]

Personal tensions

Whatever the rights and wrongs of the positions that the Haldanes took, it must be said that there were personal tensions between them and those around them that did nothing to help the maintenance of unity. James was warmly liked by many, but Robert seems not to have been the easiest person to work with. Certainly some of his associates were pretty bitter after falling out with him. After the split in the Tabernacle over baptism Robert closed the Glasgow seminary and withdrew his financial support from many of the churches he had built. Greville Ewing—the seminary tutor, an early associate and later a leading Congregational minister in Glasgow—fell out with the brothers and was never again on good terms with them. Even more to the point, his daughter, Janet Matheson, mentioned the way her father had been treated in

29 Robert Haldane, *The Conduct of the Rev. Daniel Wilson*, (Edinburgh: 1829), p. 3.
30 John Macleod, *Some Favourite Books,* (Edingburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1988).
31 James Haldane, *Observations on Universal Pardon, the Extent of the Atonement and Personal Assurance of Salvation,* (Edinburgh: 1831).

her biography of him[32] which drew a response from James. William Orme, later an eminent Congregational minister in London, likewise complained about the high-handed way the Haldanes had treated him.[33] The problem seems in part due to Robert's authoritarian personality and in part due to the way he financed and really controlled what happened in many of the tabernacles. This abrasive tendency can also be seen in the way in which, in controversy on some of the issues mentioned above, Robert would get very personal in his criticisms. For example, in the Apocrypha controversy he attacked the integrity of Daniel Wilson, a leading evangelical Anglican who later became the first bishop of Calcutta.[34] Needless to say this approach to personal relationships did not help to build evangelical unity.

There is always something inspiring about the story of a movement of God, however imperfect the instruments he uses. It is a reminder that God can move today in different circumstances and yet accomplish the same purpose of extending his kingdom. The story of the Haldanes is one such story that is largely forgotten today, but is worthy of being retold. But the story of the Haldanes has some important lessons to teach us, particularly that evangelical union is a noble ideal which every Christian should strive to see realised. When God is at work advancing his kingdom many of our differences seem relatively minor. Within churches and between churches Christians should accept one another as Christ has accepted them and so bring praise to God. While on many issues we must have our convictions, on the big issues of the gospel—righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit—we can be one as we strive together for the faith of the gospel. But the story of the Haldanes also teaches us that there are many pitfalls to avoid. We must guard against an obsession with the relatively minor issues of church order. We must not expect complete agreement on everything in the life of the church. We must maintain good relationships with brothers and sisters who disagree with us. We must beware of a love of controversy for its own sake. We must remember that Christians are at different levels of understanding and maturity. We must discern on what issues it is worth taking a stand and then contend for the faith in love and with a generosity of spirit. Like Robert and James Haldane we are very fallible human beings, but also like them we can be used by God to advance the kingdom of his Son.

32 Janet J Matheson, *A Memoir of Greville Ewing,* (London: 1843), p. 326.
33 William Orme, *A Reply to the Remarks of RH Haldane*, (Perth: 1809), pp. 19,21.
34 R Haldane, *The Conduct of the Rev. Daniel Wilson.*

Past Conference Papers

1981

A Tovey MA BD . . . . . Robert Browne: The Morning Star of Congregationalism
DO Swann BA BD . . . . . The Church Meeting
P Seccombe BD . . . . . John Angell James

1982

J Legg BA BD . . . . . Children of the Covenant (available as a booklet)
A Clifford BA MLitt PhD. . . . . The Christian Mind of Philip Doddridge
D Boorman BA MLitt . . . . . The Origins of the London Missionary Society

1983

H Elias BA BD . . . . . PT Forsyth—Prophet of the 20th Century
M Boland . . . . . Oliver Cromwell
N Rees BD . . . . . Prayer Life of the Local Church

1984

GT Booth BD . . . . . The Hymn Writers of English Congregationalism
ES Guest. . . . . John Robinson (1575–1625)
G Fielder MA BD. . . . . RW Dale and the Non-Conformist Conscience.

1985

Prof. T Jones DPhil DD . . . . . Walter Craddock (1606–1659)
Prof. T Jones DPhil DD . . . . . John Penry (1563–1593)
P Golding BTh MTh . . . . . Owen on the Mortification of Sin

1986

PJ Beale MA . . . . . Jonathan Edwards and the Phenomena of Revival
DO Swann BA BD . . . . . An Earnest Ministry
P Collins. . . . . Thomas Wilson

1987

DL James MSc ARCS . . . . . John Cotton's Doctrine of the Church
M Plant BA. . . . . Richard Davis and God's Day of Grace
B Jones Lionel Fletcher—Evangelist

1988

G EvansRichard Mather—The True Use of Synods
A Tovey MA BD . . . . . That Proud Independency
G Kirby MA . . . . . The Countess of Huntingdon

1989

GT Booth BD . . . . . Josiah Conder—Hymn-writer and Compiler
J Legg BA BD . . . . . The Use and Abuse of Church History
G Hemming BA . . . . . Savoy, 1833 and All That

1990

EJE Semper BA. . . . . David Bogue—A Man for All Seasons
L James PhD. . . . . Griffith John—The Founder of the Hankow Mission
I Rees BA . . . . . Jonathan Edwards on the Work of the Holy Spirit

1991

A Kelly What Makes Churches Grow
ES Guest. . . . . Joseph Parker—The Immortal Thor of Pulpitdom
P Seccombe BD . . . . . RW Dale—Standing Firm or Drifting Dangerously

1992

A Fraser PhD . . . . . When Evolutionary Thought and Congregational Thinkers Meet
D Saunders MA BEd . . . . . Living Stones—Our Heritage, Our Future
J Little BD . . . . . John Cennick—Conflict and Conciliation in the Evangelical Awakening.

1993 Some Separatists

A Tovey MA, BD . . . . . A Reforming Pair—Henry Barrow and John Greenwood
T Jones DPhil DD: John Penry

1994 Perseverance and Assurance

I Densham . . . . . Sherwood, Selina and Salubrious Place
N Bonnett . . . . . John Eliot—Son of Nazeing
G Davies. . . . . Thomas Goodwin and the Quest for Assurance

1995 Ministers and Missionaries

PJ Beale MA . . . . . The Rise and Development of the London Missionary Society
D Swann BA BD . . . . . Thomas Haweis 1734–1820
B Higham. . . . . David Jones—The Angel of Llangan

1996 Freedom and Faithfulness

ES Guest. . . . . From CERF to EFCC
DL James, DMin, MSc, ARCS . . . . Heroes and Villains—The Controversy between John Cotton and Roger Williams
EJE Semper, BA . . . . . Edward Parsons—Influence from a Local Church

1997 From Shropshire to Madagascar via Bath

RGDW Pickles, BD, MPhil . . . . . The Rise and Fall of the Shropshire Congregational Union
Philip Swann. . . . . William Jay—Pastor and Preacher
Dr Noel Gibbard . . . . . Madagascar

1998 Eternal Light, Adoption and Livingstone

GT Booth, MM, BD . . . . . Thomas Binney, 1798–1874
G Cooke. . . . . The Doctrine of Adoption & the Preaching of Jeremiah Burroughs
A Fraser, PhD . . . . . David Livingstone

1999 JD Jones, Lloyd-Jones and 1662

Peter Williams. . . . . JD Jones of Bournemouth
John Legg, BA, BD. . . . . God's Own Testimony: Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones' Doctrine of Assurance
Mervyn Neal. . . . . The Great Ejection of 1662

EFCC *publications*

Telling Another Generation

This book contains a symposium of papers originally written to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of EFCC, and as a tribute to Stan Guest, who has been closely involved in the work of EFCC ever since its formation, and retired as secretary of the Fellowship in 1989.

Serving as a Deacon by John Legg

"Diaconates might find it useful to supply each member with a copy of this work"—*Evangelicals Now.*

Evangelical & Congregational

A brief survey of Congregational history, church order, confessions of faith, the ministry, worship and sacraments. Includes *The Savoy Declaration of Faith*.

After Conversion—What? by Lionel Fletcher

A reprint of the forthright and biblical advice to new Christians by Lionel Fletcher, one of Congregationalism's foremost pastors and evangelists.

Children of the Covenant by John Legg

The biblical basis for infant baptism.

Signs and Seals of the Covenant by CG Kirkby

A biblical review of the doctrine of Christian baptism.

EFCC also has available these books about Congregational church government

Manual of Congregational Principles by RW Dale

The definitive work of Congregational church government.

Christian Fellowship or The Church Member's Guide by John Angell James

A practical manual for church members to learn their duties and responsibilities.

All these items are available from the Office Manager, The Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches, PO Box 34, Beverley, East Yorkshire, HU17 0YY

Typeset Quinta Press, Meadow View, Weston Rhyn, Oswestry, Shropshire, SY10 7RN
Tel: 01691 778659
E-mail: cscinfo@quintapress; Web-site: www.quintapress.com