

The Spitalfields area of London in 1799. The Crispin Street Church was located behind 36 Crispin Street and was accessed from the courtyard at the rear of the property. 36 Crispin Street is to the left of West Street that leads directly off from the left side of the Spitalfields Market area.

John Love in London

– Part II –

A History of the Crispin Street Congregation¹

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In order to understand John Love's difficult pastorate at the congregation in Crispin Street, London, it is essential to appreciate the historical backgrounds and the doctrinal positions of the five ministers of the congregation that preceded him. Regrettably, prior to this article, no detailed history of the congregation has been written; in addition, other than brief notices, neither are there biographical accounts of the five ministers who preceded John Love as the pastor. Our purpose in this article is to provide a history of the congregation up the time of Love's ordination as its minister in a similar way to that provided for most of the other old London congregations by Walter Wilson in his *History and Antiquities of the Dissenting Churches and Meeting Houses in London, Westminster, and Southwark*.² All of John Love's

1. The writer gratefully acknowledges the help a number of libraries and their staff for providing assistance and copies of rare pamphlets: Dr Williams' Library in London; the National Library of Scotland; New College Library, Edinburgh; Glasgow University Library; Regent's Park College Library, Oxford; the Archivist at Westminster College, Cambridge; and Kenneth Henke of the Archives and Special Collections at Princeton Theological Seminary Library.

2. Walter Wilson, *The History and Antiquities of the Dissenting Churches and Meeting Houses in London, Westminster, and Southwark; including the Lives of their Ministers from the Rise of Nonconformity to the present time* (4 vols., London, 1808) (cited afterwards as *Dissenting Churches* with volume and page number). Wilson provides a brief history of the congregation whilst it met at Petticoat Lane and concentrates mainly on the ministry of Joseph Hussey; see Vol. 4, pp. 408-422.

predecessors were different from him as regards his staunch commitment to Presbyterian Church polity; in addition, several of them were High Calvinists which led to significant differences between his and their theological perspectives. A consequence of this was that all five men that preceded John Love made their own contribution to the mindset of the fellowship to which he was called to become the minister in 1787.

The Congregational church that eventually met at Crispin Street was first gathered by John Humfrey, a minister who was ejected from the Established Church in 1662. It is unclear when the congregation was originally formed. The Baptist historian, William T. Whitley, asserts that it began as a mixed-membership church (Independent and Baptist) that met in Boar's Head Yard off Petticoat Lane, in which John Bunyan preached his last London sermon in 1688, and that it was to this church that Humfrey and his supporters associated themselves around 1700.³ Following the Indulgence of 1672, Humfrey registered his house in Beckford, near Tewksbury, as a Nonconformist place of worship.⁴ It seems probable that he came to London either in the late 1680s or in the very early 1690s because he took an active part, as we shall notice, in the controversies among London Nonconformists in the last decade of the seventeenth century. Walter Wilson notes, with regard to the congregation that Humfrey gathered: 'In the year 1700, his people met in Duke's-place, from whence they removed to a new meeting-house in Rosemary-lane. They afterwards went back again to Duke's-place, but at length fixed in Petticoat-lane.' Alexander Gordon states that the meeting-house on Petticoat Lane, Whitechapel was in Boar's Head Yard.⁵

Ministers of the Petticoat Lane – Turners' Hall – Crispin Street Congregation	
<i>Minister and ecclesiastical Position</i>	<i>Pastorate</i>
John Humfrey (Anglican then Congregationalist)	1690?–1719 at Petticoat Lane
Joseph Hussey (Presbyterian then Congregationalist)	1719–1726 at Petticoat Lane
William Bentley (Congregationalist)	1729–1751 at Turners' Hall and Crispin Street

3. See W. T. Whitley, *The Baptists of London* (Kingsgate Press, London, 1928), pp. 120-121.

4. G. Lyon Turner, *Original Records of Early Nonconformity under Persecution and Indulgence* (3 vols., London and Leipsic, 1911), Vol. 2, p. 816.

5. Wilson, *Dissenting Churches*, Vol. 4, p. 408. See also Alexander Gordon's article on Humfrey in *Dictionary of National Biography* (cited afterwards as *DNB*).

Ministers of the Petticoat Lane – Turners’ Hall – Crispin Street Congregation	
<i>Minister and ecclesiastical Position</i>	<i>Pastorate</i>
John Potts (Burgher Seceder then Congregationalist)	1754–1773? at Crispin Street
Alexander Simpson (Relief Church then Congregationalist)	1783–1786 at Crispin Street
John Love (Presbyterian)	1787–1798 at Crispin Street

John Humfrey (1621-1719)

John Humfrey was born at St Albans in Hertfordshire; he was the son of William Humfrey and his wife, Ann. In the Lent term of 1638/9⁶ he was entered as a student at Pembroke College, Oxford and graduated B.A. in November 1641. He left the University briefly at the time that Oxford was garrisoned by the parliamentary army, and being then of the episcopal persuasion, he went to Devonshire, but returned in 1642 when Oxford became Charles I’s capital-in-exile. When Oxford fell to Parliament in June 1646 he again left, serving as a chaplain in Devon before returning again in July 1647 where he took the degree of M.A. Although he was a Puritan, he quickly established himself as a man of no party and refused to take the Solemn League and Covenant or to join in fellowship with a Presbyterian Classis. However, two years later he was ordained by such a Classis and became the vicar of Frome-Selwood, in Somersetshire in June 1654;⁷ he later claimed that the explanation for his Presbyterian ordination was that he had no access to a bishop.

Moderate Anglican supporting Free Communion

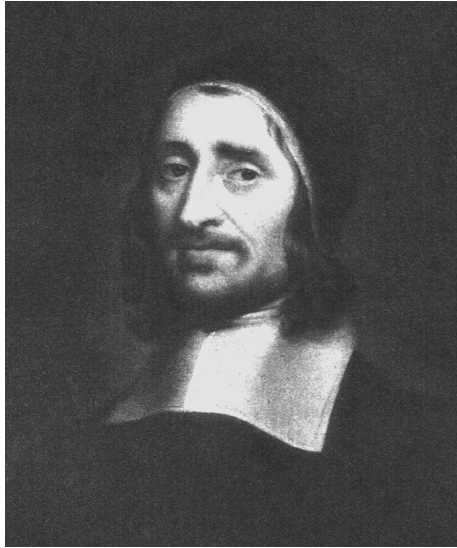
As vicar of Frome, Humfrey gained notoriety for admitting to the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper those who would not, or could not, come before the elders of the parish to be examined regarding their profession of faith.⁸ Humfrey commented that many parishes in the provinces had

6. The Old Style date of 1638 is given in Samuel Palmer, *The Nonconformist’s Memorial* (3 vols., London, 1802-3), Vol. 3, p. 190; in *DNB*; and in Anthony A. Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses*, ed. P. Bliss (5 vols., London, 1813-20), Vol. 4, p. 743. The New Style date of 1639 is given in A. G. Matthews, *Calamy Revised* (Oxford, 1934), p. 284; and in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* – online edition (cited afterwards as *ODNB*).

7. Matthews, *Calamy Revised*, p. 284.

8. Humfrey’s biographer in the *Nonconformist’s Memorial* writes, ‘In those days (during

not received the Lord's Supper for a decade. The predominant view among the Puritans was that the sacrament was only for those professing a true faith and that it was not a converting ordinance. Humfrey disagreed with this view, believing that the Lord's Supper was capable of converting the ungodly. He engaged in a long and bitter controversy with those who refused admission other than to those who made a profession of saving



Richard Baxter (1615-1691), the leading Presbyterian minister with whom John Humfrey corresponded.

faith. His principal opponents were the London minister Roger Drake (1608-1669) along with Anthony Palmer (1616-1679) and Humphrey Saunders (1622-1672).⁹ All three men were among the ejected clergy of 1662.

Both Humfrey and his opponents agreed that it was church membership that gave the right to partake of the Lord's Supper. In the English parish churches there were large numbers of nominal church members on account of their baptism. Humfrey held the view that unregenerate church members may be converted by partaking of the Lord's Supper. For his

opponents, church membership involved an explicit profession of saving faith and a life in keeping with that profession.¹⁰ Humfrey complained in private correspondence with Richard Baxter that the strictness of the Presbyterians' view of the Lord's Supper encouraged formalism and dishonesty in the congregation.¹¹ He eventually saw Baxter's own opinions

the protectorate of Oliver Cromwell) the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, as he thought, lay waste in most places; they that were for gathered churches (the Independents) administering it only to their own members, and others (the Presbyterians) to those only whom they selected as visibly worthy by examination. This caused him to write for free admission to the Lord's Supper.' Palmer, *Nonconformist's Memorial*, Vol. 3, p. 191.

9. There are biographical accounts of Drake, a Presbyterian, and Palmer, a Congregationalist, in *ODNB*. For details of Saunders, see Matthews, *Calamy Revised*, p. 426.

10. For a helpful outline of the controversy, see Wilfred W. Biggs, 'The Controversy concerning Free Admission to the Lord's Supper, 1652-1660', *Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society* (cited afterwards as *TCHS*), Vol. 16 (1949-1951), pp. 178-189.

11. N. H. Keeble and G. F. Nuttall (eds.), *Calendar of the Correspondence of Richard Baxter* (2 vols., Oxford, 1991), Vol. 1, p. 290.

as unnecessarily strict, and was clearly at that time a proponent of mixed communion.¹² As a consequence of his involvement in this controversy over free admission to the Lord's Supper he became the author of several treatises on the subject.¹³

Humfrey also opposed both the Commonwealth and the Protectorate under Oliver Cromwell and made no secret of his desire to see the return of Charles II. After the army coup that removed Richard Cromwell in 1659, he preached a sermon on the words in Ezekiel 21:27, 'I will overturn, overturn, overturn it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is, and I will give it him.' This language proved too much for some in the army and a warrant was issued for Humfrey's arrest. Following the restoration of the monarch in 1660, William Piers (1580-1670), the restored bishop of Bath and Wells,¹⁴ invited Humfrey to assist in the ordination of new priests and took the opportunity to urge Humfrey to renounce his Presbyterian ordination and be episcopally re-ordained. This caused Humfrey a crisis of conscience and after considering the matter he agreed to Piers' request with the qualification that some modifications were made to the liturgy. This resulted in him writing a paper demonstrating the validity of re-ordination.¹⁵ Though his paper received the compliments of a number of bishops, Humfrey could not reconcile himself to his actions, and he renounced his episcopal ordination before Piers' registrar and

12. See the article on Humfrey in *ODNB* by E. C. Vernon.

13. *An humble vindication of free admission to the Lord's Supper* (London, 1652); *A rejoinder to Mr. Roger Drake; or, a reply unto his book entitled, A boundary to the holy mount* (London, 1654); *Second vindication of a disciplinary, anti-Erastian, orthodox free admission to the Lord's Supper or, the state of this controversie revised and proposed* (London, 1656).

14. For biographical details of Piers, see *ODNB*. From 1621 to 1624 Piers was the Vice-Chancellor of Oxford University and in that capacity he and other College heads charged Gabriel Bridges with 'false and offensive doctrine' after he had preached a sermon advocating Arminian views. In 1622, a sermon upholding predestination, by Immanuel Bourne, rector of Ashover in Derbyshire, was dedicated to Piers. These events suggest that at that date Piers had Calvinistic sympathies, and cast doubt on Anthony Wood's comment that while he was Vice-Chancellor he was 'too officious against such that were then called *anti-Arminians*', and thereby 'he gained the good will of Dr. Laud'. See Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses*, Vol. 4, p. 839.

15. John Humfrey, *The question of re-ordination, whether, and how a minister ordained by the Presbytery, may take ordination also by the Bishop?* (London, 1661). John Wilkins (1614-1672) who became the Bishop of Chester in 1668 saw the work in manuscript and highly approved of it, whilst Edward Worth (1620-1669), afterwards the Bishop of Kil-laloe, told Humfrey that its publication had 'converted all Ireland' (excepting two Scots).

burnt his deacon's orders but kept his certificates of priest's orders until after the ejection of 1662. In reply to his own paper on re-ordination, he wrote a further tract stating that the office of presbyter and bishop were synonymous and that his original presbyterian ordination was valid.

When the Act of Uniformity became law in 1662, Humfrey refused to comply with the requirements of the Act and was ejected from the parish of Frome-Selwood in August of that year and continued for the rest of his life a Nonconformist. He moved to London and gathered a congregational church that met at various places including Duke's Place, Rosemary Lane, and finally in Boar's Head Yard, Petticoat Lane, Whitechapel. This was the congregation of which John Love would become the pastor almost a hundred years later. Humfrey remained a man of no party in Nonconformity and sought continually to achieve toleration for those who could not in conscience join the Church of England.

Moderate Nonconformist

Anthony Wood says that Humfrey 'became a congregational man in London, and the most moderate non-conformist of all the brethren, who, tho' they value themselves above him, (as one saith) yet it is to be wished, that they would learn of him moderation.'¹⁶ This assessment of Humfrey is confirmed by Alexander Gordon who writes, 'His views on church matters were extremely moderate, and he spent much ink in futile recommendations of a union of all Protestants. In the theological disputes of the time he was a man of no side.'¹⁷

This is seen in Humfrey's views on predestination. In a debate with Richard Baxter in 1674 he makes clear that he was almost as liberal as Baxter on the doctrine of justification, and that, like Baxter, he shared a belief in a middle way between Calvinism and Arminianism. His desire for accommodation earned him the commendation of three latitudinarian bishops, Simon Patrick of Ely, Edward Stillingfleet of Worcester, and Nicholas Strafford of Chester.¹⁸ This makes the following comment of Walter Wilson regarding him quite improbable. He writes:

16. Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses*, Vol. 4, p. 743.

17. *DNB*, Vol. 10, p. 236. Amongst the very many treatises that Humfrey wrote, there are eighteen that have titles including such words as 'Middle Way', 'Healing Paper', 'Pacific Paper', 'Mediocria', 'Healing Attempt', 'Union Pursued', 'Peace in Divinity', and 'A Draught for Accommodation'; the full title of one being *Mediocria or the Middle Way between Protestant and Papist in a paper on Justification*.

18. It was no doubt due to these views of Humfrey, along with his close friendship to

A manuscript says, ‘Mr. Humfrey was inclined to Antinomianism and his people more so.’ It is certain he was of the Crispian School and wrote on that side of the controversy.¹⁹

Wilson’s view of Humfrey is contradicted by Alexander Gordon who writes, ‘He was certainly not an Antinomian, as Wilson supposes, though he criticised the critics of Tobias Crisp.’²⁰ Whilst it is true that Humfrey defended Tobias Crisp, who was regarded as an Antinomian, he was not, however, defending his views. Humfrey was rather a defender of toleration, and he believed that the ‘hated Antinomian’ should have the right to publish his views.

Like his moderate Nonconformist friend, Richard Baxter, Humfrey was a tireless exponent of a new and more comprehensive settlement of the Church of England. He published a considerable number of tracts on the comprehension of moderate Nonconformists into the Church of England.²¹ Whilst his labours to achieve a comprehension proved to be fruitless, Humfrey still continued to write letters and tracts to almost every session of King William III’s Parliaments, campaigning for an accommodation of Nonconformists.²² In consequence of the Antinomian and the Neonomian controversies, English Nonconformity polarized in the troubled decade of the 1690s. This polarization resulted in the division of the Common Fund to support country ministers into a Congregational Fund and a Presbyterian Fund, and the weekly lecture at Pinners’ Hall for the purpose of propagating the Protestant Faith becoming two weekly lectures held at the same time but at different locations. During these protracted controversies, John Humfrey wrote several tracts seeking to

Baxter, that Curt Daniel considered him to be a Neonomian. See Curt D. Daniel, ‘Hyper-Calvinism and John Gill’ (PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1983), p. 5.

19. Wilson, *Dissenting Churches*, Vol. 4, p. 408.

20. *DNB*, Vol. 10, p. 236.

21. This concern was typical not only of Congregationalists like Humfrey but also of the English Presbyterians, and was a major reason why they never organised Presbyterian polity after the Act of Toleration in 1689. As we noted in the first part of this paper, it was the absence of effective Presbyterian Church government, and the consequent failure to put a check of false teaching, that was a major factor leading to the spread of Arianism in the eighteenth century.

22. For Humfrey’s attempts to obtain a comprehension of Nonconformists in the Established Church, see Douglas R. Lacey, *Dissent and Parliamentary Politics in England, 1661-1689* (Rutgers University Press, 1969), pp. 23-24, 56, 65, 68, 69, 226-227.

achieve harmony among paedobaptist Nonconformists, two of which were entitled *Peace at Pinners'-Hall wished, and attempted in a pacifick paper touching the universality of redemption, the conditionality of the covenant of grace, and our freedom from the law of works upon occasion of a sermon* (1692), and *Pacification touching the doctrinal dissent among our united brethren in London, being an answer to Mr. Williams and Mr. Lobb* (1696).²³

John Humfrey was both a correspondent²⁴ and a prolific author. Alexander Gordon in his *DNB* article lists forty-four treatises that he published, the last one being issued when he was ninety-one. He was still living both when Edmund Calamy produced his account of the ejected ministers in 1713 and at the time of the Salters' Hall controversy over creed subscription in February-March 1719, but he took no part in it. He died towards the end of 1719, having continued in the ministry until his death at the age of ninety-eight. Humfrey survived all the other ejected ministers except Nathan Denton.²⁵

Joseph Hussey (1660-1726)

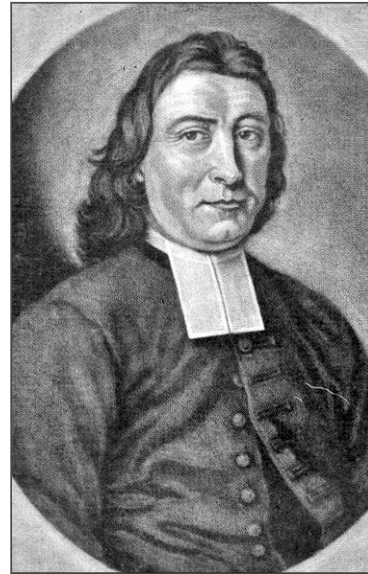
It was a very different minister that succeeded John Humfrey. If Humfrey was for 'middle ways' and toleration, the man who followed him had, by the time he came to Petticoat Lane, very fixed doctrinal views. How a man with such definitive theological opinions as Joseph Hussey was called to follow a man with such latitudinarian ones as Humfrey is far from clear. We have noted that Walter Wilson in his *History and Antiquities of the Dissenting Churches* stated that he either had, or had seen, a manuscript which stated that 'Mr. Humfrey was inclined to Antinomianism and his people more

23. For accounts of this polarization and the resulting controversies, see Peter Toon, *Puritans and Calvinists* (Reiner Publications, 1973), pp. 85-106; Roger Thomas, 'The break-up of Nonconformity', in *The Beginnings of Nonconformity* (Hibbert Lectures for 1962, James Clarke, 1964), pp. 33-60; Roger Thomas, *Daniel Williams, 'Presbyterian Bishop'* (Friends of the Dr Williams' Library Lecture for 1962, Dr Williams' Trust, 1964).

24. In the extant letters from and to Richard Baxter catalogued by Neil Keeble and Geoffrey Nuttall there are seven from Baxter to Humfrey and fourteen from Humfrey to Baxter. See Keeble and Nuttall, *Calendar of the Correspondence of Richard Baxter*, Vol. 2, p. 364.

25. Nathan Denton (1634-1720), who was buried on 13th October 1720, was the last surviving minister who had been ejected in 1662. He became the Vicar of Bolton upon Dearn around 1660 and was ejected as a Nonconformist two years later. He continued to live in Bolton except for a short period when he had to move in consequence of the Five Mile Act. For biographical details, see Palmer, *The Nonconformist's Memorial*, Vol. 3, pp. 425-426. See also Matthews, *Calamy Revised*, p. 163.

so.²⁶ Wilson was a careful historian and it is understandable how Humfrey's defence of Tobias Crisp's right to proclaim his Antinomian views could have been misinterpreted as implying support for Crisp, rather than being merely a manifestation of his views on toleration. The comment, however, that Humfrey's people were pronounced Antinomians is not as easily explained. Their calling of Hussey, who was an Antinomian, to succeed him seems, in all likelihood, to verify Wilson's assessment of them. Humfrey continued in the pastorate without an assistant until he was ninety-eight. It seems very probable, therefore, that in his later years he would have been assisted by office-bearers in his congregation. These men may well have held to the complex of doctrines that identified a person or a church as being Antinomian, and following Humfrey's death they may have sought a minister whose views were more in accord with their own.



Joseph Hussey.

Early Career

Joseph Hussey was born on 31st March 1660 in Somerset²⁷ into a godly family. He grew up at Fordingbridge in Hampshire where he received the first elements of learning from Robert Whitaker,²⁸ who has been ejected from his fellowship at Magdalene College, Cambridge in 1662, and then lived

26. Wilson, *Dissenting Churches*, Vol. 4, p. 408.

27. The few brief accounts of Hussey's life all state that he was born in Fordingbridge. This was corrected by Geoffrey Nuttall in his Presidential Lecture to the United Reformed Church History Society in September 1976 entitled 'Cambridge Nonconformity, 1660-1710: From Holcroft to Hussey' (afterwards cited as 'Cambridge Nonconformity') and printed in *The Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society*, Vol. 1.9, April 1977, pp. 241-258. Nuttall points out that in Hussey's *A Warning from the Winds*, he speaks of 'my native county Somersetshire.' See footnote 61 on p. 253. The lecture is reprinted in Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *Studies in English Dissent* (Quinta Press, Weston Rhyn, 2002), pp. 161-180. The reference to Hussey's place of birth is on p. 174.

28. Robert Whitaker (1639-1718) was born in Read, near Padiham, in Lancashire and went to school in Burnley. Edmund Calamy believes he was prevented from taking M.A. by his Nonconformity. It is recorded that 'God blessed his ministry in Fordingbridge to the good of many souls.' See Palmer, *Nonconformist's Memorial*, Vol. 1, p. 270; Matthews, *Calamy Revised*, p. 524.

in Fordingbridge. At the appropriate age Hussey was sent to a Dissenting Academy with a high reputation at Newington Green, London which was run by Charles Morton²⁹ who after being ejected for Nonconformity and, living quietly in the country, set up a private academy. This institution, which he ran from c.1672 to 1685, gained a great reputation. Walter Wilson's references to Morton and his academy are fulsome. He writes that he was 'a gentleman, who, for a considerable course of time, taught university learning, with applause' and who was 'distinguished no less for depth of learning than politeness of manners.'³⁰ He had a considerable number of students under his tuition who afterwards gained eminence in both Church and state. Among these were Daniel Defoe and Samuel Wesley, the father of John and Charles Wesley, along with a number of other notable students, most of whom were Presbyterians. Before Morton was forced to close his institution in 1685, it was regarded as the most impressive of the Dissenting Academies, enrolling as many as fifty pupils at a time. Many of Morton's students entered the Dissenting ministry. The curriculum at the Newington Green Academy was very broad; besides the usual religious and classical studies, there was instruction in history, geography, mathematics, natural science, politics, and modern languages, and a laboratory equipped with air-pumps, thermometers, and various mathematical instruments. Daniel Defoe thought that the pupils also gained a greater mastery of English than at any other contemporary school.³¹

29. Charles Morton (1672-1698) was born in Pendavy, Cornwall and educated at Wadham College, Oxford. He was ejected from his position as Rector of Blisland, near Pendavy at the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660. Following the closure of his academy, in consequence of persecution by the authorities, he went to America where he became a minister in Charleston and the first Vice-President of Harvard College where he occasionally lectured. For Morton, see *DNB*; *ODNB*; and Mark Burden, *A Biographical Dictionary of Tutors at the Dissenters' Private Academies, 1660-1729*, Dr Williams' Centre for Dissenting Studies – online publication, 2013, pp. 381-394.

30. Wilson, *Dissenting Churches*, Vol. 1, p. 158; Vol. 2, p. 309.

31. For details of the Newington Green Academy run by Morton, see Irene Parker, *Dissenting Academies in England* (Cambridge, 1914), pp. 58-63; H. McLachlan, *English Education under the Test Acts: Being the History of the Nonconformist Academies, 1662-1820* (Manchester University Press, 1931), pp. 76-80; J. W. Ashley Smith, *The Birth of Modern Education* (Independent Press, London, 1914), pp. 56-61; T. G. Crippen, 'Early Nonconformist Academies', *TCHS*, Vol. 3 (1907-8), pp. 277-285; and *Dissenting Academies online* at <http://dissacad.english.qmul.ac.uk> (accessed 31st January 2017). Morton's Academy should be distinguished from the one run by Theophilus Gale which was also located at Newington Green. Previous scholarship on the Dissenting Academies should be

When Hussey had finished his studies under Morton he preached his first sermon in William Jenkyn's meeting house on Jewin Street in London on 14th August 1681. It is indicative of Hussey's outward commitment to Westminster Presbyterianism that this was the congregation in which he began his career as a preacher. William Jenkyn³² was an outspoken Puritan and Presbyterian minister who opposed the Commonwealth under Cromwell. The rise of Cromwell's New Model Army and its supporters in Parliament caused Jenkyn along with a number of fellow Presbyterians to believe that heretics were perverting the cause of the Solemn League and Covenant. Ejected in 1662, he resolved to continue his ministry, and held conventicles. On the passing of the Conventicle Act in 1664, he retired to a house of his own at King's Langley, Hertfordshire, where he continued to exercise his ministry. The Indulgence of 1672 brought him back to London and his house was the first to be registered under the provisions of the Indulgence. Jenkyn's congregation then built a meeting-house for him in Jewin Street.³³

Shortly after preaching his first sermon in Jenkyn's meeting-house, Hussey became the domestic chaplain to Mrs Powell, afterwards Lady Thompson of Clapham. This was a position he held for two years; it involved him preaching occasionally in the household. He then became the chaplain to Sir Jonathan Keate (1633-1700) at the Hoo, Hertfordshire for five years from 1683 to 1688. Sir Jonathan's father, Gilbert Keate, was apprenticed to a London grocer but prospered as a ship-owner and sugar-refiner and

considerable enhanced with the eventual publication of Isobel Rivers and David L. Wykes (eds.), *A History of the Dissenting Academies in the British Isles, 1660-1860* (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

32. For William Jenkyn (1613-1685) see Palmer, *The Nonconformist's Memorial*, Vol. 1, pp. 109-115. See also Matthews, *Calamy Revised*, pp. 296-297; Wilson, *Dissenting Churches*, Vol. 3, pp. 328-335; and ODNB. His *Commentary of the Epistle of Jude* was reprinted in Nichol's Commentary Series and his two farewell sermons preached on the forenoon and the afternoon of 17th August 1662 are contained in *Farewell Sermons* (London, 1816), pp. 61-103.

33. It was Jenkyn's practice always to pray for the king and the government, which was surely a factor in his services' being connived at from the withdrawal of the Indulgence in 1673 until 1682. His meeting was, however, disturbed in 1682 by a band of soldiers. After this, he still preached privately, but was at length arrested in September 1684 while attending a prayer-meeting with three other ministers. Though his friends escaped, one of whom was John Flavel, Jenkyn was captured and committed to Newgate where he was forbidden to pray with visitors, even with his own daughter. He died in prison on 19th January 1685.

was a substantial investor in the East India Company. The son became a merchant and during the Commonwealth imported sugar from Barbados. He retired from business when his wife inherited the Hoo Estate, where he rebuilt the mansion and later acquired two adjacent manors. Jonathan Keate was granted a baronetcy at the restoration of Charles II and, in addition, became the High Sheriff of the County of Hertford. He was returned as Member of Parliament for the county at a contested election on August 1679. The authors of the *History of Parliament, 1660-1690* state: ‘Though he conformed to the Church of England, an ejected Presbyterian minister served him an unknown period, and he maintained a Congregationalist Chaplain from 1683 to 1688.’³⁴ The Congregational chaplain referred to was Joseph Hussey, then a Presbyterian, but who would, in few years, change his position and become a Congregationalist. Unlike his earlier chaplaincy, his half-decade with Keate involved regular weekly preaching to the household.

Conversion and ordination

Looking back on his spiritual experiences in these formative years of his life it was Hussey’s view that it was not until 1686, five years after he preached his first sermon and during his chaplaincy with Keate, that he was converted. He writes:

The love of God is towards sinners, before sinners are converted. ‘But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us’ (Rom. 5:8). It was as free to God to love us before the world was, as to love us yesterday in our blood, or a few years ago when we were yet sinners, and had not believed through grace, nor were brought home to God in Christ! Oh, the riches of Eternal Grace! Oh, the prevailings of this ancient love, when God comes to break it up, and to bring it forth in time.

It was this thought that hath drawn my soul first and last to Christ. It was this that drew my soul to him in reading Mr. Charnock’s Discourse of God’s being the author of reconciliation, in the covenant of redemption before the world was made! Then it was that I felt the first effectual call

34. For biographical details of Keate, see E. R. Edwards and Geoffrey Jaggard, *History of Parliament, 1660-1690*, online edition at <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1660-1690/member/keate-sir-jonathan-1633-1700> (accessed 12th January 2017); *The English Baronetage* (London, 1741), Vol. 3, Part 1, pp. 27-28; Lacey, *Dissent and Parliamentary Politics in England*, p. 417. The ejected minister who had been Keate’s chaplain was John Peachy, the vicar of St. Paul’s, Walden; see Matthews, *Calamy Revised*, p. 385.

of grace, after the publication of that man's labours in his second folio-volume in 1684, perhaps two or three years after in the reading it. Oh! It was then I closed with Christ upon this doctrine beheld, in which he had so long before closed with me in a Redeemer's covenant! And from thence I date my new birth, after I had been from a child sober, well educated, constantly reading the Scriptures, two chapters, if not four chapters every day; prayed secretly upon my knees to God, twice every day without omission, having been always accustomed to it from five or six years old.³⁵

In the years of his two chaplaincies, from 1681 to 1688, Hussey had not received ordination. This is hardly surprising, as this was a time when Nonconformity was being persecuted. On 1st October 1688, William of Orange accepted the invitation to occupy the British Crown and landed at Torbay five weeks later on 5th November 1688. William and Mary were crowned as joint rulers on 11th April the following year. The toleration of Nonconformity seemed now not only a possibility but a probability. Taking advantage of the changed situation, Hussey sought to be regularly set apart as a minister of the Gospel. He was ordained at Samuel Annesley's meeting-house, Little St. Helens on 26th October 1688 in the presence of six Presbyterian ministers of whom we know the names of only five: Samuel Annesley, Samuel Slater, John Quick, John Turner, and Robert Franklin.³⁶ At his ordination exercises, he had to defend the thesis *Papum esse illum antichristum*. Arnold G. Matthews, in his introduction to *The Dairy of A Cambridge Minister*, writes: 'It is indicative of what Hussey calls "the cloudiness of the times," and the consequent unwillingness of older ministers to risk the responsibility of ordaining, that of the six officiating ministers, five – all of them elderly men who had suffered under the ejection of 1662 – in giving him the usual certificate stated only that they of their personal knowledge knew him to be an ordained minister;

35. Joseph Hussey, *The Glory of Christ Unveiled or the Excellency of Christ Vindicated in His Person, Love, Righteousness, &c.* (London, 1706). Citations are taken from the complete one-volume edition (Supralapsarian Press, 2015), p. 103.

36. Accounts of these five men will be found in Wilson, *Dissenting Churches*. Samuel Annesley is in Vol. 1, pp. 365-370. Annesley's youngest daughter, Susanna, married Samuel Wesley, who like Hussey had studied under Charles Morton; Susanna Annesley would become the mother of John and Charles Wesley. Samuel Slater is in Vol. 1, pp. 150-152. The account of John Quick is in Vol. 3, pp. 372-377. Quick was the compiler of *Synodicon in Gallia Reformata* (London, 1692). Wilson's account of John Turner is in Vol. 4, pp. 390-391, and that of Robert Franklin is in Vol. 3, p. 219.

caution preventing their testifying that they themselves had actually conferred this status upon him. The sixth of their number would not sign the certificate or even disclose his name.³⁷

The years immediately following the Act of Toleration were a difficult time for English Nonconformity. Congregations that had been meeting in homes or in secret had now formally to organise themselves and, as we noticed in the first part of this paper, Presbyterians were reluctant to set up Presbyteries, hoping that it would be possible for them to be comprehended in the Church of England. Accordingly, the churches that were formed were usually Congregational; if a Presbyterian congregation was formed the only difference between it and an Independent congregation was that it would be governed at a congregational level by its minister and elders rather than by a church-meeting. Following his ordination, Hussey, for the first time, entered upon three years of regular pastoral ministry. He moved to Sissiferns (or Sissevernes), an estate in the parish of Codicote in Hertfordshire which was around fifteen miles east of The Hoo where he had been chaplain to the Keates family. Two properties were registered for worship in 1689 at Sissiferns. The first is described as follows: ‘Sissiferns in the parish of Codicote, certified by Joseph Hussey of Codicote.’³⁸ In addition to preaching at Codicote it seems that he was also preaching regularly, eight miles north of Codicote, to a congregation of paedobaptists who had separated from a Baptist congregation in 1690, encouraged doubtless by the freedom of the Toleration Act.³⁹ They met first outside the town, at a farm in the parish of Ippollitts named Maiden Croft, then later in Back Street, Hitchin.⁴⁰ Walter Wilson details this period of Hussey’s career in the following terms:

In the summer of that year, he removed to Sissafernes, in Codicote parish, Herts, at which place, and at Maiden Croft, near Hitchin, he continued to preach till his removal to Cambridge, in 1691. Mr. Hussey appears to have obtained considerable reputation as a preacher during his residence in that part of the country, and was often consulted by ministers and others, upon subjects connected with religion. Some of his letters, written during this period, have appeared in different publications. In Mr. Rogers’s

37. A. G. Matthews, *The Dairy of a Cambridge Minister* (Emmanuel Church, Cambridge, 1937), pp. 3-4.

38. William Urwick, *Nonconformity in Herts* (London, 1884), p. 275.

39. See Urwick, *Nonconformity in Herts*, p. 649 for details of the congregation.

40. Nuttall, ‘Cambridge Nonconformity’, p. 250.

Discourse upon Trouble of Mind, there is a pretty long letter from him to that author, dated Sissafernes, Nov. 4, 1690.⁴¹

It seems from what limited information is available that Hussey had two main places of activity in Hertfordshire: the building that he had registered at Codicote and the new congregation in Hitchin. In addition to preaching at these two locations he itinerated extensively in the area.⁴² William Urwick has a record of his preaching in Ware which is twelve miles south-east of Codicote. He writes: ‘John Young M.A., minister in the parish during the Commonwealth, was ejected in 1661, and ... in 1672 William Collet’s house was licensed as a Presbyterian meeting-house. In 1689 Joseph Hussey, Nonconforming minister of Codicote, in his private register records his preaching at Ware June 16th of that year for a Mr Foster, who appears to have been then the settled minister.’⁴³

The Minister of Hog Hill Church, Cambridge

In 1691 Joseph Hussey was called to be the first pastor of a Presbyterian congregation in Cambridge. Regarding Presbyterianism in the county

41. Wilson, *Dissenting Churches*, Vol. 4, p. 411. The volume referred to is Timothy Rodgers, *A Discourse Concerning Trouble of Mind: and the Disease of Melancholy* (London, 1691). Rogers was the minister of the Old Jewry English Presbyterian congregation in London. The first minister was Edmund Calamy, jun. For Rogers, see Wilson, *Dissenting Churches*, Vol. 2, pp. 321-331.

42. Geoffrey Nuttall has identified at least another four houses in which Hussey preached whilst he was at Codicote and Hitchin. See Nuttall, ‘Cambridge Nonconformity’, p. 251 note 46.

43. Urwick, *Nonconformity in Herts*, p. 719. For John Young, see Palmer, *The Nonconformist’s Memorial*, Vol. 2, p. 314; Matthews, *Calamy Revised*, p. 552. The reference to Hussey’s register is to a small quarto volume of some five hundred pages, bound in pigskin with the inscription, ‘A Church-Book kept for my own Private Use, to register many Incidental Things; and especially my Preaching, Baptizing, and administering the Lord’s Supper: together with a Register of the Names of my Pastoral Flock in Cambridge, from the year 1691, when they first called me to office, and on to the year 1719, written with my own Hand and attested by Me Joseph Hussey.’ Arnold Matthews adds the following comments regarding the volume: ‘About this there are three remarks to be made: the first, that, except for a page or two at the end, the journal is Hussey’s fair-copy, not his original log-book: the second, that the record begins about 10 years before he came to Cambridge, and continues after his removal to the church in Petticoat Lane, Whitechapel, concluding with a very shaky entry on 17th October, a month before his death on 15th November 1726: the third, that the baptismal register was ripped out in 1837 and along with others of its kind, committed to the custody of the Registrar General at Somerset House.’ Matthews, *Dairy of a Cambridge Minister*, p. 3.

of Cambridge, Margaret Spufford has written: 'If in 1669 you take Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Baptists and Quakers, then for the country as a whole the Presbyterians with well over 40,000 adherents were by far the strongest;' but in Cambridge, she says, 'the pitifully small group of thirty-odd Presbyterians put the county lowest among those which had Presbyterians at all.'⁴⁴ Congregationalism, however, had fared rather differently, as Matthews observes: 'there cannot have been any other county in England at this period (1660-1690) where Congregationalism within so short and so extraordinarily difficult a time took such lasting root.'⁴⁵ The reason for the dominance of congregationalism in Cambridgeshire was the labours of the ejected minister of Bassingbourn, Francis Holcroft,⁴⁶ who whilst still in the Established Church became convinced of independency. Along with another ejected minister Joseph Oddy⁴⁷ (1629-1687) and a band of helpers they established Congregational churches all over the county. Though he was often imprisoned for preaching, Holcroft and his colleagues took the gospel to Cambridgeshire. Walter Wilson details the significance of Holcroft:

Most of the Dissenting churches in that county were planted by Mr. Francis Holcroft, who was ejected from Bassingbourn; and he was for many years considered their common pastor and parent. The prodigious labours of that extraordinary man, together with the injury he received when barbarously imprisoned for preaching, greatly undermined his health, and at length

44. Margaret Spufford, 'The Dissenting Churches in Cambridgeshire from 1660 to 1700', *Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society*, Vol. 61 (1968), pp. 67-69, cited in Nuttall, 'Cambridge Nonconformity', p. 241.

45. A. G. Matthews, 'The Seventeenth Century', in *Congregationalism through the Centuries* (London, 1937), p. 54.

46. For Francis Holcroft (1620-1693), see Palmer, *The Nonconformist's Memorial*, Vol. 1, pp. 259-262; Matthews, *Calamy Revised*, pp. 296-297; *DNB*; and *ODNB*. Holcroft wrote little; however, his tract, *A Word to the Saints from the Watch Tower* (1668) was reprinted in the magazine *Gospel Tidings* along with a sketch of his life, his funeral sermon by Thomas Milway, an Epistle to the Reader by Thomas Taylor and Joseph Hussey, and memories of Holcroft's preaching by one of his hearers, Mary Churchman of Saffron Walden, recorded in her old age by a member of Holcroft's church at Clavering. See *Gospel Tidings*, Vol. 5, No. 7, (May 1975), pp. 273-300 (edited by Peter M. Rowell).

47. Joseph Oddy (1629-1687) was ejected from Meldreth in Cambridgeshire. Like Holcroft, he embraced a congregational ecclesiology and was often imprisoned. He was Holcroft's main fellow-worker in evangelising Cambridgeshire. Holcroft and Oddy are buried next to each other at Oakington. For biographical details, see Palmer, *The Nonconformist's Memorial*, Vol. 1, pp. 275-276; Matthews, *Calamy Revised*, p. 371.

laid him aside from his labours. This circumstance, combined with the liberty granted to nonconformists by the Act of Toleration, occasioned the Dissenters of Cambridgeshire to separate into distinct societies.⁴⁸

Samuel Palmer, writing in 1802, observed regarding the ejected minister of Bassingbourn: ‘He was indefatigable in his labours, preaching perpetually about the county; so that there is scarcely a village in Cambridgeshire, but some old person can shew you a barn where Holcroft preached.’⁴⁹ Geoffrey Nuttall comments that ‘this was evangelism indeed.’⁵⁰ In July 1687 there were registered eight places in which Nonconformist worship might be held; six of these were private houses in which small occasional gatherings might take place, and the seventh was a congregation chapel located in Green Street⁵¹ which owed its existence to the preaching of another of Holcroft’s labourers, Samuel Corbyn.⁵² The eighth was a Presbyterian chapel on Hog Hill which soon became known as the ‘Great Meeting’. It was vested in six trustees in 1687, five of whom were tradesman. This was the congregation in which Joseph Hussey was settled as pastor on Thursday 19th November 1691. Three ministers were engaged in Hussey’s induction at Hog Hill. The senior minister who preached on the occasion was a Presbyterian, Stephen Scandrett of Haverhill.⁵³ The other ministers

48. Wilson, *Dissenting Churches*, Vol. 4, p. 412.

49. Palmer, *The Nonconformist’s Memorial*, Vol. 1, p. 262.

50. Nuttall, ‘Cambridge Nonconformity’, p. 245.

51. Courtney S. Kenny, ‘The Earlier History of Emmanuel Church, Cambridge’, *TCHS*, Vol. 4 (1909-1910), p. 185. For short accounts of the Green Street congregation, see Courtney S. Kenny, ‘A Forgotten Cambridge Meeting House’, *TCHS*, Vol. 4 (January 1910), pp. 223-229; Andrew A. Smith, ‘Nonconformity in Green Street, Cambridge’, *Presbyterian Historical Society Journal*, Vol. 14:2 (May 1969), pp. 59-66.

52. For Samuel Corbyn (died 1673) see Palmer, *The Nonconformist’s Memorial*, Vol. 1, p. 276; Matthews, *Calamy Revised*, pp. 136-137.

53. Stephen Scandrett or Scanderet (1631-1705) was ejected from his lectureship in Haverhill, Suffolk in 1662. After the ejection he preached for over a quarter of a century in and around Haverhill and once a month in Cambridge. Haverhill is approximately twenty miles south-east of Cambridge. His Presbyterian commitment is detailed in John Browne, *History of Congregationalism and the Memorials of the Churches in Norfolk and Suffolk* (London, 1877), pp. 503-505. For further biographical information, see Palmer, *The Nonconformist’s Memorial*, Vol. 3, pp. 263-265; T. W. Davids, *Annals of Evangelical Nonconformity in the County of Essex* (London, 1863), pp. 623-627; Matthews, *Calamy Revised*, pp. 428-429; Alexander Gordon, *Freedom after Ejection* (Manchester University Press, 1917), p. 347; *DNB*; *ODNB*.

were Robert Billio, jun. of St. Ives, Huntingdonshire⁵⁴ and John King of Wellingborough.⁵⁵

The Hog Hill Presbyterian Church (the Great Meeting) had seventy-six members when Hussey began his ministry among them. His early ministry was very successful; by October 1696 the number of communicants had increased to one hundred and twenty-two. Unbeknown to the Hog Hill Church, when he was inducted at Cambridge, Hussey was well on his way to adopting congregational principles. He sought to bring his congregation to his new way of thinking and by October 1694, just three years after coming to Cambridge, he was able to record: 'At a Church meeting in my own house I opened Proverbs 27:23, "Be thou diligent to know the state of the flocks, and look well to thy herds." After this we openly practised Congregational order.'⁵⁶ This change culminated two years later in October 1696 in the adoption of a Church Covenant signed by seventy-six members Church members in which they explicitly committed themselves to Independency. The congregation would now be

54. Robert Billio, jun. (died 1710) was the son of the ejected minister of Wickham Bishops in Essex, Robert Billio, sen. (1623-1695). Billio sen. had two sons in the nonconformist ministry, Robert and Joseph. Robert, his eldest son, was trained at the Dissenting Academy of Samuel Cradock at Wickhambrook in Suffolk. (For Cradock and his Academy, see Mark Burden, *A Biographical Dictionary of Tutors at the Dissenters' Private Academies*, pp. 123-131). After fleeing to Holland in 1685, Robert junior returned to become minister of St. Ives, near Cambridge. In 1700 he moved to Mare Street, Hackney where he ministered until his death. He was succeeded by the commentator, Matthew Henry. For details of the Billio family, see Davids, *Annals of Evangelical Nonconformity in Essex*, pp. 512-515; Gordon, *Freedom after Ejection*, p. 215.

55. John King (fl. 1680-1746) had studied, like Hussey, at Charles Morton's Academy at Newington Green. He was an assistant to John Collins at the Independent church at Paved Alley, Lime Street London, a church started by Thomas Goodwin. After a further assistantship in Great Yarmouth, he became the minister at the Congregational church that then met in Silver Street, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire. For biographical information on King, see Gordon, *Freedom after Ejection*, p. 297; Thomas Coleman, *Memorials of the Independent Churches in Northamptonshire with biographical notices of their pastors* (London, 1843), pp. 213-215.

56. Peter Toon, 'Joseph Hussey, Architect of Hyper-Calvinism', *Free Grace Record*, Vol. 4, No. 5 (Winter 1966-67), p. 222; see also Matthews, *Dairy of a Cambridge Minister*, pp. 7-8. While this change arose out of Hussey's preference for Independency, it is very probable that Calvinism was also a factor. Geoffrey Nuttall, writing of this period, says: 'in these same years, Congregational churches were being formed out of Presbyterian because the Presbyterians were abandoning, or at least moderating their Calvinism'; see his 'Calvinism in Free Church History', *Baptist Quarterly*, Vol. 22:8 (October 1968), p. 422.

governed not by a Session comprised of minister and elders, but by the Hog Hill Church meeting.⁵⁷

The original Presbyterianism of the Great Meeting was not remotely similar to that practised in Scotland. Most English Presbyterian congregations were totally independent of one another; they merely adopted Presbyterian principles at the level of the congregation. One of the main practical differences following the adoption of the ‘Congregational way’ was in how applicants were admitted to church membership. In the congregationalism of the 1690s, the new member was received only after giving a testimony of the work of grace in his heart before the Church meeting, who would then vote on whether the person should be admitted. This was a significant difference from the procedure in English Presbyterian congregations, which, in this instance, was similar to the practice in Scotland. The power of admission to communicant membership resided with the minister and elders meeting as a Session.

This change of view by Hussey led to a most extraordinary sequence of events. Some Presbyterians resigned as members but still attended the Great Meeting, whilst twenty-four Presbyterian dissidents seceded and went to the small Green Street Congregational Church where Thomas Taylor was the minister. The Presbyterian seceders were able to obtain sufficient influence in the small Green Street Church to persuade them to forsake their congregational church polity and to become Presbyterians. This action led to some of the older Green Street members, who were committed Congregationalists, seceding and joining the Hog Hill Church, where Hussey was the minister.⁵⁸

Hussey – ‘Architect of Hyper-Calvinism’⁵⁹

Ecclesiology was, however, not the only topic on which Joseph Hussey’s views were changing. Peter Toon has written regarding the Cambridge

57. Courtney S. Kenny, ‘The Earlier History of Emmanuel Church, Cambridge’, pp. 187-188; Matthews, *Dairy of a Cambridge Minister*, p. 8. Hog Hill Independent Church was renamed Emmanuel Congregational Church on the opening of a new building in 1790. The church moved to its present location on Trumpington Street in 1874.

58. Kenny, ‘A Forgotten Cambridge Meeting House’, p. 224; Smith, ‘Nonconformity in Green Street, Cambridge’, p. 61. The senior deacon of Hussey’s church was Robert Wilson, who had been ejected from the curacy at Over, Cambridgeshire in 1662, and who afterwards taught music in Cambridge until 1710. See Palmer, *The Nonconformist’s Memorial*, Vol. 1, p. 316; Matthews, *Calamy Revised*, p. 537.

59. The term ‘Architect of Hyper-Calvinism’ for Hussey was coined by Peter Toon in his article cited above.

minister that the decade between 1694 and 1705 were ‘years of reading and reflection’.⁶⁰ Prior to this decade of study, in 1693 at the request of a friend, Hussey published a course of sermons that he had previously preached both at Hitchin and Cambridge from Luke 14. The book was titled *The Gospel Feast Opened*. Toon has described the contents of the book as follows:

The three points of doctrine which he seeks to establish in the book are:— first, that the Gospel is a large Feast stored with all kinds of spiritual provision in it; secondly, God makes an invitation to sinners to come in to this Feast; and thirdly, the Gospel is a Feast or Supper that has all its provisions now ready. Whilst the doctrinal framework of the sermons seems to be that contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith, he lays great emphasis on God’s invitation to sinners to accept the Gospel of Christ. The properties of the invitation of Christ he gives as: a gracious invitation, a free invitation, a sovereign invitation, a clear invitation, a commanding invitation, an open invitation, a large and comprehensive invitation, a pressing, earnest invitation, a seasonable invitation, and an effectual invitation (to the elect).⁶¹

After his decade of study, Hussey developed a rather dismissive view of the books he had read; he writes, ‘What Ignorance is there in our Systems of Divinity! What defects in our Catechisms and Confessions! What barren heaps are our Libraries! What a wilderness, what a barren forest is that seen to be, when God hath opened our Eyes, which was wont to be called the fruitful Field.’⁶² Though Hussey does not explain the reasons why he undertook this decade of reading and reflection, it is not difficult to arrive at an answer as to what these might have been. In London the controversy was raging among the Dissenters between Antinomians and Neonomians raising the issues of free-will and free grace. At the same time the Unitarian controversy was going on in the Established Church and old heretical beliefs about the Person of Christ were once more being agitated. In Toon’s words, ‘The whole theological scene was one of turmoil and doubt.’⁶³ The Cambridge minister set himself the task of finding the truth, and after his period of study he believed he had found it. The result was he came to embrace a pronounced and far-reaching Supralapsarianism

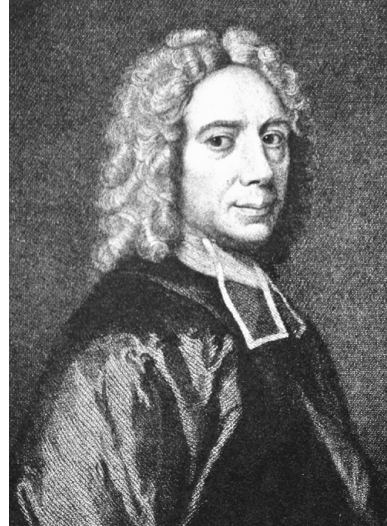
60. Toon, ‘Joseph Hussey, Architect of Hyper-Calvinism’, p. 223.

61. *ibid.*, p. 223.

62. Hussey, *The Glory of Christ Unveiled*, p. 93.

63. Toon, ‘Joseph Hussey, Architect of Hyper-Calvinism’, p. 224.

which outworked itself in two main areas. The first was with respect to the Person of the Christ; Hussey now maintained that the Saviour's humanity mysteriously existed in heaven, before creation and the incarnation, from the agreement of the Covenant of Redemption and the decree of election.⁶⁴ It was, however, a further change of view that had the most far reaching consequences. This was the Hog Hill minister's rejection of the free offer of the gospel. Hussey's revised teaching was embodied in two important books, *The Glory of Christ Unveiled or the Excellency of Christ Vindicated* (1706), and *God's Operations of Grace but No Offers of Grace* (1707).



Isaac Watts (1674-1748) who along with Hussey and Samuel Stockell asserted the pre-existence of Christ's human soul before the incarnation.

The Glory of Christ Unveiled was written in response to John Hunt's treatise, *The Saints Treasury or, A Discourse concerning the Glory and Excellency of the Person of Christ*. Hunt (d. 1725)⁶⁵ was the son of William Hunt, the ejected minister of Sutton in Cambridgeshire, and the minister from 1698 to 1709 of the Castle Hill Church in Northampton. This was the congregation of which Philip Doddridge was the minister from 1730 until his death in 1751. The author of an historical account of the Castle Hill meeting-house says of John

64. Toon has shown that Hussey's view of the Person of Christ was an erroneous development of Thomas Goodwin's view of Christ's Person and one of which Goodwin would have disapproved. With some justification, Toon calls it a 'Supralapsarian Christology'. Isaac Watts, also erroneously developing Goodwin, did not go as far as Hussey but asserted the pre-existence of Christ's human soul. See Peter Toon, 'The Growth of a Supralapsarian Christology', *Evangelical Quarterly*, Vol. 39:1 (January-March 1967), pp. 23-29; Toon, 'Joseph Hussey, Architect of Hyper-Calvinism', p. 226-230. For Watts' defence of his position, see the third discourse in his *The Glory of Christ as God-Man* in *The Works of Isaac Watts* (6 vols., London, 1811), Vol. 6, pp. 675-728.

65. For biographical information on Hunt, see Gordon, *Freedom after Ejection*, p. 289; Coleman, *Memorials of the Independent Churches in Northamptonshire*, p. 12; Browne, *History of Congregationalism and the Memorials of the Churches in Norfolk and Suffolk*, p. 306. It seems probable that Hunt was the leader of the secession from Hussey's Church in 1696. See Geoffrey F. Nuttall, 'Northamptonshire and the Modern Question', *Journal of Theological Studies*, new series, Vol. 16:1 (April 1965), p. 113; Matthews, *Dairy of a Cambridge Minister*, p. 12.

Hunt that ‘he was a man of considerable talents, and warmly engaged in the Supralapsarian controversy in those days, against the writings of Mr. Hussey of Cambridge.’⁶⁶ With regard to the invitations of the gospel, Hussey’s own book *The Gospel Feast Opened* had been used extensively by Hunt in defence of such gospel invitations. Hussey now regarded his earlier book as highly defective and part of the barren heap. He writes:

Mr. Hunt shows himself to go on more as Faith is set forth confusedly in books (of many writers) and to state his ill and dark notion of the sinners coming to Christ out of my *Gospel-Feast*, published fourteen years ago; when, as appears by my hints of coming to Christ, instead of the Pure Gospel, I wanted the Day-Light of the Gospel in some places to open the Mysteries of the Gospel; and particularly, the Great Mystery of the soul’s Motion-Faith in coming to Christ, as distinguished from Discerning Faith, (made out here to be in the soul upon the spot before it hath a heart to come.) The truth is, we were then generally angry with the Gospel through the Nation, and laboured hard to put out the eyes of a Discerning Faith... we had loved darkness, rather than light, because our deeds were evil, John 3:19; publishing that for the Gospel, which, as to a great part of it, rose but little higher than the light of nature, and no higher than the corrupt part of man’s reason...And we laboured to do it, by loading it with the reproaches of Antinomianism, Crispianism, Davisism, and I know not what, which I am afraid the body of us have not been humbled for, II Cor.12:21, nor repented of to this day!⁶⁷

Hussey’s opposition to gospel invitations was articulated even more forcefully in the volume published a year later, *God’s Operations of Grace but No Offers of Grace*. In this volume he details his reasons for rejecting the usual Reformed and Puritan view of the free offer of Christ to men in the preaching of the gospel, and lists twenty propositions which describe his beliefs concerning the true manner of preaching the Gospel.⁶⁸ High Calvinists like Tobias Crisp and Richard Davis still preached the

66. ‘Historical Account of the Ancient Congregational Church, assembling at Castle Hill, Northampton’, *The Congregational Magazine*, new series, Vol. 7 (March 1830), p. 144. Alan Clifford speaks of Hunt as ‘a rather over-zealous Calvinist, flaying his opponents with his orthodoxy, yet comforting the godly with deep pastoral earnestness’; see *The Good Doctor: Philip Doddridge of Northampton* (Norwich, 2002), p. 112.

67. Hussey, *The Glory of Christ Unveiled*, p. 228.

68. An abridged edition of *God’s Operations of Grace but No Offers of Grace* was printed by Primitive Publications, North Carolina in 1973. The outlining of Hussey’s twenty propositions takes up seventy pages in the 1973 edition – pp. 126-195.

free overtures of grace in the gospel.⁶⁹ With Hussey's volumes, Hyper-Calvinism was born.⁷⁰ Peter Naylor has summarised his position: 'Hussey developed the view that because grace is irresistible and available for the elect alone, to preach Christ is scriptural. However, to offer grace and salvation indiscriminately to sinners will not help them to believe since faith is the sovereign gift of God. Because eternal life is granted to the elect alone, it is wrong to offer this blessing promiscuously to all men.'⁷¹

To his denial of the free offer of the gospel, Hussey added several of the tenets of doctrinal antinomianism. This is to be distinguished from practical antinomianism, which abuses God's grace and was seen amongst the Anabaptists in Munster in 1534:

The system of doctrines that is called doctrinal antinomianism is so described only because the system does possess the possible tendency to cause people who hold it to neglect the practical duties of religion. Four of the most popular teachers of doctrinal antinomianism were John Saltmarsh, John Eaton, Tobias Crisp and Robert Lancaster...One of their favourite doctrines was eternal justification, by which they meant that God not only elected the Church to salvation but actually justified the elect before they were born. As a development of this they taught that justification in time was merely the realisation that eternal justification was theirs already. Another favourite emphasis was the teaching that the only sure way for a Christian to know he was elect was the voice of the Spirit within his soul saying, 'You are elect.'⁷²

The Dartmouth Puritan, John Flavel (1630-1691), in controverting the views of men like Tobias Crisp, John Saltmarsh, and Robert Towne lists ten central antinomian errors as follows:

69. Peter Toon, *The Emergence of Hyper-Calvinism in English Nonconformity* (London, 1967), pp. 63-64. John Gill pointed out that Davis changed his position in closing years of his life. Toon thinks it probable that some of Davis's followers adopted Hussey's views, *ibid*, p. 93. See also Nuttall, 'Northamptonshire and the Modern Question', p. 113, especially the citation, clearly supportive of the free offer of the gospel, from Davis's book, *Truth and Innocency Vindicated* (London, 1693), p. 78.

70. Toon, *Emergence of Hyper-Calvinism*, pp. 74-85; Barry H. Howson, *Erroneous and Schismatical Opinions: The Question of Orthodoxy regarding the Theology of Hanserd Knollys* (Leiden, 2001), pp.158-193; Toon, 'Joseph Hussey, Architect of Hyper-Calvinism', pp. 224-231.

71. Peter Naylor, *Picking up a Pin for the Lord* (London, 1992), pp. 151-152. See also Peter Naylor, *Calvinism, Communion and the Baptists: A Study of English Calvinistic Baptists from the Late 1600s to the Early 1800s* (Carlisle, 2002), pp. 174-175.

72. Toon, *Emergence of Hyper-Calvinism*, p. 28.

1. Justification is an immanent and eternal act of God.
2. Justification by faith is but a manifestation of what God has already done.
3. It is wrong for Christians to examine themselves to see whether they are in the faith.
4. As all sin has been pardoned, confession of sin is not necessary.
5. God never sees sin in believers.
6. At no time does God ever punish the elect.
7. On the Cross, Christ became as sinful as we are, and now the elect are as righteous as he is.
8. Christians should not worry about sin in their lives for this can do them no harm.
9. The New Covenant has no conditions, not even faith.
10. Christians are not to rely on signs and marks of grace in their lives as helps to an assurance of salvation.⁷³

Hussey believed in justification from eternity⁷⁴ and acknowledged that he held antinomian views. He writes:

Every time I read these oppositions to Antinomians so-called, I find they are admirable means to propagate the Antinomianism they strike at, and make me redouble that language between God and my own soul, blessed be God, yea, forever blessed be God for Free Grace! For through that Free Grace, which a great many brave men do all their days stumble at, and from press and pulpit labour to scare men with, under the bug-name of

73. The ten errors detailed above are those listed by Flavel as they have been summarized by Toon in *Emergence of Hyper-Calvinism*, p. 30. For Flavel's full text, see his 'A brief account of the rise and growth of antinomianism, the deductions of the principal errors of the sect, with modest reflections upon them' in *The Works of John Flavel* (6 vols., Banner of Truth Trust, 1968), Vol. 3, pp. 551-591 and esp. pp. 555-557. There is an extensive critique of Antinomianism by Samuel Rutherford, *A Survey of the Spiritual Antichrist* (London, 1648). Rutherford's title mentions John Saltmarsh, Tobias Crisp, John Eaton and Robert Towne as among those whom he was seeking to controvert. The second part of Rutherford's treatise deals with the different aspects of antinomianism in a similar way to Flavel, but in much more detail. A modern helpful analysis is provided by William Young's article on 'Antinomianism' in Edwin H. Palmer, *Encyclopedia of Christianity* (Wilmington, 1964), Vol. 1, pp. 270-278. Young provides a twenty-point list of antinomian errors. The article is reprinted in William Young, *Reformed Thought* (Grand Rapids, 2011), pp. 59-74.

74. Hussey, *The Glory of Christ Unveiled*, p. 428.

Antinomianism, which name as these men intend it and oppose it, I wear for Christ and the Gospel's sake, and can truly say, I value more than a chain of gold about my neck, though I know some poor Godly Saints both in London and the country are too much disturbed at the honour of this reflection.⁷⁵

The Cambridge ministry of Joseph Hussey lasted for twenty-nine years and seems to have been highly successful. When he went to Hog Hill in 1691 he had seventy-six members; by 1717 his hearers are recorded as 1100. Whilst this figure includes all the members of the entire households that attended his ministry, the average attendance at any one service may well have been just a third of that number. Nonetheless, it was still a significant increase.

One of Hussey's hearers, who heartily embraced his 'no-offer theology', was John Skepp.⁷⁶ In August 1714 he left the Cambridge church and became pastor of the Particular Baptist Church that met in Curriers' Hall, Cripplegate.⁷⁷ Skepp wrote only one work, published posthumously, entitled *Divine Energy or the Operations of the Spirit of God upon the soul of man in his effectual calling and conversion, stated, proved, and vindicated...being an antidote against the Pelagian error* (1722). The title's similarity to Hussey's 1707 book is significant. Skepp's influence was felt by Particular Baptists in London and Cambridgeshire. In particular, he had an enormous influence upon two London Baptist ministers, John Gill and John Brine. Skepp took part in Gill's ordination, and encouraged him in Hebrew studies; and when Skepp died in 1722 Gill purchased many of his books. Brine became the pastor of Skepp's church in 1730. There

75. Hussey, *The Glory of Christ Unveiled*, p. 398.

76. For biographical details of John Skepp (1675-1721), see Wilson, *Dissenting Churches*, Vol. 2, pp. 572-574, Vol. 4, pp. 216-217; Joseph Ivimey, *A History of the English Baptists* (4 vols., London, 1811-30), Vol. 3, pp. 363-366; Peter Toon, 'John Skepp and John Gill', *Free Grace Record*, Vol. 4:7 (Summer 1967), pp. 317-328; Toon, *Emergence of Hyper-Calvinism*, pp. 85-89. Skepp was a subscriber at Salters' Hall; see F. J. Powicke, 'The Salters' Hall Controversy', in *TCHS*, Vol. 7:2 (1916), p. 113.

77. In his diary, Hussey wrote this concerning Skepp: 'John Skep of Little Wilbrun, Miller, he rent himself at last off from the Church, and turned Anabaptist Preacher, yet was a lad converted thoroughly to Christ under my preaching, spake on soul-work clearly, and was admitted into the Church with much satisfaction. [Added later.] After all this has repented of his sin and is returned, and liberty given him to preach as a gifted brother at Wittelsea. And last of all is dismissed to be pastor of an Anabaptist Church in London.' Matthews, *Dairy of a Cambridge Minister*, p. 12. The first minister of the Particular Baptist Church that met at Curriers' Hall of which Skepp became the minister was Hanserd Knollys (1599-1691).

is little doubt that John Skepp is the connecting link between Hussey and the Hyper-Calvinism of many Particular Baptists in the eighteenth century. Curt Daniel has expressed the view that Skepp was the first Baptist of note to accept the Hyper-Calvinist non-offer view with regard to preaching the Gospel.⁷⁸

Hussey – successor to John Humfrey at Petticoat Lane, London

Hussey continued as the pastor of the Cambridge congregation at Hog Hill until 1718 when a dispute occurred, partly about Church discipline and partly about his doctrine, which according to Walter Wilson ‘rendered him very uneasy’.⁷⁹ This was the reason why at the close of 1719, when he was almost sixty years of age, he accepted the invitation from the Petticoat Lane congregation to succeed John Humfrey as their minister.⁸⁰ The Hog Hill Church objected to Hussey’s leaving them and going to London. They contended, and they had current usage on their side, that he had no right to leave without the authorization of the church members; which they refused to give. In addition, at that time very many Nonconformists held that a pastorate ought, scripturally, to be lifelong; so when he left the Cambridge church he was admonished by them and prohibited from ever again entering the Hog Hill pulpit.⁸¹ Shortly after Hussey moved to London, a very significant secession occurred that led to the formation of a Baptist congregation in Cambridge. Geoffrey Nuttall, speaking at the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of that congregation, has provided the details:

In 1721, twelve months after Hussey had left Cambridge for Petticoat Lane in London, two thirds of the membership, in number about a hundred, withdrew from Hog Hill to form a distinct church. As so often happens, personalities entered in: there was disagreement over Hussey’s successor. But Hussey’s opinions had continued to move in the direction of High Calvinism and strict communion, and there can be little doubt that this theological factor contributed now to the separation. Within only two

78. Daniel, ‘Hyper-Calvinism and John Gill’, pp. 6, 366.

79. Wilson, *Dissenting Churches*, Vol. 4, p. 413.

80. Matthews has published a number of entries from Hussey’s diary from November-December 1719 that make this plain. Hussey writes that his leaving was ‘on account of those horrid grievances in the Church at Cambridge I complained of’. Matthews, *Dairy of a Cambridge Minister*, pp. 10-11.

81. Kenny, ‘Earlier History of Emmanuel Church, Cambridge’, p. 190.

years a considerable number of those who separated declared themselves Baptists and in favour of strict communion and a Baptist pastor.⁸²

Hussey arrived in London in January 1720 and continued as minister of the congregation for six years until his death in November 1726. During Humfrey's ministry at Petticoat Lane, a number of Baptists were either members of his congregation or shared the building in which the Independent congregation was worshipping. When Hussey succeeded Humfrey either the Baptists left or the arrangement whereby the building was shared came to an end.⁸³ This may indicate that the congregation under Humfrey was, at least for a time, one that practised mixed communion. The short ministry of such a prominent man as Joseph Hussey with very firm doctrinal convictions, and that of his successor who shared his views, seems to have left its stamp on the congregation even when John Love became the minister of the congregation in 1787. Hussey's ministry at Petticoat Lane had a profound effect on two men who embraced much of his thinking. Both of them would become ministers in London. They were William Bentley, who would succeed him as pastor of the congregation, and Samuel Stockell.⁸⁴

'Sam the Potter', as Stockell was called by his friends on account of being trained in that profession, listened attentively to Hussey in the Petticoat Lane meeting-house. Though neither the minister nor the Church felt that Samuel Stockell (1704-1753) should enter the Nonconformist ministry he became in his early twenties an itinerant preacher and in 1730 gathered a congregation and hired a vacant meeting-house in Red Cross Street in London. His ministry there, although frowned upon by most London Calvinistic ministers, attracted large crowds composed largely of poor and uneducated people.⁸⁵ Stockell was a disciple of Hussey and

82. Geoffrey Nuttall, 'Robert Robinson and the Cambridge Baptists', in Kenneth A. C. Parsons, *St Andrews Street Baptist Church, Cambridge, 250th Anniversary* (Cambridge, 1971), pp. 1-18, and reprinted in Geoffrey Nuttall, *Studies in English Dissent*, pp. 183-204 (citation on p. 185). The pastor of the congregation from 1790 to 1806 was Robert Hall (1764-1831). For the Cambridge Baptists, see Bernard Nutter, *The Story of the Cambridge Baptists and the struggle for Religious Liberty* (Cambridge, 1912); Graham H. Hughes, *With Freedom Fired: The Story of Robert Robinson, Cambridge Nonconformist* (London, 1955).

83. For details, see Whitley, *The Baptists of London*, p. 123.

84. For details of the life and ministry of Samuel Stockell (1704-1753) see Wilson, *Dissenting Churches*, Vol. 3, pp. 311-313; Peter Toon, 'Samuel Stockell: His influence on Strict Baptist Thought', *Free Grace Record*, Vol. 4:6 (Spring 1967), pp. 263-270.

85. Toon, 'Samuel Stockell', p. 263.

embraced the central tenets of his theology – eternal justification and no offers of grace. He modified Hussey’s Christology by insisting only on the existence of Christ’s human soul from the making of the Covenant of Redemption. Where he differed significantly from Hussey was to assert that all human souls existed from before the creation of the world.⁸⁶

Joseph Hussey kept a detailed record of the sermons he had preached during his forty-five-year ministry. He preached in total 3,607 sermons of which just 176 were preached during the six years when he was the minister of the Petticoat Lane congregation.⁸⁷ He died on the 15th November 1726 at the age of sixty-six. His dying sayings were taken down by William Bentley, who eventually succeeded him as pastor of the congregation, and were published by him at the end of his tract, *The Lord the Helper of His People*.⁸⁸ Bentley ends his account with these words: ‘Thus there fell a great man in Israel. One to whom the Lord imparted much of his mind, and whom the Lord made eminently useful in his work. O what a spirit was there found in him! What light, what zeal, what faith and faithfulness was found in him! How did God lead him to honor Father, Son, and Spirit; and to debase the creature, and stain the glory of all flesh! O that God would pour down a double portion of the Spirit that was upon him, on his servants which are left behind! Even so, Amen.’⁸⁹ Joseph Hussey was buried in Bunhill Fields, the Nonconformist burial ground in London.⁹⁰

86. See Samuel Stockell, *The Redeemer’s Glory Unveiled, or the Excellency of Christ Vindicated in the Antiquity of his Person, as God-Man, before the World began* (London, 1733), and Toon, ‘Samuel Stockell’, pp. 264-266. Peter Toon appears to assert that Stockell’s Christology had a direct effect on the views of the Strict Baptist, John Stevens (1776-1847). Whilst it is true that Stevens held to the pre-existence of the soul of the Saviour, it is less than clear that he was influenced directly by Stockell. Robert Oliver asserts that the pre-existence error, as taught by Isaac Watts, was introduced into Particular Baptist circles by John Allen, the Baptist pastor of Petticoat Lane from 1764 to 1767. Allen was vigorously opposed by John Gill. See Peter Toon, ‘The Growth of a Supralapsarian Christology’, pp. 24-29; Robert Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists* (Banner of Truth, 2006), p. 214. For Allen, see Wilson, *Dissenting Churches*, Vol. 4, pp. 426-428; Ivimey, *History of the English Baptists*, Vol. 4, pp. 237-238; and ODNB.

87. Hussey preached 290 sermons in his ministry at Hitchen and elsewhere prior to going to Cambridge. The vast number of his sermons, a total of 3141, were preached during his twenty-eight-year ministry at Hog Hill. Matthews, *Dairy of a Cambridge Minister*, p. 4.

88. William Bentley, *The Lord the Helper of His People* (London, 1733), pp. 34-39. Hussey’s deathbed sayings are reproduced in Wilson, *Dissenting Churches*, Vol. 4, pp. 413-416.

89. Bentley, *The Lord the Helper of His People*, p. 39.

90. *TCHS*, Vol. 4 (1909-1910), p. 362.

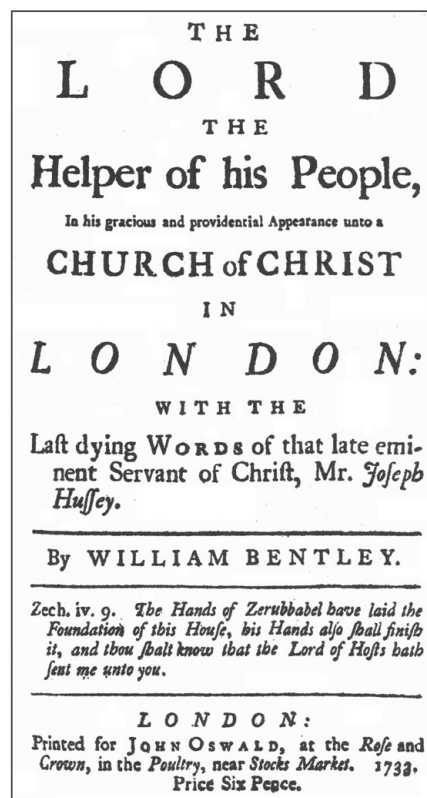
William Bentley (1699-1751)

William Bentley was born in 1699 and may well have been raised in Cambridge. He was converted under Joseph Hussey's preaching and states that he had known him from his childhood. As Bentley was twenty-one when Hussey came to London, which was hardly his 'childhood', it seems probable that Bentley had attended Hussey's Hog Hill congregation in Cambridge.

Deacon at Petticoat Lane with Joseph Hussey

Bentley seems to have been in the Petticoat Lane congregation from the beginning, or very near the beginning, of Hussey's ministry in London. He was elected a deacon in the congregation. His early connection with Hussey is clear from the dedication of his tract *The Lord the Helper of His People*. He writes:

Your late Pastor, Mr. Joseph Hussey, I was well acquainted with from my Childhood, whose labours my soul hath great reason to bless the Lord for, when young, and as his name is precious to many of us who were begotten by him in the Gospel, so it is to others of you, to whom he was a Father, to nourish and cherish that which was begun under your former Pastor Mr. Humphreys. As there was no strangeness between me and your last Pastor in his life, so none at his death. As his preaching was blest to me from the pulpit, so it was when his bed became his pulpit. Oh what joy then surrounded his soul, filled his Heart, and made him speak out of the abundance, to the refreshment of many: many of whose dying words I took from his lips: and as the dying words of friends are much valued, so do you value his.⁹¹



*Title-page of Bentley's 1733 tract
The Lord the Helper of His People.*

Bentley was closely attached to Hussey and seems to have embraced most of his distinctive tenets.⁹² When his minister died, he was a young man of just twenty-seven years of age. In the years prior to Hussey's death there had been some discontent in the congregation. Though we do not know

91. Bentley, *The Lord the Helper of His People*, pp. vi-vii.

92. Toon, *Emergence of Hyper-Calvinism*, pp. 48, 148.

the reason for the discord, there was unquestionably a fertile ground for dissension in the contrast between Humfrey's long ministry and his 'middle-way policy' coupled with his desire for toleration and Hussey's brief ministry, his 'no-gospel offer theology', and his doctrinal antinomianism. After his death the differences in the congregation increased to the point where harmony between the two groups broke down and separation was inevitable. The supporters of Hussey, who were by far the majority, withdrew from Petticoat Lane and began meeting for a short period in a private house which they licensed for the purpose under the provisions of the Toleration Act.⁹³ Little more than a year after Hussey's death they began meeting in Turners' Hall which had become vacant when the Particular Baptist congregation that met there united with another Particular Baptist church meeting at Devonshire Square whose first minister was William Kiffin.⁹⁴ The union occurred following the death of the Devonshire Square minister, Mark Key in 1726. The united congregation agreed to meet in the Devonshire Square building with the minister of the Turners' Hall church, Sayer Rudd, becoming the pastor of the united church.⁹⁵

Hussey's supporters removed into the now vacant Turners' Hall in 1727. This was a mansion leased to the Company of Turners in 1591;⁹⁶ it was situated on Philpot Lane which at that time reached from Fenchurch-Street North, to Little Eastcheap South. The Company received a Royal Charter in 1604 and whilst they made good use of the Hall for business and social activities, they also let it out for other purposes. Accordingly, it was occupied successively by several different societies, for upwards of half a century. The first Dissenting society that met there were General Baptists. It was then occupied

93. Bentley, *The Lord the Helper of His People*, pp. 4-5.

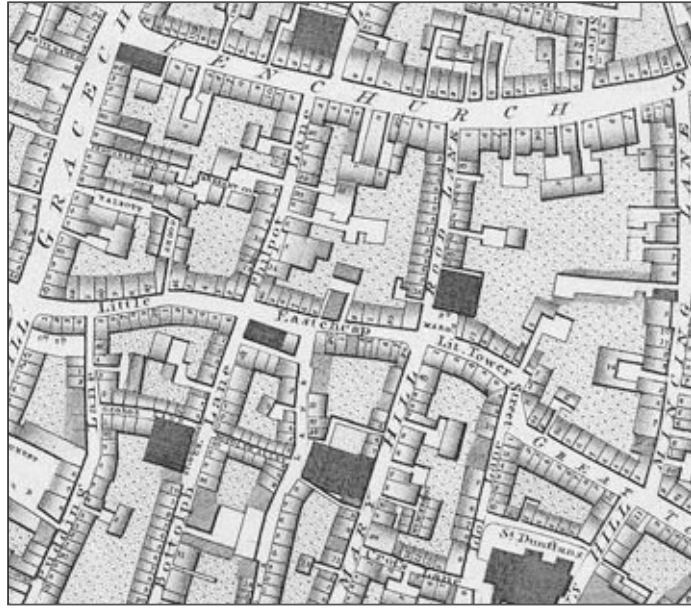
94. For William Kiffin, see William Orme, *Remarkable Passages in the Life of William Kiffin* (London, 1823); Benjamin A. Ramsbottom, *Stranger than Fiction: The Life of William Kiffin* (Harpenden, 1989); Michael A. G. Haykin, *Kiffin, Knollys and Keach* (Leeds, 1996), pp. 42-42; and *ODNB* article by Michael Haykin.

95. For details of the two Baptist churches, see Wilson, *Dissenting Churches*, Vol. 1, pp. 143-145, 400-454.

96. The Company of Turners is the successor to the Guild of Turners. It is one of the oldest Livery Companies in the City of London. Its origins go back to early medieval times: the first reference to a London turner dates to 1189. The medieval Company was a trade guild, set up to protect the interests of its members, whose skill was to turn and shape wooden objects on a lathe. The Company laid down standards for their products and had a strict system of apprenticeship. Unlike the richer Livery Companies, the Turners were craftsmen, not merchants.

Turners' Hall was located on the white area set back in grounds on the right of Philpot Lane which links Fenchurch and Eastcheap.

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by Quakers, followed by Independents, Particular Baptists, and finally in 1727 by Hussey's supporters that had left Petticoat Lane.⁹⁷

At Turners' Hall the congregation conducted public worship among themselves, with the occasional assistance of such ministers as they could procure to preach for them. However, they had not been in their new meeting-place long before they experienced further difficulties. They were entirely without a preacher and for a time were compelled to lay aside that part of the worship altogether, and met only on the latter part of the Lord's Day. On these occasions, they spent their time in imploring the divine countenance and blessing, praying earnestly that God would send them a pastor after his own heart.⁹⁸

William Bentley, who had been a deacon with Hussey, and was an eye-witness to the events, details the condition of the congregation in the early years in Turners' Hall:

From the time of our opening the meeting, through the hand of the Lord with and among us, we were never destitute of preaching for many months, though at great expense to get fresh supplies; and, considering the many difficulties we laboured under, yet we went on, and frequently met in solemn days of prayer, that the Lord would appear for us, and

97. Wilson, *Dissenting Churches*, Vol. 1, p. 135. At the time that Hussey's supporters occupied the Hall, the Company of Turners was going through difficult times. This was due largely to the bursting of the South Sea Bubble which, in 1726, bankrupted first the landlord of the Hall and then the legal representative of his estate. After expensive legal proceedings stretching over ten years, with no successful end in sight, the Company reluctantly decided to abandon the Philpot Lane Hall.

98. Wilson, *Dissenting Churches*, Vol. 1, p. 146. See also Bentley, *The Lord the Helper of His People*, p. 5.

raise up a Pastor to go out and in amongst us. Sometimes we were in hopes that the mercy was at the door, and we were ready to say, the Lord is now answering of us: But this was our mistake, as we have seen; we were not wanting in this matter, but tried some that were pastors and gave one of them a Call, but it proved abortive. Then our hopes seemed to flag, and we were at a stand in our minds, but still had some secret encouragement, that the Lord would not cast us off, as a Church, nor suffer the candlestick to be broken, though he had extinguished our lights, one after another: And, whilst we were in this posture of affairs, a person was recommended to us, whose gift we tried; but finding all matters would not issue in the comfort of the Church, in his settlement among us, he removed.⁹⁹

The person ‘whose gifts they tried’ was unacceptable to the majority. This failure to obtain a minister led to further division. Bentley explains:

This caused a further shaking, and great uneasinesses arose hereupon, so that some of our number left us, and though we were small before, yet the Lord saw fit we should be smaller still, that his power might the more appear, and that we might be the more sensible that it was his own arm that brought salvation unto us. For some space of time, the publick worship of preaching was then laid down, and we only met in the latter part of the Lord’s Day, to call upon his name; for in the time of trouble he had promised he would hear; and if ever a poor Church had a day of trouble, this was one to us: The thoughts of heart we then had, were better felt than expressed; yet the loving kindness of the Lord was, in those seasons, much manifested. Surely, if the Church had ever a spirit of prayer, it was then evidently manifested, and we were helped to wrestle with Him and say, we will not let Thee go unless Thou hast blessed us.¹⁰⁰

Bentley as Elder and then Pastor

William Bentley was a very active deacon in the congregation and was encouraged by the ‘Turners’ Hall people to exercise his preaching gifts. Indeed, a significant portion of the congregation desired that he should become the minister. He was not, however, convinced at this stage either of his gifts or of the propriety of becoming a minister. Regardless of his reticence, his brethren persistently urged him to preach before the congregation so that his ‘gifts could be tried’. Bentley remained reluctant to do this until one Lord’s Day he went to worship at the Independent Church

99. Bentley, *The Lord the Helper of His People*, pp. 5-6.

100. *ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

at Paved Alley, Lime Street¹⁰¹ where Robert Bragge¹⁰² was the minister. Bentley explains how hearing Bragge led him to begin preaching to the congregation at Turners' Hall:

The next Lord's Day, returning in the morning, I went to hear that valuable servant of the Lord, Mr. Bragge, (whose ministry the Lord greatly used, to carry on that work begun upon my soul, under my spiritual father Mr. Joseph Hussey) where I met with the Lord's presence. In that morning's discourse, I remember he was treating towards the close of his sermon, upon the duty of church members filling up their relation unto one another in fellowship, and he referred to that scripture in the Hebrews, 10:25. 'Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.' Where he remarked the duty of church members, not to forsake the worship of Christ in his house, and to exhort one another. I thought this word was levelled at our Church,



Robert Bragge (1665-1737).

101. For a detailed history of the Paved Alley, Lime Street congregation, and biographical sketches of its ministers, see Wilson, *Dissenting Churches*, Vol. 1, pp. 212-250. Thomas Goodwin, the Westminster Divine, was the first minister of the congregation.

102. Robert Bragge (1665-1737) was the son of an ejected minister of the same name. After studying at the University of Utrecht he was ordained in 1698 as joint pastor at Paved Alley, Lime Street along with John Collins, jun. and became the sole minister on Collins' death in 1714. He was a subscriber at Salters' Hall and held orthodox views on justification. According to Walter Wilson he preached against the errors of the day which included Neonomianism and Antinomianism. Though he was a great assistance to Bentley, he did not hold the doctrines associated with Joseph Hussey. Between November 1730 and April 1731 a series of weekly lectures were given in Bragge's meeting house. These Lime Street lectures were subsequently published in two volumes under the title *A Defence of some Doctrines of the Gospel* (London, 1732). An introductory sermon was given by Bragge and subsequently he delivered four lectures that dealt with the doctrine of justification. Bragge followed the teaching of the Westminster Confession and denied the doctrine of eternal justification. John Gill's close friend John Brine, the Baptist minister at Curriers' Hall, took immediate exception to Bragge's denial of eternal justification and published *A Defense of Eternal Justification* (London, 1732). Bragge was buried at Bunhill Fields in the same tomb as John Bunyan. See Wilson, *Dissenting Churches*, Vol. 1, pp. 241-249; Peter Toon, 'The Lime Street Lectures and their significance', *Evangelical Quarterly*, Vol. 41:1 (January-March 1969), pp. 42-48.

and that because we were without the word of exhortation, that principally ought to be upon the Lord's Day, and that we were scattered for want of it, and then the words followed me again, 'The Lord gave the Word, &c'. I came home to dinner, but could not sit at table, the Word made such deep impression upon my mind: I went up into my closet, and begged of the Lord that he would shew me my duty in this matter; the Word the more abode upon me, (exhort one another) and in my meditations upon them, I had the presence of the Lord; and in the afternoon I told some of the brethren, that I did intend to speak from a Scripture, and begged their prayers for me; and accordingly after prayer, I opened that text in the Hebrews; and as it was suitable unto the condition of the Church, so the Lord blessed it, to the encouragement and strengthening of us together, and great joy filled the hearts of the people, so that the shout of a king was great in the midst of us, and I continued to insist upon this Word for some Days. All this was done, not without, but with authority from the Church, who had requested this of me many months before; but I had not liberty in my soul till now. The auditory increasing upon this report of my preaching, many things were said; the Church not a little reproached for their conduct in approving, and I as much condemned for engaging in this work. This brought many visitors to see me, some to encourage me, and some to dissuade me from it; and they presented as many difficulties as they could muster together, in order to beat me off from the work.¹⁰³

After this first attempt at preaching he was subject to satanic attack to give up the work. He then writes that 'the Lord was pleased providentially to cast my eye upon a passage in Dr. Goodwin that was greatly blessed to my soul.'¹⁰⁴ The snare was now broken and he continued preaching. Following the practice of Independency, he was then set apart with solemn prayer by the local congregation and authorised to preach the gospel. Bentley entered formally on his public work on 7th December 1729.

For taking this step, both Bentley and the other deacons at Turners' Hall were the subjects of 'banter and ridicule'. Bentley writes, 'I found at this time more favour and esteem in the eyes of Churchmen, than from the Dissenters...as to those of our own denomination, viz., Congregational; these have owned, and do still own this practice of ours to be right in the Savoy Confession of Faith.'¹⁰⁵ According to the practice of the Congregational Churches as set out in the *Savoy Declaration of the Institution of Churches*

103. Bentley, *The Lord the Helper of His People*, pp. 14-15.

104. *ibid.*, p. 17.

105. Bentley, *The Lord the Helper of His People*, pp. 20-21.

and the Order appointed in them by Jesus Christ, Bentley and his colleagues were correct in what they had done. Article XII reads:

The Essence of this Call of a Pastor, Teacher or Elder unto Office, consists in the Election of the Church, together with his acceptation of it, and separation by Fasting and Prayer: And those who are so chosen, though not set apart by Imposition of Hands, are rightly constituted Ministers of Jesus Christ, in whose Name and Authority they exercise the Ministry to them so committed. The Calling of Deacons consisteth in the like Election and acceptation with separation by Prayer.¹⁰⁶

Whatever action the Turners' Hall congregation took regarding the setting apart of William Bentley to preach, they still regarded themselves as being debarred from administering the Lord's Supper and the ordinance of baptism. Hence they set themselves to inquire how they might overcome this difficulty. At length after searching the scriptures, and consulting the writings of Thomas Goodwin, John Owen, and Isaac Chauncey, they were confirmed in their opinion that the matter would be resolved if they had a ruling-elder. Accordingly, they gave Bentley a call to that office. After continuing for some time in this state, with satisfaction on all sides, the church began to think it would be better for them to have a regular pastor. For this purpose, they spent several days in imploring the divine direction, and at length, came to a unanimous resolution, that William Bentley should be fixed in the pastoral office.

Whilst preaching regularly at Turners' Hall, Bentley had not given up his employment, and he was concerned, that if he did, he would be unable provide for his large family. As a consequence of his family responsibilities, he was unsure how to respond to the call he had received. Whilst he was reflecting on what course he should take, these words of Scripture were blessed to him, 'Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world.' He then writes: 'This a little revived me, and gave me new vigour in my soul; and after these words, came others suitable unto the care which I was for taking of my family, viz. "My God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Jesus Christ" (Philippians 4:19) and soon after these words, "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof; the cattle upon a thousand hills are mine" (Psalm 50:10-12).'¹⁰⁷

106. A. G. Matthews (ed.), *The Savoy Declaration of Faith and Order*, 1658 (London, 1959), p. 123. The Savoy *Institution of Churches, etc.* is reprinted in Iain Murray (ed.), *The Reformation of the Church* (Banner of Truth Trust, 1965), pp. 276-280.

107. Bentley, *The Lord the Helper of His People*, pp. 26-27.

His anxiety being cleared, Bentley now accepted the call to become the pastor, and a day was appointed to set him apart by fasting and prayer according to the provisions of the *Savoy Institutions*. As the Turners' Hall people were not in connexion with any of the Dissenting Boards, and as the London ministers refused to recognise them, the service was conducted entirely by the congregation. One of the deacons, a Mr Bocket,¹⁰⁸ was deputed by the church to act on their behalf. Bocket transacted the chief service of the day. After some of the brethren had engaged in prayer, he called upon the church to renew their call. This they did, after which Bentley declared his acceptance of the pastoral office, and gave a short account of his call to the ministry. Bocket exhorted the minister from Colossians 4:17; and then the church from 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13. Some of the brethren then engaged in prayer, and the service was concluded with singing. The purpose of Bentley's tract *The Lord the Helper of His People* was to explain his soul-exercise regarding his eventual acceptance of the call to be the minister of the congregation. In it, he vigorously defends himself against criticism that he 'never was for having anybody fixed except myself' by showing the earlier attempts they had made to secure a pastor.¹⁰⁹

Crispin Street in Huguenot Spitalfields

After his ordination as the pastor, William Bentley continued to preach at Turners' Hall for a decade until 1740, when, according to Wilson, 'his congregation, having grown numerous, removed to a larger meeting-house, in Crispin Street, Spitalfields.'¹¹⁰ Whether that is entirely the correct interpretation of the move to Crispin Street is open to question. Turners' Hall came under new ownership in 1736 and this may have been a factor in the move. Interestingly, John Wesley preached in Turners' Hall a year before Bentley's congregation left the building, which appears to have been in a state of disrepair. Wesley's *Journal* for 27th September 1739 gives the following extraordinary account:

I went in the afternoon to a society at Deptford, and thence, at six, came to Turners' Hall; which holds (by computation) two thousand persons. The press both within and without was very great. In the beginning of the expounding, there being a large vault beneath, the main beam which

108. Bentley in his account does not supply the deacon's name. It has been preserved by Walter Wilson; see *Dissenting Churches*, Vol. 1, p. 147.

109. Bentley, *The Lord the Helper of His People*, p. 12.

110. Wilson, *Dissenting Churches*, Vol. 1, p. 148.

supported the floor broke. The floor immediately sunk, which occasioned much noise and confusion among the people. But, two or three days before, a man had filled the vault with hogsheads of tobacco. So that the floor, after sinking a foot or two, rested upon them, and I went on without interruption.¹¹¹

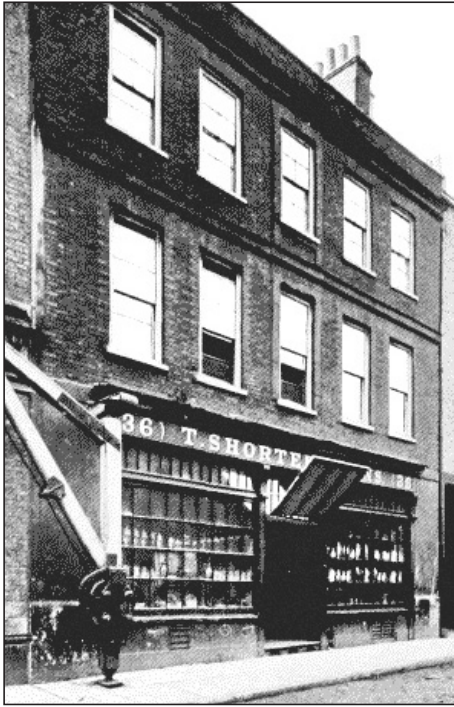
If Wesley's assessment of the numbers that could be accommodated in Turners' Hall is correct then Bentley could hardly have moved to Crispin Street because Turners' Hall was too small.

The Spitalfields area of London, to which Bentley took his congregation, had a very large immigrant population of French Protestants. This was due to a massive influx of Huguenots that had fled from France as a result of the severe persecution following the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685.¹¹² As many as 400,000 Protestant-Calvinists fled from France in consequence of the persecution; of these between 40,000 and 50,000 came for safety to England. Half of that number settled in Spitalfields where housing was inexpensive and the London Trade Guilds held less economic power. The Huguenots came from all walks of life: many were intellectuals, some were businessmen engaged in providing financial services, and others were highly skilled tradesmen with backgrounds in weaving or clock-making. Textile manufacturing was, however, the main occupation of the refugees in Spitalfields. Due to their skill and hard work their businesses thrived and Spitalfields became known as 'weaver town'. The silk and French styles were popular with the upper classes in London. Many workshops were opened and their owners became wealthy and employed many hundreds of workers.¹¹³

111. Nehemiah Curnock (ed.), *The Journal of John Wesley* (8 vols., Epworth Press, London, 1938), Vol. 2, pp. 282-283.

112. The Edict of Nantes was signed by Henry IV of France in April 1598 and was aimed at bringing to an end the long-running and disruptive French Wars of Religion. It was successful for a time in restoring peace, and gave the Huguenots some civil rights and a measure of toleration in what was still essentially a Roman Catholic country. The grandson of Henry IV, Louis XIV (1638-1715), revoked the Edict and ordered the destruction of Huguenot churches, as well as the closing of Protestant schools. For an overview, see Guy Saupin, *The Edict of Nantes* (Musée d'histoire de Nantes, 2008); R. J. Knecht, *The French Wars of Religion* (Longman-Harlow, 2010); J. G. Gray, *The French Huguenots; Anatomy of Courage* (Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1981). For a more detailed account, see Henry M. Baird, *The Huguenots and the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes* (2 vols., New York, 1895).

113. For the Huguenots in London and Spitalfields, see Robin Gwynn, *The Huguenots of London* (Brighton, 1998); George B. Beeman, 'Notes on the Sites and History of the French



*The shop-front of 36 Crispin Street.
The Chapel was at the rear
of this property.*

The Huguenots also began their own French congregations which had the effect of binding the community together and providing a connecting point for new immigrants. In the Spitalfields area alone, there were nine French Huguenot churches in the eighteenth century. It was to a building that had been occupied by one of these Huguenot congregations that Bentley brought his people in 1740 after they had left Turners' Hall. The building was situated behind 36 Crispin Street which was very close to Spitalfields Market and was just less than a mile from their previous place of worship. It had the address of 36A Crispin Street.¹¹⁴ There is no known documentary evidence for the architectural history of either 36 or 36A Crispin Street, which were probably built

before 1713. The premises seem to have comprised two houses fronting the street – this was 36 Crispin Street – with a chapel or meeting-house, and possibly a warehouse, at the back. The chapel at the back is described in a deed of 1740 as 'erected and built on the said Garden and used for religious worship, filled up with a pulpit, pews, and other necessities for that purpose.'¹¹⁵ The

Churches in London', *Proceedings of the Huguenot Society of London*, Vol. 8 (1908-9), pp. 13-59. For the wider Huguenot settlements in Britain, see John S. Burn, *The History of the French, Walloon, Dutch and other Foreign Protestant Refugees settled in England* (London, 1846); Samuel Smiles, *The Huguenots: Their Settlements, Churches, and Industries in England and Ireland* (London, 1889).

114. For the location of the Crispin Street Church building, I am indebted to *Survey of London: Vol. 27, Spitalfields and Mile End New Town* (London County Council, London, 1957) – online edition.

115. *Survey of London: Vol. 27, Spitalfields and Mile End New Town* – online edition. According to the *Survey of London*, 36 Crispin Street had a well-designed front of early eighteenth-century character, and was three storeys high and five windows wide. The original ground-storey treatment had been replaced by a shop-front of about 1800. From the mid-nineteenth century until its demolition the premises were occupied by a glass and china merchant. At some time during this period, 36A appears to have been rebuilt as a warehouse. Like the rest of this part of Crispin Street, the buildings were acquired by the Corporation of London in 1923 and demolished.

early history of the Huguenot congregation that worshipped at 36A Crispin Street cannot now be determined with complete accuracy. Towards the end of 1688, in the ‘Glorious Revolution’, England’s Roman Catholic King James II was deposed and replaced by the Protestant monarchs William and Mary. In 1689 William joined the League of Augsburg in its war against France (begun earlier in 1688) where James II had fled. William, sympathizing with the French Protestants, issued a proclamation encouraging them to come to England in order to avoid persecution.¹¹⁶ Letters patent were given to French ministers with the power to purchase land and to build churches. Accordingly, some French congregations were called ‘The Churches of the Patent’. The congregation whose building Bentley acquired seems to have been formed in 1689 and to have met at several locations including Glovers’ Hall.¹¹⁷ John Burn asserts the building in which they were worshipping prior to moving to Crispin Street was rather unsatisfactory due ‘to the closeness of the benches, the amount of rent, and uncertainty of possession, added to the fact, that many of their congregation were leaving for want of accommodation.’ In 1716, in order to resolve these issues, the elders purchased the chapel at 36A Crispin Street, with the house adjoining, for £300 with a lease of thirty-two years. They occupied the chapel from 1st January 1717, when their minister Jean Jembelin preached from 2 Cor. 13:12-13, ‘Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints salute you.’ In 1740, the lease of Crispin Street chapel being nearly expired, the chapel was sold to William Bentley’s congregation for £100.¹¹⁸ The consistory then purchased a chapel in Brown’s Lane,¹¹⁹ which had been publicly offered for sale; and there the congregation remained till its dissolution, and incorporation with the London Walloon church, which took place in 1786.

Bentley’s preaching

William Bentley ministered at Crispin Street for the next eleven years until his death on 1st May 1751. His preaching seems to have been highly regarded by those who attended on his ministry. Five sermons preached

116. Burn, *History of Foreign Protestant Refugees settled in England*, p. 21.

117. Beeman, ‘Notes on the Sites and History of the French Churches in London’, pp. 39-40 interacts with Burn, *History of Foreign Protestant Refugees settled in England*, pp. 168-169 on the places in which the congregation met prior to the move to Crispin Street.

118. Burn, *History of Foreign Protestant Refugees settled in England*, p. 169.

119. For an account of the Brown’s Lane meeting-house and its several occupants see Beeman, ‘Notes on the Sites and History of the French Churches in London’, p. 51.

by him are extant as separate booklets, all of which appear to have been published by him. Four of the sermons state, either on the title-page or in the introduction, that they were published at the request of his congregation. Two sermons are from his Turners' Hall ministry and the remaining three from his ministry at Crispin Street. The first was preached on 1st August 1735 to commemorate the ejection of the Puritans from the Established Church on 24th August 1662. His text was Num. 23:23, 'According to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought.' The title of the sermon was 'Balak's desire frustrated; or, Baalam would if he could' and on the title-page the text of Ps. 124:7 'The snare is broken and we are escaped' is printed at the bottom of the page.¹²⁰ The second printed sermon, from Bentley's Turners' Hall ministry, was on the death of a young man in his congregation who died at the age of twenty-three, having been a member for just sixteen months. Bentley in a footnote in the sermon states that the Lord began his work on him when he was sixteen. He seems to have been converted under Bentley's preaching.¹²¹

Two of the three published sermons during his Crispin Street ministry were preached on fast-days appointed by the King George II. The first was preached on a day of fasting and humiliation appointed for 4th February 1741 in consequence of the war with Spain. This was the conflict between Britain and Spain that lasted from 1739-1748 and was due to Britain's involvement in the War of the Austrian succession. The fast-day was appointed just weeks before a major defeat for the British Navy and Army when they attempted an amphibious landing to take Spanish ports in the Caribbean. The King ordered that the fast-day was to be 'observed in a most solemn and devout manner for obtaining the pardon of our sins, and imploring the Divine blessing and assistance on the Arms of His Majesty, and for restoring and perpetuating peace and

120. William Bentley, *Balak's desire frustrated; or, Baalam would if he could: A sermon preached on first of August in Turners' Hall* (London, 1735).

121. William Bentley, *The Lord's Desire to the Work of His Hands, or, A young convert soon gathered: A sermon occasioned by the death of Mr. Edward Killingback, who departed this life the 18th day of October, 1738, aged twenty three* (London, 1738). In his introduction, addressed to the Turners' Hall congregation, Bentley states, 'I know sermons of this kind are much run after...I neither like the place for it nor the thing itself...I must confess, the many such that I have heard, has given me a great dislike unto sermons of this kind' (p. v). He preached the sermon as he thought it unkind to refuse the request of a dying friend. He hoped the sermon would be the means to encourage others 'to join themselves unto the Lord in a covenant not to be forgotten' (p. iv).

safety, and prosperity to Himself and His kingdoms.’ Sermons were also preached before the House of Lords in Westminster Abbey by Matthias Mawson, Bishop of Chichester,¹²² and before the House of Commons in St. Margaret’s, Westminster by Reuben Clarke, the Archdeacon of Essex and Chaplain in Ordinary to the King. Bentley’s fast-day sermon was entitled ‘The Lord’s Mark, the Saint’s protection at all times’ from the text ‘And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof’ (Ezek. 9:4).¹²³

Bentley’s second fast-day sermon was preached on 18th December 1745. This was a fast-day appointed in consequence of the Jacobite rising of 1745 (‘the Forty-Five’). Bentley’s sermon was entitled ‘The Evil Confederacy of Syria and Israel against the kingdom of Judah’ and was an exposition of Is. 7:1-7. In the introduction to the sermon, in which he addresses the Church of Christ together with his people at Crispin Street, Bentley outlines the sort of men needed in the British army to repel the evil confederacy of the Young Pretender:

An experimental acquaintance with Christ as our righteousness and His blood as the price of your redemption, and his spirit as your sanctifier and comforter, and his Word as your guide (the good old Doctrines of the Reformation) will make you as it did the worthies of old, to put your enemies to flight. Heaven-born Souls make the best of soldiers; they edge their swords with prayer at God’s altar, and then they go forth in God’s strength and do valiantly; and blessed be God we have some such to my knowledge in our armies at this Time; would to God that their numbers were greater, they are the salt of that part of the earth.¹²⁴

The fifth of Bentley’s published sermons was preached on 25th December 1750, just five months before his death. This sermon is more probably reflective of his regular preaching to his congregation than the earlier four addresses which were all delivered on special occasions. His text was

122. The reason for the fast-day is taken from the title-page of Matthias Mawson, *Sermon preach’d before the House of Lords* (London, 1740).

123. William Bentley, *The Lord’s Mark, the Saint’s protection at all times: A sermon preached on Fourth of February, being the day appointed by His Majesty for a General Fast on occasion of the present war with Spain in Crispin Street, Spitalfields*, (London, 1741).

124. William Bentley, *The Evil Confederacy of Syria and Israel against the Kingdom of Judah considered in a sermon preached on the 18th of December 1745, being the day appointed for a solemn fast in Crispin Street, Spitalfields* (London, 1745), pp. vi-vii.

Isaiah 25:6, 'And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined.'¹²⁵ The sermon expounds the spiritual feast that the people of God experience in the Church of God, the Lord's banqueting house, provided by the Triune God. From Bentley's introduction to the sermon, it appears he had been criticised due to his use of allegory. He concludes the sermon by critiquing the worldliness of his generation, even in the mid-eighteenth century, for their conduct on the twenty-fifth of December.

I fear many will, when they have eat and drank, like those of old, who eat and drank and rose up to play, they will then call for cards and dice, and go to a variety of destructive games. How many have thrown away their estates by such pernicious practices and their souls too. There never was more opportunity of sinful and abominable diversions than now, but especially at such seasons of the year as this; as if Christ were the minister of sin, or came into the world to encourage it. Suffer none of these things in your houses; you that are parents or masters be not examples of this kind to your children and servants, lest they have cause to lay their destruction at your door another day; but I hope better things of you, and the things that accompany salvation, though I thus speak.¹²⁶

Bentley's death

William Bentley was little over fifty years of age when he died. Shortly after preaching his fifth published sermon he appears to have been taken seriously ill. In early April, in the hope of recovering his health, he and his wife travelled to the spa city of Bath from where he wrote three letters to his Crispin Street congregation.¹²⁷ He was, however, a dying man. The journey from London to Bath he found very difficult; he wrote to his congregation on 10th April 1751: 'such a journey as I had was enough to make a well man sick, and I do not wonder at it, if the exercise and shaking of the journey, for the present make me somewhat the worse.' Earlier in the same letter he described his appearance: 'as to my body, it is weak and skeleton-like, I look ghastly enough, but bad as it looks, it is the temple of the Holy Ghost.' Yet, he was able to encourage them to maintain their doctrinal stand: 'The

125. William Bentley, *A Spiritual Entertainment: A sermon preached at Crispin Street, Spitalfields, December 25, 1750* (London, 1751).

126. Bentley, *Spiritual Entertainment*, p. 39.

127. The letters are appended to the funeral sermon preached after his death. See John Rogers, *A sermon occasioned by the death of the Rev. William Bentley* (London, 1751), pp. 46-59.

breasts through which I am now nourished and fed, and comforted, are, what? Not the new-fangled doctrines of the day, but the good old doctrines, that our fore-fathers bore witness unto, and were not ashamed of, even unto death; and I hope I shall, to death and to all eternity glory in.¹²⁸

He writes to them a week later, and he is clear that eternity is near:

I cannot, nor ever may preach to you from the pulpit, but I would, by my pen, so long as I can write, put you in remembrance, and stir you up as the apostle Peter speaketh, ‘knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ has shown me’ (2 Peter 1:14) ...We die; the Word of the Lord lives forever, which word I have preached to you in the glory of His person, grace, offices and fulness; and you have been comforted thereby. Christ I hope has been the subject of my ministration to you; I find Him now to my soul, in all His dear relations, a precious box of ointment ... my heart’s desire and prayer to the Lord for you is, that you may be a tribe preserved for his name; He can raise up an under-shepherd for you, if I should be taken away.¹²⁹

The next day the dying pastor writes again, this time to a friend:

I am almost brought down to the dust of death; I frequently am ready to say with Job, and call the earth, my sister and brother; the Lord, and my Lord is breaking me (as to my frame) apace ... O Christ! my Lord, friend and elder brother (in his glorious conquest and victory, over sin, Satan, death, and hell) appears glorious in my eyes; I see him by faith, and am helped by faith in this trying time, to stay and trust upon him, and him alone; for he is my salvation, and in him I have all I want or can desire. O this foundation! What supports it brings into the soul, in the views of dissolution, death, and the grave; as indeed is my case. I can hardly hold my pen steady to write; my case is very dangerous, and all the means hitherto used fail; O sad and wearisome nights are appointed to me, but everlasting arms doth support me, I long to see my dear friends once more in the flesh, but I fear I shall not.¹³⁰

William Bentley signed what appears to be his last letter ‘A brother in affliction and distress of body’.¹³¹ He died thirteen days later on 1st May 1751 and was buried in Bunhill Fields.¹³² A funeral sermon was preached

128. *ibid.*, pp. 47, 49, 51. Letter dated 10th April 1751.

129. *ibid.*, pp. 53-55. Letter dated 17th April 1751.

130. *ibid.*, pp. 57-58. Letter dated 18th April 1751.

131. *ibid.*, p. 58. Letter dated 18th April 1751.

132. *TCHS*, Vol. 4:6 (September 1910), p. 361.

in the Crispin Street church eleven days later on 12th May 1751 by John Rogers from the text, 'My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee, and my soul, which thou hast redeemed. My tongue also shall talk of thy righteousness all the day long: for they are confounded, for they are brought to shame, that seek my hurt' (Ps. 71:23-24).

Mixed-Communion Churches in London

John Rogers was the minister of an Independent congregation on Collier's Rents¹³³ in Southwark. The church building was situated half a mile south of London Bridge. There seem to have been close links between the Crispin Street congregation and that at Collier's Rents. Formed in 1726, the Collier's Rents church¹³⁴ consisted of both Baptists and Paedobaptists, on which account they practised mixed communion. Their first minister Clendon Dawkes, who was a Baptist, resigned in 1730 due to his objection to mixed communion.

Following the division in the Petticoat Lane congregation after Hussey's death, and before Bentley became the pastor of the majority section at Turners' Hall, it seems from a memorandum in the Church Book of Collier's Rents that an attempt was made to unite the two congregations.¹³⁵ At the time, both congregations were without a minister and it was determined that the trustees of each church should have an equal vote in the choice of a new one. They seem to have agreed to invite Jonas Thorowgood,¹³⁶ the

133. In the eighteenth century Collier's Rents, formerly called Angel Alley and Bridewell Alley, was a narrow passage behind St. George's Church, winding its way from High Street, Borough to White Street. See Edward E. Cleal, *The Story of Congregationalism in Surrey* (London, 1908), p. 59.

134. For a history of the Collier's Rents church, see Wilson, *Dissenting Churches*, Vol. 4, pp. 321-329; Cleal, *Congregationalism in Surrey*, pp. 59-63; J. Waddington, *Surrey Congregational History* (London, 1866), pp. 253-256.

135. See Wilson, *Dissenting Churches*, Vol. 1, p. 146 and Vol. 4, p. 322. Wilson appears to have thought that the Turners' Hall congregation then had Bentley as its minister and that the proposed union could not refer to the supporters of Hussey. This is incorrect as both congregations were without a minister in 1730, and a union of the two churches, as indicated in Collier's Rents book, looked highly probable. See also Whitley, *The Baptists of London*, p. 121 for further confirmation of this failed attempt at the union of the two congregations.

136. Jonas Thorowgood was the minister of the Baptist Church at Potter Street near Harlow for thirty-six years between 1717 and 1753. Besides being a minister, he seems to have acquired medical skills. See Wilson, *Dissenting Churches*, Vol. 4, pp. 290-291; Ivimey, *History of the English Baptists*, Vol. 4, p. 483.

minister of a Baptist Church near Harlow, to become the pastor of the united congregation. The union did not proceed as the Collier's Rents church called another minister and Bentley became the minister at Turners' Hall.

John Rogers (1716-1790),¹³⁷ the preacher at Bentley's funeral service, had been trained by Abraham Taylor¹³⁸ at Deptford Academy. In the 1730s an association of laymen known as the King's Head Society (from their place of meeting) was established with the objective of reviving Calvinistic orthodoxy amongst Baptists and Independents by funding several Nonconformist academies around London and assisting young men of piety and talent to train for the ministry. Deptford Academy was one of these institutions in which Taylor was the tutor. Taylor's views regarding the question of the free offer of the gospel and eternal justification were diametrically opposite to those of Joseph Hussey; whether Rogers took his or Hussey's position we do not know.

Rogers was the sixth in a direct family line of seven men, six of whom bore the name of John Rogers.¹³⁹ In addition, six of the seven were ministers of the Gospel. The first in the line was John Rogers (1500-1555), the first Protestant martyr in the Marian persecution who was burnt at Smithfield.¹⁴⁰ The third in the succession was the ejected minister of Croglin

137. For an account of John Rogers (1716-1790), see Wilson, *Dissenting Churches*, Vol. 4, pp. 325-328.

138. Abraham Taylor (fl. 1726-1740) was one of the Lime Street lecturers and took a leading part in the controversy called the 'Modern Question' that troubled the Baptist Churches of Northampton. The controversy was concerned largely with the question of the free offer of the gospel. Taylor's tract, in which he asserted that sinners have a duty to repent and believe, had a decisive influence on Andrew Fuller. In an *Address to young students* Taylor had referred to Hussey's view that Christ must not be offered to sinners, in terms that were bound to give offence. He had written: 'This odd fancy was started above thirty years since, by a gentleman of a great deal of rambling learning, but of a confused head.' Abraham Taylor, *Address to young students in divinity, by way of caution against some paradoxes, which led to doctrinal antinomianism* (1739), cited in Nuttall, 'Northamptonshire and the Modern Question', p. 115. He also controverted John Gill on the question of eternal justification, which he called an 'immoral conceit'; see Wilson, *Dissenting Churches*, Vol. 4, pp. 218. Alexander Cruden commended Taylor to Marischal College, Aberdeen for a doctorate in divinity, which was awarded him in 1736. For Taylor, see *DNB* and *ODNB*.

139. For a listing of all members of the Rogers family and a brief outline of their careers, see *Evangelical Magazine and Missionary Chronicle*, new series, Vol. 24 (1846), pp. 535-537.

140. For John Rogers the martyr, see J. C. Ryle, *Light from Old Times* (London, 1898), pp. 56-66. A recent account is Timothy Shenton, *John Rogers: Sealed with Blood* (Leominster, 2007). See also *DNB*, and the *ODNB* account by David Daniell.

in Cumberland.¹⁴¹ The only one of the seven who was not a minister was the father of the preacher at Bentley's funeral service. The Collier's Rents congregation was very small when Rogers was called to it in 1745. He was, however, diligent in his pastoral work and built up the congregation. Wilson says of him: 'In the discharge of his ministerial duty, he was faithful, acting under the habitual remembrance of the solemn account he was to give. The support and adorning of the Christian character, as it is manifested by a separation from the world, he frequently inculcated on the professors of religion.'¹⁴²

John Potts (c.1720-1792)¹⁴³

The fourth minister of the Crispin Street congregation, and the man who succeeded Bentley, was John Potts, a Scottish Secession minister. Practically nothing is known of his early life beyond the fact that he was an Englishman.¹⁴⁴ The Secession Church, led by Ebenezer Erskine, James Fisher, William Wilson, and Alexander Moncrieff, separated from the

141. John Rogers (1610-1680) was born in Chacombe, Northamptonshire. In 1644, he was appointed Rector of Leigh in Kent by the Westminster Assembly and in the same year, by order of Parliament, became the perpetual curate of Barnard Castle in Durham. Both the Leigh and Barnard Castle livings appear to have been sequestrations and after the restoration of the monarchy in 1660 he had to surrender Barnard Castle. Lord Wharton then presented him to the vicarage of Croglin, seven miles north-east of Lazonby, from where was ejected in the early months of 1663. He retired to Barnard Castle and continued preaching as often as he was able. There is a full account in Palmer, *Nonconformist's Memorial*, Vol. 1, pp. 379-385. See also B. Nightingale, *The Ejected of 1662 in Cumberland and Westmorland* (2 vols., Manchester, 1911), Vol. 1, pp. 409-415; Matthews, *Calamy Revised*, p. 132-133; *DNB*; *ODNB*.

142. Wilson, *Dissenting Churches*, Vol. 4, p. 326. According to Whitley, once Rogers had become settled as the minister he 'eliminated all Baptists; infant christenings began 1751'; see *The Baptists of London*, p. 129.

143. Potts' approximate date of birth has been deduced from the fact that he became a student in the Secession in 1742, which, he states, was at an age when he was immature. John Potts, *Seceding Presbyterianism Delineated in the Case of John Potts; or, A Protest against the Seceding Presbytery of Edinburgh and an Appeal to the Protestant reformed Churches, as to the whole process depending betwixt the said Presbytery and Mr. Potts* (Edinburgh, 1753), p. v. Assuming that he was in his early twenties when he became a student, his date of birth would have been approximately 1720. His death is recorded as taking place on 20th June 1792 in the *European Magazine and London Review*, Vol. 22 (July-December 1792), p. 79.

144. In Potts, *Seceding Presbyterianism Delineated*, p. 4, he refers to England as his own country.

Church of Scotland in 1733, largely over the issue of patronage. The new Church was known as the Associate Presbytery. Potts joined the Secession Presbytery as a student in 1742 and whilst a student, before receiving licence, acted as its Clerk.¹⁴⁵ We do not know what the influences were that led a young Englishman to become a student in the Secession Church. It would not be unreasonable to assume that a factor was the decline in biblical orthodoxy among English Presbyterians following the decision at Salters' Hall in 1719 against subscription to the Westminster Confession. That victory for laxity in 1719 soon led to Arianism getting a foothold amongst non-subscribers.¹⁴⁶

Secession theological student, probationer and minister

William Wilson of Perth who had been appointed as the Associate Presbytery's first Professor of Theology died in 1741 and was replaced by Alexander Moncrieff (1695-1761). Potts was among the six commencement-year students in Moncrieff's first class at Abernethy. Moncrieff had been trained by Principal Hadow at St. Mary's College, St. Andrews and in Holland under Johannes à Marck (1655-1731) and Johannes Wesselius (1671-1745) at Leiden. Both Wilson and Moncrieff used Marck's *Christianae Theologiae Medulla Didactico-Elentica* in Latin as their theological textbook.¹⁴⁷ Moncrieff followed the pattern set by Wilson of conducting the divinity hall for three months beginning in March each year. According to Landreth he took 'special and increasing care of the discourses and the critical and exegetical exercises that were delivered or read annually by each student.'¹⁴⁸ Moncrieff was particularly interested in the student's preaching ability and was concerned that the students preached the free offer of the gospel in the Marrow tradition. Unquestionably, Potts would have left Abernethy with a good grounding in Reformed theology and with an understanding of what was necessary in order to preach the gospel in an effective way.

145. Robert Small, *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church, 1733-1900* (2 vols., Edinburgh, 1904), Vol. 2, p. 251.

146. For details on the decline of English Presbyterianism, see Roy Middleton, 'John Love in London, Part 1: From licensing in Scotland to ordination in London', *Scottish Reformation Society Historical Journal*, Vol. 7 (2017), pp. 158-173.

147. For an account of the theological training provided by both Wilson and Moncrieff, see Peter Landreth, *The United Presbyterian Divinity Hall* (Edinburgh, 1876), pp. 24-102; J. C. Whytock, *An Educated Clergy* (Milton Keynes, 2007), pp. 169-186, 201.

148. Landreth, *The United Presbyterian Divinity Hall*, p. 79.

Soon after he was licensed, Potts received calls from both the Dalkeith and Stichel¹⁴⁹ congregations; the latter one was signed in December 1746 and contained 157 signatures. Before he could give his mind to these calls he was sent by the Secession Synod¹⁵⁰ to supply supporters of the Secession in London. The Synod had received repeated and urgent calls from these friends in London for supply. Accordingly, at its meeting in April 1746 the Synod appointed Adam Gib and William Mair to preach for three months and dispense gospel ordinances in the English metropolis, after which Potts was sent as a probationer to succeed them. Doubtless the Synod thought this was an appropriate appointment due to Potts being an Englishman. The ensuing Synod of the Church in 1747 was one of intense strife over the question of the Burgess Oath.¹⁵¹ So intense was the controversy that it resulted in a Breach which divided the Secession Church into two separate denominations: Burgher and Anti-Burgher Seceders. In the confusion over the Burgess Oath, the decision over which of the two Scottish congregations John Potts was to be assigned remained undetermined. Consequently, he continued in London, which seems to have been much to his satisfaction; and for him it had the added advantage that he was able to look on the Burgess Oath controversy from afar. During his stay in the English capital, as he states in his pamphlet, he frequently went to hear dissenting ministers of other denominations, for which offence a hue and cry was raised against him.¹⁵² In consequence of his attending public worship conducted by non-Secession ministers, Potts believed that the Anti-Burghers under Adam Gib

149. I have followed the spelling of Robert Small, *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church* and William Mackelvie, *Annals and Statistics of the United Presbyterian Church* (Edinburgh, 1873) for the name of the village. The current spelling is Stichel.

150. Due to their growth, in October 1744 the Seceders constituted themselves into a Synod to be styled the Associate Synod. It consisted of three Presbyteries – Dunfermline, Glasgow, and Edinburgh. See John M'Kerrow, *History of the Secession Church* (Glasgow, 1841), pp. 196-197.

151. A 'burgess' was originally a freeman of a burgh. It later came to mean an elected or unelected official of a burgh or municipality. The Burgess controversy was about an oath imposed on burgesses in the towns of Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Perth. The oath required them to endorse the religion professed in this realm. Those who opposed the oath (the Anti-Burghers) understood it as endorsing the Church of Scotland from which they had separated in 1733. Alternatively, the Burghers construed the oath to be an approbation of the Protestant Reformed faith with the intention of excluding Roman Catholics from becoming burgesses. Moncreiff and Adam Gib were among the Anti-Burghers, whilst the Erskine brothers and James Fisher were Burghers. The controversy was very bitter and the literature on its history is extensive. A useful overview of the controversy is in M'Kerrow, *History of the Secession Church*, pp. 208-238.

152. Potts, *Seceding Presbyterianism Delineated*, p. viii.

would deal more sharply with him than the party led by the Erskines and James Fisher; this consideration led him to cast in his lot with the Burghers.¹⁵³

Regrettably, the Breach of 1747 also divided the Seceders in London; the majority adhered to the Anti-Burghers who purchased a chapel in Bow Lane, Cheapside. They later moved to a building in Oxenden Street, Haymarket that had been built originally for Richard Baxter in 1676. With the approval at first of the Burgher Synod, Potts was instructed to supply the minority Burghers.¹⁵⁴ However, he continued in London in defiance of the Synod until the beginning of 1751 when he was peremptorily ordered back to Scotland to appear before the Synod¹⁵⁵ where he made some acknowledgement regarding his conduct, submitted to a rebuke, and what he calls a ‘patched up peace’ was achieved.¹⁵⁶ He was then formally ordained as the minister of Stichel, near Kelso.¹⁵⁷ This was just three months after William Bentley’s death. Potts had been in London for five years and had doubtless developed a whole range of friendships and connections and it seems clear that his heart’s desire was to be a minister in the English capital rather than in Scotland.

153. Potts, *Seceding Presbyterianism Delineated*, p. 5.

154. The London Burgher Seceders met first in Aldersgate and after meeting in several locations finally purchased a chapel in 1764 at Wells Street. Their second minister was Alexander Waugh who was pastor of the congregation from 1782 until his death in 1827. Waugh and John Love were part of a small group of Scottish ministers who took an active part in the formation of the London Missionary Society. For the London Burgher Seceders, see Mackelvie, *Annals and Statistics of the United Presbyterian Church*, pp. 495-497; Kenneth M. Black, *The Scots Churches in England* (Edinburgh, 1906), pp. 205-217.

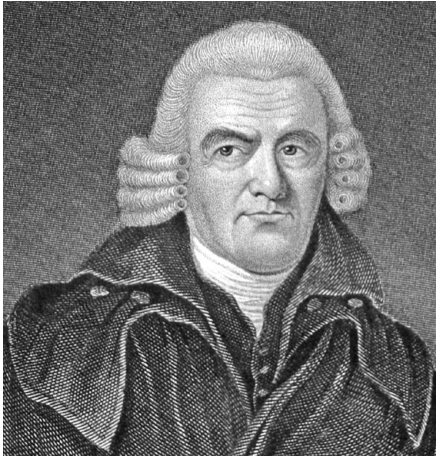
155. Potts seems to have been popular in London. Mackelvie observes: ‘These circumstances (i.e. the recalling of Potts to Scotland) had an unfavourable effect upon the congregation, and hindered its prosperity. Several of the most popular ministers and probationers of the denomination were sent by the Synod to London after Mr Potts’ withdrawal, and among the rest Rev. Mr. M’Ewen of Dundee . . . with instructions to remain there till the third Sabbath of November (1751), “providing he can upon probable grounds write the Presbytery of Dunfermline that there is a prospect of gathering a congregation upon a Presbyterian footing in the city.” . . . M’Ewen remained in London till the first week of February 1752, but could not on his return afford the Presbytery encouragement to send up a preacher to supply his place. The congregation nevertheless determined to keep together, and for this purpose resolved itself into a society for prayer and mutual edification, readily accepting supply of sermon from ministers when they could obtain them, and at other times making up for the want of this by exhorting one another.’ *Annals and Statistics of the United Presbyterian Church*, pp. 495-496.

156. Potts, *Seceding Presbyterianism Delineated*, p. viii.

157. As Potts had kept the Dalkeith congregation waiting for such a long time, they had allowed their call to drop, so only the call to Stichel remained.

Potts' controversy with the Secession Churches

The call to Potts had originally been from the Stichel congregation alone; however, during his time in London the Kelso congregation, which was



John Brown (1722-1787), the Burgher Secession Minister at Haddington.

just three miles away, had been linked to that at Stichel to make it a joint charge.¹⁵⁸ As Robert Small observes, 'Whatever were the circumstances, the minister seems to have made Kelso his sole centre.'¹⁵⁹ This was formalised on 6th February 1753 when Kelso was disjoined from Stichel and Potts was given the option to choose in which congregation he would continue as minister.¹⁶⁰ He preferred Kelso, but the pastoral relation would not continue very long as matters had come to a near rupture between him

and his brethren in the Edinburgh Presbytery. Small graphically describes the reasons and the outcome:

In June (1752) of the previous summer he was engaged to take part in communion work at Jedburgh, but before the time for setting out he received a paper from five of the elders, along with the signatures of their own minister and Mr Brown of Haddington. They complained that, according to information received from some of his own hearers, he had been declaring in favour of mixed admission to the Lord's Table, and striking out against the Secession terms of communion, and they wished to hear his explanation before proceeding further. No satisfaction was obtained, and we know that when the Synod met in May 1753 the Presbytery reported that Mr Potts was under sentence of suspension.¹⁶¹

158. Both the Stichel and Kelso Secession congregations had come into existence mainly due to ministers being placed over the Established Church congregations against the desires of the people and the local office-bearers. For the history and background of these intruded settlements, see Mackelvie, *Annals and Statistics of the United Presbyterian Church*, pp. 381-383 regarding Stichel and pp. 389-391 concerning Kelso. Briefer accounts are in Small, *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church*, Vol. 2, pp. 250-251, 262.

159. Small, *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church*, Vol. 2, p. 263.

160. Mackelvie, *Annals and Statistics of the United Presbyterian Church*, p. 391.

161. Small, *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church*, Vol. 2, p. 263. The letter to Potts from John Brown and John Smith is printed in Potts, *Seceding Presbyterianism Delineated*, pp. ix-x.

What was meant when John Smith, the minister of the Jedburgh Burgher congregation, and John Brown asserted that Potts was in favour of mixed communion was that he approved of the procedure of admission to the Lord's Table as it was commonly practised by the dissenters in England. In Potts' reply to them he stated, 'I could not hold communion with one half of the dissenters in England, as little as I can do with the whole members of this national church.'¹⁶² He went on, however, to make it clear he had no theoretical objection to receiving the Lord's Supper standing, sitting or kneeling and that he could administer baptism either by immersion or sprinkling, and with regards to baptism 'he would not chose the former mode (immersion)...because it may offend some weak brethren.'¹⁶³

Potts would later charge the Edinburgh Presbytery with unworthy conduct as he had made it clear to them, prior to his ordination, that it was his view that there was nothing inappropriate in joining in ministerial and Christian communion with persons belonging to a different denomination than the Secession, and that he had done so when the Synod had sent him to England.¹⁶⁴ Rather pointedly Potts asked: 'Whether or not 'tis reasonable and religious to seclude one out of their communion because he declares he could have communion with some other ministers of Christ and Christians in other churches of Christ, beside these called Seceders? If you determine this question in the affirmative, may I then humbly crave of you, that you strengthen your resolution by clear texts of Scripture.'¹⁶⁵ In addition to his views on mixed communion, Mackelvie records that he 'had declared himself in favour of Independent views of Church government.'¹⁶⁶

By now John Potts had clearly had his fill with Secession Church discipline. In addition to his suspension by the Burghers, the Anti-Burgher Synod had deposed him a few weeks earlier for deserting them and proving faithless to the *Act and Testimony*. He was now done with both sections of the Secession, and went back to London, a city to which he had become closely attached from his years there as a probationer. Before he went to London, he published in Edinburgh his pamphlet, *Seceding Presbyterianism Delineated*, in which he outlines his case against the Seceders and apologises for having associated himself with them by saying:

162. Potts, *Seceding Presbyterianism Delineated*, p. xiii.

163. *ibid.*, pp. 18-19.

164. *ibid.*, p. 4.

165. Potts, *Seceding Presbyterianism Delineated*, p. 27.

166. Mackelvie, *Annals and Statistics of the United Presbyterian Church*, p. 391.

‘It was at an age so immature that he could not be esteemed a judge either of men or things.’¹⁶⁷

Minister of the Congregational Church at Crispin Street

John Potts became the minister of the Crispin Street congregation sometime towards the end of 1754. The Crispin Street congregation, like that of John Rogers at Collier’s Rents, practised mixed communion, both Baptists and Paedobaptists being received into membership. John Brine, the Baptist High Calvinist and close friend of John Gill, preached at Crispin Street in December of 1751, the year that Bentley died. His sermon, in which he expounded 2 Tim. 1:9, was published at the request of the congregation, and Brine addressed the sermon ‘To the Church assembling at Crispin Street, beloved brethren in our common Lord.’¹⁶⁸

Another preacher at Crispin Street after Bentley’s death, and before Potts became the minister, was Samuel Pike (1717-1773). He was the tutor in a Dissenting Academy at Hoxton Square and in order to provide funds for its maintenance an occasional public collection was taken. One of the sermons, after which a collection was made, was delivered by Pike at ‘Mr. Bentley’s meeting house, Crispin Street, February 8. 1753.’¹⁶⁹ Pike at that time was a well respected congregational minister at Three Cranes Meeting House in Fruiterers’ Alley; he was also a lecturer at Merchants’ Hall. In later life, after entering into correspondence with Robert Sandeman, he embraced the distinctive views of John Glas and Sandeman. This change of view eventually led to his resignation from Three Cranes Church, and to his removal from the Board of the London Congregational Ministers in 1766 as ‘not a proper person to be continued on our list.’¹⁷⁰ He then became a member of a Sandemanian Church in London and was chosen as an elder. Pike was subsequently called to be the minister of a Sandemanian Congregation at Trowbridge in Wiltshire.¹⁷¹

167. Potts, *Seceding Presbyterianism Delineated*, p. v.

168. John Brine, *The Causes of Salvation and Vocation Considered* (London, 1752).

169. Wilson, *Dissenting Churches*, Vol. 2, p. 86.

170. *TCHS*, Vol. 2:1 (1905), p. 60.

171. Samuel Pike along with Samuel Hayward (1718-1757) delivered a series of casuistical lectures at the meeting-house at Little St. Helens in 1754-1755. The result of their labours was a two-volume work on *Cases of Conscience* (London, 1755), the first of which was reprinted by the Publications Committee of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland in 1968. These volumes, along with his solidly Calvinistic *A Form of Sound Words, or a*

We do not know the exact date on which Potts became the minister at Crispin Street, or which ministers were involved in his induction, or whether it was undertaken by the congregation itself in a similar way to Bentley's induction. He had most probably become acquainted with the congregation whilst he was supplying the Burgher congregation in London and would very probably have heard Bentley, as one of the dissenting ministers on whose preaching he had attended, which had caused so much concern to the Seceders. The Crispin Street call to Potts proved to be far from straightforward. He was asked, whilst still in Kelso, by the office-bearers and several members of the Crispin Street congregation to supply the pulpit for nine or ten Lord's Days in the summer months of 1753.¹⁷² A male member who was associated with the deacons in asking Potts to preach at Crispin Street was a prominent Baptist. Regrettably, the man is not named in the literature and he is referred to as Mr. R....d R.....s or more generally as RR; he seems to have had a rather authoritarian disposition.¹⁷³

A difficulty arose during the summer of 1753 when RR asked Potts to his house in order to counsel his son. This counselling was to be conducted in the presence of both the father and a few friends. RR regarded his son as having deviated from some of the fundamental doctrines of the gospel. In concluding the conference, RR asked Potts for his view of the young man. Potts responded by saying that on the whole he entertained some hopeful thoughts of him and recommended to the father 'a more mild and paternal way of treating him, as more likely to attract, and of a more persuasive nature than the manner which your son complained you treated him with, when you talked with him on subjects of this kind.'¹⁷⁴ RR was

Body of Divinity, based on the Shorter Catechism, were published before Pike's theological position changed. For biographical details of Pike, see *DNB*; *ODNB*; Wilson, *Dissenting Churches*, Vol. 2, pp. 85-99. The *DNB* account is by Alexander Gordon.

172. *Testimony to the truth as it is in Jesus: or a Declaration of the Faith and Practice of the Church of Christ under the pastoral care of Mr. Thomas Craner* (hereafter cited as *Testimony to the Truth*) (London, 1757), p. 21. There is a sermon by Potts preached at Crispin Street on 15th July 1753 in a book of his sermons. See John Potts, *Twenty Sermons on various and important subjects preached upon several occasions in Crispin Street, London* (London, 1766), p. 17. Some of these sermons were, therefore, preached by Potts whilst he was pulpit supply before he became the minister of the congregation.

173. Philalethes, *Remarks on the Reasons offered by Mr. Craner's church for their separation from the Church lately under the pastoral care of Mr. William Bentley* (hereafter cited as *Remarks on the Reasons*) (London, 1759), p. 12.

174. Philalethes, *Remarks on the Reasons*, pp. 50-51.

incensed and from then on was determined that Potts would not become the minister at Crispin Street. He then secured the assistance of a Mr. Ho...w...h (or H) who was disgusted with the Crispin Street congregation for not choosing him as their pastor to succeed Bentley. Together they ran an effective campaign against Potts. They suggested his doctrine was not in keeping with the testimony raised at Crispin Street and sought to blacken his character. Amongst the issues they raised against Potts with the intention of blackening his character were the following: in his prayers he sometimes seemed to regard himself as unconverted; his sermons were too philosophical – which seems to mean that they disapproved of anything learned in his sermons; that he had kept some chairs that he had borrowed; and, very significantly, that he was an anti-constitutional man opposed to the Government. This was particularly damaging less than a decade after the second Jacobite uprising with Charles Edward Stuart living in Europe still desiring to invade England.¹⁷⁵

On 4th November 1753 a Church members' meeting was called with a view to extending a call to Potts. An office-bearer of the congregation¹⁷⁶ detailed the case for proceeding with a call, stressing how Potts' preaching during the summer months had been useful to them for their comfort and edification.¹⁷⁷ RR and H then detailed their case against Potts' being chosen as the pastor. In doing so, they were careful not to refer to any of the issues by which privately they had sought to put a question mark over his integrity. They focused rather on three issues:

- (i) Contrary to what the Crispin Street office-bearer had said, they stated that his ministry had not been a source of edification.
- (ii) It was not clear to them that he was of the same faith and judgment as the Crispin Street Church on various doctrines of the gospel.
- (iii) He had been educated in Presbyterian principles and for many years had adhered to them in practice. They thought, therefore, it would be hazardous to the constitution of their Church to choose him as their pastor merely on his statement that he now held to

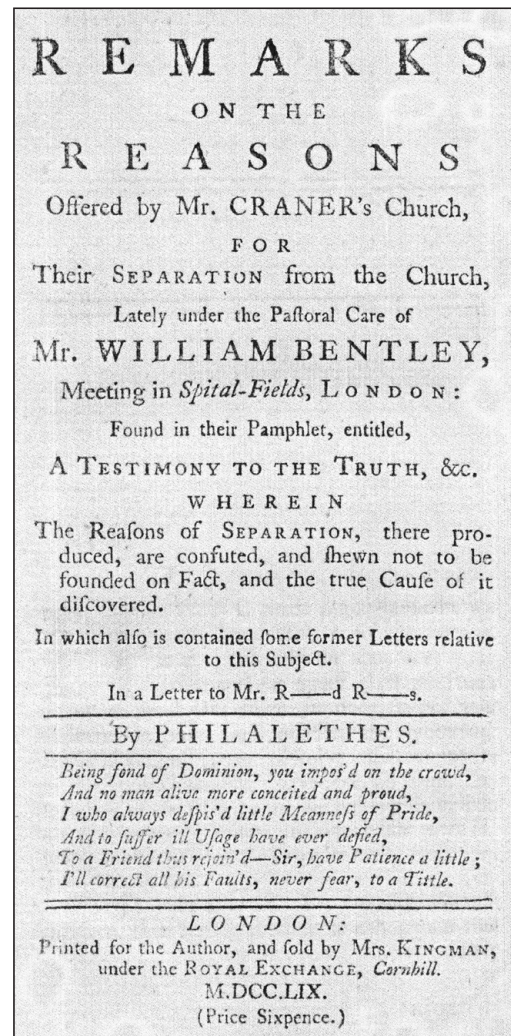
175. See Philalethes, *Remarks on the Reasons*, pp. 26-27, 46-47, 62-63.

176. It is again regrettable that this man is not named in the literature but is referred to as Mr. Sh...le or more generally as Mr. S. He played a major role in securing John Potts as the minister at Crispin Street. See Philalethes, *Remarks on the Reasons*, p. 12.

177. *Testimony to the Truth*, p. 22.

the Independent position
on Church polity.

What was meant by the assertion that there was doubt that Potts was of the same faith and judgment as the Crispin Street congregation is made clear by a letter written by one of his supporters, writing under the pseudonym of Philadelphus, to a person opposed to Potts. The letter was written little more than two months after the November 1753 meeting. Philadelphus writes: ‘You go on to acquaint us with your next objection (i.e. that Potts was not of the same faith and judgment): Mr. Potts never preached the doctrine of eternal union, nor of justification from all eternity.’¹⁷⁸ These were two High Calvinist doctrines espoused by Hussey and Bentley and by the doctrinal Antinomians like Tobias Crisp, John Saltmarsh, and Robert Towne. It seems clear, therefore, that those who opposed Potts were High Calvinists who, in addition to their personal objections, thought that a man trained in the Scottish Secession Church, with its commitment to Marrow Theology, would hold a significantly different doctrinal position from the one which they embraced.¹⁷⁹



*Title-page of a pamphlet supporting
John Potts with respect to the
Baptist secession.*

178. Philalethes, *Remarks on the Reasons*, p. 42. It should be noted that Philadelphus was a different person from Philalethes, the author of the tract.

179. The doctrine of eternal union as embraced by a number of eighteenth-century High Calvinists took several forms. At its most extreme, in those like Samuel Stockell who held not only to the pre-existence of the Saviour's human soul but also the pre-existence of the souls of men, the actual union of the elect to Christ was eternal and natural; the members are joined to the Head. For Stockell, the doctrine of the pre-existence of the soul was key; see Samuel Stockell, *The Redeemer's Glory Unveiled, or the Excellency of Christ Vindicated in the Antiquity of his Person as God-Man, before the world began* (London, 1733), pp. 268-289. Eternal union as held by John Gill was, however, far less extreme. Though, as in his

There were forty-two male members present at the meeting on 4th November 1753; of these twelve voted to proceed with a call to Potts and thirty for a motion put forward by his opposers 'to wait'. When the female members were added, the total voting figures were thirty-six to proceed with a call and fifty-one for waiting. The term 'waiting' in the successful motion was misunderstood. Those who were opposed to Potts meant by the term that they should wait until a more suitable person could be found. Others viewed it as meaning that the decision should be delayed until a later date. Potts' supporters were unwilling to accept this result as only eighty-seven members were present at the meeting out of a total membership of over a hundred and ten. They waited almost five months, during which time they rallied their forces. A second members-meeting was called for 31st March 1754 when the motions to be voted on were either to set aside the earlier decision or to affirm it. This time the voting was sixty-seven to set aside the former decision and forty-seven to affirm it.¹⁸⁰ This resulted in a call being extended to Potts to become the pastor. A few weeks later RR, along with twenty-six other brethren who were opposed to Potts, wrote to him explaining, from their perspective, what had taken place in the hope that he would decline the call.¹⁸¹ Doubtless, all this caused John Potts a measure of concern as it was a further three months before he intimated his acceptance. A letter from him indicating his willingness to become their pastor was read to the congregation on 25th August 1754.

Before Potts could be inducted as successor to Bentley, those who were opposed to him, who appear to have been largely Baptists, seceded

doctrine of eternal justification and eternal adoption, he differs significantly from the position detailed in the Westminster Confession, his view of eternal union was not based on the erroneous idea of the pre-existence of the soul. Gill does, however, go beyond the doctrine of election in Christ and the believer's federal union and speaks of an eternal conjugal union between Christ and the elect. See John Gill, *A Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity* (The Baptist Standard-Bearer, Arkansas, 1989), pp. 198-201. See also Toon, *Emergence of Hyper-Calvinism*, p. 110. Philalethes, who was a supporter of Potts, seems to imply that Potts held the doctrine of eternal justification. See *Remarks on the Reasons*, p. 21. This is incorrect: Potts rejected the doctrine of eternal justification. See John Potts, *The Preacher's Plan: Or, Jonah's Commission Opened: in a Course of Sermons Delivered at Crispin-Street, Spitalfields, London, Upon These Words: Jonah 1:2 'Arise, Go unto Nineveh that Great City, and Preach unto it the Preaching that I Bid Thee'* (London, 1758), pp. 333-340.

180. *Testimony to the Truth*, pp. 24, 28; Philalethes, *Remarks on the Reasons*, p. 67.

181. The letter written to Potts which is dated 20th April 1754 is included in *Testimony to the Truth*, pp. 32-37.

and formed a separate congregation. The separation took place on 20th October 1754 when a letter signed by thirty-nine persons desiring a peaceable dismissal was sent to the office-bearers of the Crispin Street congregation. The letter stated: ‘As we understand you intend to settle Mr. Potts as pastor over you, whom we cannot in conscience approve of for our pastor, for many reasons we forbear to mention, except that his ministry was not made useful to us. We, therefore, for the above mentioned reasons, cannot continue our fellowship with you in a particular church state any longer, but, being willing to depart peaceably and orderly, we desire your consent to form ourselves into a separate Church state.’¹⁸² As Potts had not been inducted at the time the letter was written in October 1754, it seems clear, therefore, that it was not until November 1754, at the earliest, that he became the minister at Crispin Street.

Baptist secession from Crispin Street

The seceders from Crispin Street took a lease of the meeting-house in Jewin Street.¹⁸³ Two years later, in October 1756,¹⁸⁴ Thomas Craner was ordained as pastor of the seceding Baptist society in the presence of John Gill and several other ministers. Craner had previously been the minister of the Old Meeting Baptist Church at Blunham in Bedfordshire.¹⁸⁵ Walter Wilson has provided the circumstances that caused Craner to

182. *Testimony to the Truth*, p. 38.

183. ‘The street derived its name from the part of the town in which it was situated, having been originally called the Jews’ Garden, because in former times it was the only burial place allowed them in England.’ Ivimey, *History of the English Baptists*, Vol. 4, p. 240.

184. There is an error on the title page of 1781 edition of *A Testimony to the Truth as it is in Jesus: or a Declaration of the Faith and Practice of the Church of Christ under the pastoral care of Mr. Thomas Craner meeting at Jewin Street* (London). It states that Craner was ordained at Jewin Street on 21st October 1759. The earlier, and larger, 1757 edition correctly states the date of ordination to be 1756.

185. The Old Meeting at Blunham was started by the mixed-communion Bunyan Meeting in Bedford. It was formed into a separate congregation in June 1724. Craner became the pastor in 1739 and, during his ministry, took an active part in registering buildings for dissenting worship; see Edwin Welch, *Bedfordshire Chapels and Meeting Houses, Official Registration, 1672-1901* (Bedfordshire Historical Record Society, 1996), pp. 26, 45, 142. For the history of the Old Meeting at Blunham, see H. G. Tibbutt, *The Old Meeting, Blunham* (Blunham, 1951); *The Old Meeting Baptist Church, Blunham: Church Book, 1724-1891* (Bedfordshire County Record Office, 1976); George E. Page, ‘Baptist Churches in the Bedford Area’, *Baptist Quarterly*, Vol. 14:6 (April 1952), pp. 276-278.

leave Blunham and become the minister to those who had seceded from Crispin Street:

This gentleman had been settled some time with a Baptist congregation somewhere in the county of Bedford; and left his people on account of some errors which they had given into, and from which he could not reclaim them. We have been told that when he happened to touch upon any doctrines in the pulpit which was disagreeable to his hearers, they would manifest their displeasure by stamping with their feet. As Mr. Craner did not relish this sort of harmony, he, upon one of these occasions, singled out an old man who was particularly active, and threatened, that in case he did not desist, he would descend from the pulpit and lead him by the nose out of the meeting-house. This salutary threatening had, for that time, the desired effect. But his situation still continued unpleasant, and he was glad of the opportunity to remove.¹⁸⁶

At the time of Craner's ordination as minister to the Jewin Street seceders, a twenty-four-point *Testimony* along with a Church Covenant was drawn up, either by him or jointly with the congregation. The doctrinal testimony reflects the High Calvinism of Hussey, Bentley, Samuel Stockell, and Lewis Wayman, and in some points that of Gill and Brine, and very probably that of many in the Crispin Street congregation from which they separated. Point 4 of the *Testimony* leaves room for asserting the pre-existence of Christ's human soul and its union to his Divine person before the incarnation. Point 6 asserts a Supralapsarian view of election. Point 15 teaches that the elect were justified before the foundation of the world.¹⁸⁷ The ecclesiastical position of the group was

186. Wilson, *Dissenting Churches*, Vol. 3, pp. 320-321. Joseph Ivimey has added the following anecdote regarding Craner's move to London in consequence of his disapproval of the behaviour of some at the Blunham Old Meeting: 'Mr. Craner, soon after the event mentioned, received an invitation to settle with the people who had separated from Crispin Street. It was on this occasion, it is supposed, that a circumstance, to which a humorous anecdote alludes, is published in the *Baptist Magazine*, Vol. 1. p. 493. Mr. Craner being in company with Mr. Clayton, the Baptist minister of Stivington, in Bedfordshire, the conversation turned upon Mr. Craner being about to remove to London. "Brother Clayton," says Mr. Craner, "I see my call exceedingly clear to leave Blunham, and to go to London." Mr. Clayton replied, "Ah, brother, London is a fine place, and as it is to go there, you can hear mighty quick; but if God had called you to go to poor Cranfield, he might have called long enough, I fear, before you would have heard him.'" Ivimey, *History of the English Baptists*, Vol. 4, pp. 240-241.

187. *A Testimony to the Truth*, pp. 2-4, 10.

congregational; whilst on subject of baptism, though the majority were Baptists, they left the matter an open question – the *Testimony* at point 20 reading as follows:

We believe, that water baptism is an ordinance of Jesus Christ, and to be attended to and regarded by all the followers of the Lamb; but as we are differently minded, both in respect to the subjects and the mode, we believe it is our duty to leave each other to proceed therein, as we shall judge most agreeable to the mind of Christ, as far as it is made known unto us, being satisfied that whereto we have attained, we ought to walk by the same rule, minding of the same thing.¹⁸⁸

William Thomas Whitley asserts that the choice of Potts, who was a Presbyterian, was the cause of the Baptist secession. This gives the impression that the reason for the secession from Crispin Street was over the administration of baptism.¹⁸⁹ As we have seen, this was not the case as both congregations practised mixed communion. It is true to say, however, that whilst Crispin Street was an Independent congregation that practised mixed communion, the Jewin Street congregation was a Baptist congregation which practised mixed communion.¹⁹⁰ The reasons for the secession were more complex and included personal animosity and an understandable fear that an ex-Scottish-Secession minister would not embrace the distinctive tenets of High Calvinism.

188. *A Testimony to the Truth*, p. 13. Whilst the Church Covenant makes clear that their preference was for the baptism of believers by immersion, the matter was left open. See *A Testimony to the Truth*, p. 19.

189. See Whitley, *The Baptists of London*, p. 131.

190. In March 1762 Thomas Craner became a member of the Baptist Board. This was an organisation of Particular (Calvinistic) Baptist Ministers set up in 1723 just after the Salters' Hall decision not to require a creedal commitment among Nonconformists. Whilst Particular Baptists were practically unanimous in favour of creedal commitment, the General (Arminian) Baptists were solidly against. By 1760 members of churches connected to the Baptist Board were not allowed to participate in communion with paedobaptists or transfer membership to mixed-communion churches. An exception was made to this rule when Craner and the Red Cross Street congregation were admitted. However, from a minute five months later, it is clear his admittance had not met with general approval. It was then agreed that 'no person shall be introduced into meetings of the Society, who is known to be disagreeable to any one member of it.' See Ivimey, *History of the English Baptists*, Vol. 4, p. 241; R. Philip Roberts, *Continuity and Change: London Calvinistic Baptists and the Evangelical Revival* (Wheaton, Illinois, 1989), p. 185; Arthur J. Payne, 'The Baptist Board', *Baptist Quarterly*, Vol. 1:7 (July 1923), pp. 321-326.

In 1760, little more than a year after being settled at Jewin Street, Craner moved his congregation to a meeting-house on Red Cross Street. The move is interesting as it throws further light on the doctrinal stance of Craner and the Crispin Street seceders. The Independent congregation that had been meeting at Red Cross Street was started by Samuel Stockell who had originally been a member at Petticoat Lane when Joseph Hussey was the minister. Stockell had embraced the central tenets of his minister's theology – eternal justification, no offers of grace, and the existence of Christ's human soul from the making of the Covenant of Redemption. He died in 1750 and was succeeded, after a four-year vacancy, by John Griffith who, after a serious disagreement with his principal deacon, was excluded from the Red Cross Street pulpit in 1758. The next minister, William Tolley, who according to Walter Wilson was a High Calvinist and an Antinomian seems to have had a moral lapse and was dismissed by the congregation.¹⁹¹ After this the congregation largely dispersed and the Red Cross Street building became vacant and was taken over by Craner and the Crispin Street seceders who absorbed those that remained from Stockell's old congregation. R. Philip Roberts has accurately described the character of the Red Cross Street congregation under Craner after 1760.

Red Cross Street was formed by a group of dissidents who had split off from the Crispin Street Independent Church in 1754, after that congregation had invited a Presbyterian to become pastor, and by a group of High Calvinists from the Independent Church in Red Cross Street. High Calvinism, not the desire to maintain traditional denominational and ecclesiological distinctives in the wake of renewed evangelicalism, seemed to have fused these two groups together.¹⁹²

Thomas Craner remained the minister of the congregation until his death at the age of fifty-seven in March 1773.¹⁹³

191. Wilson, *Dissenting Churches*, Vol. 3, p. 320. William Tolley afterwards became a Sandemanian.

192. Roberts, *Continuity and Change*, pp. 102-103. It should be noted that the 1760s was a period when the effects of the evangelical revival under Whitefield and the Wesleys were being felt by the Old Dissenting congregations which were being reinvigorated. However, Geoffrey Nuttall has pointed out that 'these Evangelical Dissenters were confronted...by others determined to stand by High Calvinism, ready to meet liberalism and reduction with conservatism or exaggeration'; see 'Calvinism in Free Church History', *Baptist Quarterly*, Vol. 22:8 (October 1968), p. 421.

193. Wilson describes Craner as a 'man of respectable character; but a drawling inanimate preacher, and very high in his notions upon some doctrinal points.' Wilson, *Dissenting*

The death of Humphrey Potts

William Mackelvie in his *Annals and Statistics of the United Presbyterian Church* states regarding Potts that ‘he removed to London, and became the minister of a Congregational church there, in which capacity he died some time after.’¹⁹⁴ Robert Small, the other main historian of the Secession congregations, writing later and perceiving some inaccuracy in Mackelvie observes, ‘In London Mr Potts became minister of the Congregational Church, Crispin Street, Spitalfields. It has been stated that he died early, but in 1760 a London periodical had a paragraph about a boy of nine or ten years, a son of Mr Potts, a Dissenting minister, having been killed by the sudden fall of two houses in a particular street, and also states that the father was quite near him when the disaster happened. In the *Bunhill Memorials* we also find that Mr John Potts of Crispin Street, Spitalfields, preached at the ordination of a Baptist minister in Essex in 1764, so that he must have survived his brief stay at Kelso at least eleven years.’¹⁹⁵ Potts lived much longer than this; his death did not occur until 20th June 1792. The thought that Potts had an early death is possibly due to the confusing of his death with that of his son, Humphrey.

The reference of Robert Small to the death of Potts’ son is rather poignant. On Sabbath 22nd June 1760 Potts preached at Crispin Street from Amos 3:6, ‘Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?’. The following day, he was walking with his only child, eight-year-old Humphrey Potts, when a house collapsed and killed the boy. The following Sabbath Potts preached again from the same text. In his concluding application, Potts applied the text to the Christless at Crispin Street:

Are there any of you here though you are not childless, yet, alas you are Christless. You seem to bewail my loss of a dead child. Your condolence I cannot but accept as a feeling token of your affection for, and sympathy with me, as a parent, a man, and a minister, and, in return for these tears you are bathed in upon this sad occasion, suffer me, in the bowels of Christ,

Churches, Vol. 3, p. 321. A list of Craner’s published sermons is in Ivimey, *History of the English Baptists*, Vol. 4, p. 242, one of them being preached on the occasion of John Gill’s death. The text was 2 Samuel 3:38, ‘And the king said unto his servants, know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel’. The discourse was entitled *A Grain of Gratitude: A sermon occasioned by the death of...John Gill* (London, 1771).

194. Mackelvie, *Annals and Statistics of the United Presbyterian Church*, p. 391.

195. Small, *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church*, Vol. 2, p. 263. The reference to Potts is on p. 77 of J. A. Jones (ed.), *Bunhill Memorials: Sacred Reminiscences of Three Hundred Ministers* (London, 1849).

and with the yearning bowels of a man, you now behold, as you may never see another standing and speaking to you in my circumstances; I pray, permit me then to express my concern for you. I am afraid there are some mourning more over the loss of dead friends, children and relatives, than they lament over their dead hearts. Shall we bewail the loss of a child, more than the loss of the light of God's face? I weep not this day so much for him, as for you and my own sin. My dear Friends, I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy.¹⁹⁶

Potts then stressed to his congregation the importance of private and family worship both for their own good and the spiritual good of their families, and his own omission of the duty on the day his son was killed:

My friends, is the morning and evening oblation and sacrifice of prayer and praise offered up in your families, or not? Is there praying with them, and for them, or a neglect of this ordinance? Hence, expect if so, you and the heathen will fare alike, for God will pour out his fury upon the heathen, and all the families of the earth, that call not upon his Name, Jeremiah 10:25. I will tell you something, my dear friends, for your good; that though I had been upon my knees in my chamber that morning of the day when God visited me, and likewise my dear child, before he went out with me that Morning, went up stairs to his chamber, fell on his knees, and prayed. But to my grief and my wounding, I omitted the worship of God in my family that morning of the day which had so mournful an evening. I say this, my Friends, for the good of your souls, and the souls of your families, your children, your wives, your relations, and your servants. O! let God have morning and evening prayer in your families. Look at me, and take admonition; if not, from this day forth I will be a witness against you, whoever you are, when trouble from the Lord comes upon you and yours. O! let not one of us be Christians praying and praising only in the Church, but we beseech you, in the bowels of Christ, in the bowels of compassion for your children and servants, that you be Christians in your own houses. O! sit loose to the World.¹⁹⁷

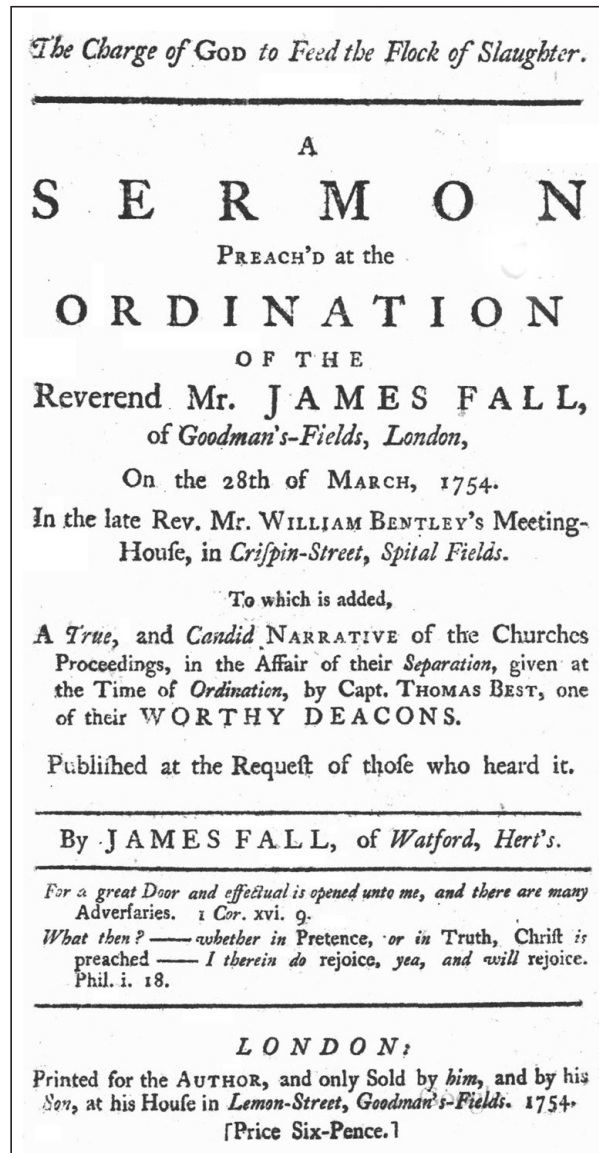
He then touchingly explained the exercises of young Humphrey Potts on the day before his death:

I am come to improve this providence to young people. The old, they must die; but it may be, you young men, and young women, you young children, you may die before the old, as mine hath done at the age of eight years only.

196. Potts, *Twenty Sermons*, pp. 394-395.

197. Potts, *Twenty Sermons*, p. 396.

Death was mostly his daily talk, how he dreaded it. I shall never forget the manner in which he told me one night before his death, when sitting upon my knee, he looked up at me with tears, and expressed himself thus, ‘O! Death will come! Death will come!’ and yet but a few days before his death, he often told his mother, that he wished to die, and go to heaven, that he might sing the songs thereof. He delighted much in reading the Bible, and some other religious books, particularly one lately published, of *A Young Child’s Practice*, of which he was wont to tell me, after he had been reading of it, ‘O! I like the reading of this book, or that reading.’ His mother and I could not help observing, with what uncommon advantages he read the third chapter of Proverbs that morning, before he went out with me, and with what a particular emphasis he uttered these words, in the same Chapter, verses 11 and 12, as if he had been preaching to his parents, how they should carry themselves under the calamity coming upon them, ‘My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord, neither be weary of his correction: For whom the Lord loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.’¹⁹⁸



*Title-page of the ordination sermon of
James Fall, preached at Crispin Street.*

198. Potts, *Twenty Sermons*, p. 397. Both Potts' sermons on Amos 3:6 are in his *Twenty Sermons*, pp. 347-400. Appended to the two sermons, on pp. 401-409, are a number of letters sent to John Potts and his wife following the death of their child.

John Potts amongst the English High Calvinists

Potts seems to have been well received by the circle of High Calvinists in London of which the Crispin Street congregation had been a part. He was called upon to officiate at funerals and inductions.

(i) James Fall's ordination at Crispin Street and then his death

A year after Potts arrived in London, an ordination service was held at Crispin Street church for James Fall at which his father, James Fall, sen.,



John Gill (1697-1771), the High Calvinist minister at whose Church James Fall was a member.

a Baptist minister in Watford, was the preacher. James Fall had previously been called to be a preacher of the Gospel by John Gill's church of which he was a member.¹⁹⁹ Following the death of Samuel Wilson,²⁰⁰ the minister of the Baptist church at Little Prescot Street, Goodman's Fields, London, at the age of forty-eight, the congregation had considerable difficulty in achieving harmony in order to call a suitable successor. Wilson was very highly regarded and during his twenty-six-year ministry the church had increased in numbers and in usefulness. After Wilson's death there was a vacancy of upwards of four years. Joseph Ivimey,

the Baptist historian, observed regarding the period in which the Prescot Street congregation was without a minister: 'It was difficult to find a

199. Ivimey, *History of the English Baptists*, Vol. 3, p. 555.

200. Samuel Wilson (1702-1750) was descended from godly Protestant dissenting ministers on both his father's and mother's side. He studied under Thomas Ridgeley and John Eames. He was a close friend of, and co-worker with, John Gill. He and Gill were the Baptist representatives among the Lime Street lecturers. Wilson gave two lectures on efficacious grace. During his ministry, the congregation sent out nine men into the ministry, one of whom was Benjamin Beddome who became the Baptist pastor at Bourton-upon-the-Water. His funeral oration was delivered at Bunhill Fields by Samuel Stennett, and Gill preached a sermon on the occasion of his death from Acts 20:38, 'Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more.' For biographical details, see Ivimey, *History of the English Baptists*, Vol. 3, pp. 542-555; *The Baptist Magazine*, Vol. 11 (1819), pp. 140-145; Jones, *Bunhill Memorials*, pp. 380-382; A. W. Light, *Bunhill Fields* (2 vols., London, 1933), Vol. 2, pp. 75-85.

suitable pastor, as it is often in our churches, especially after the decease or removal of a minister who has been greatly esteemed.²⁰¹ Four men were approached but all either refused the invitation to the pastorate or else there was a lack of harmony to proceed with a call.

At this stage James Fall, jun. was invited to preach among them for six months as a probationer for the pastoral office. It was proposed, at a church meeting, that the sense of the church should be taken, whether Fall should be called to the pastoral office. The result of the voting was sixty-one in favour of calling him and fifty-seven against. Four men were then appointed to speak to Fall and ask him if he would accept the office. Understandably, due to the lack of unanimity, he desired some time to consider before he could give his reply. The next Sabbath, when this answer was reported, it was proposed that Fall should continue to preach until he had given his reply. At this stage one of the deacons said ‘that he never should preach again in that pulpit’, and another said ‘that as the people had chosen Mr. Fall, they might take him and keep him, but the place was theirs’, adding that ‘he hoped the Lord would bless them.’²⁰²

Though there was a small majority for calling James Fall, the minority who were against him included most of the deacons and the trustees of the church property, and they refused to surrender the building to majority. Accordingly, rather than take the matter to the civil courts as some had encouraged them to do, the majority surrendered their rights and began a new work and built a meeting-house on Little Allie Street. James Fall’s supporters sought the help of John Gill and his church, now at Carter Lane, but this was declined until their difference with those at Prescott Street had been resolved. In addition, the ministers connected with the Baptist Board refused to assist in Fall’s ordination which was arranged for 28th March 1754. Ivimey, reflecting on the virtual expulsion of the supporters of James Fall, observes: ‘The writer feels persuaded that the apostle James

201. Ivimey, *History of the English Baptists*, Vol. 3, pp. 553-554.

202. A full account of the proceedings at Prescott Street and of the formation of the Little Allie Street congregation was given by Captain Thomas Best at the ordination of James Fall. Best, who was among the majority that seceded, had been a deacon at Prescott Street. The account is given in James Fall, sen., *A Sermon preached at the ordination of James Fall on 28 March 1754, in the late Rev. William Bentley’s Meeting House, in Crispin Street, Spitalfields. To which is added, A true and candid narrative of the churches proceedings, in the affair of the separation, given at the time of ordination, by Capt. Thomas Best, one of their worthy deacons* (London, 1754), pp. 23-28. Ivimey uses Captain Best as his source in Ivimey, *History of the English Baptists*, Vol. 3, p. 542-563.

would have included such a circumstance in his cutting censure, – My brethren these things ought not to be.²⁰³ As the new building had not been completed, John Potts and the Crispin Street Church were asked if they could use their premises for the ordination. This was readily agreed and James Fall, sen. along with Amos Harrison of Croydon²⁰⁴ ordained the younger Fall to the Little Allie Street pastorate. James Fall's pastorate would, however, be very short: in little over two years, the twenty-nine-year old was dead and John Potts of Crispin Street was called on to preach his funeral sermon. He chose as his text the one on which Fall had himself preached in his last sermon before his death, 'I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God' (Jn 20:17). Though John Gill had not stood by him in his troubles, the younger James Fall remained one of his disciples and had embraced his theological distinctives.²⁰⁵

(ii) *The ordination of Joseph Gwennap*

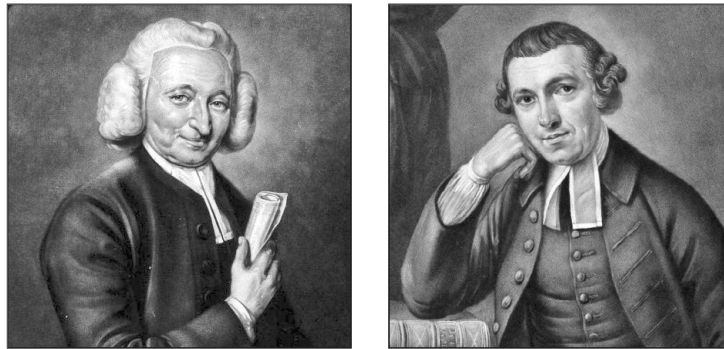
Potts was asked a decade later to take the leading part in the ordination of a minister to an Independent church at Saffron Walden in Essex. The man

203. Ivimey, *History of the English Baptists*, Vol. 3, p. 563.

204. Amos Harrison was the first minister of what is now Tamworth Road Strict Baptist Chapel, Croydon. He licensed his house in 1721 for 'worship by Baptists'. He was minister from 1729 to 1761. Harrison, along with several others, was a defendant in a case decided by the Lord Chancellor regarding the non-payment of tithes to the Established Church. For Harrison and his church, see Ralph F. Chambers, *The Strict Baptist Chapels of England: Vol. 1, The Chapels of Surrey and Hampshire* (Thornton Heath, 1952), pp. 5-11; F. C. Farncombe, MS. 'History of Tamworth Road Strict Baptist Chapel, Croydon', (2001). For the law case, see D. W. Garrow, *The History and Antiquities of Croydon* (London, 1818), pp. 314-324.

205. James Fall, sen. reflects on the lack of support from Gill in the introduction to his published sermon. He writes, 'Neither could I think it my duty to desert my son, because he was distressed, and deserted by others, who should be valiant for the truth upon the earth: whose cowardice in an affair of such importance, as religious liberty, is worthy of lasting reproach.' James Fall, sen., *A Sermon preached at the ordination of James Fall*, p. iv. This lack of support for his son does not seem to have led to estrangement between James Fall, sen. and John Gill as the Carter Lane minister preached funeral sermons on both his death and that of his wife Mary. George Ella says that Fall, jun. was converted under Gill's ministry and became a useful 'Gillite' preacher. See George Ella, *John Gill and the Cause of God and Truth* (Eggleston, 1995), p. 258. At the time that Ivimey wrote his account of the congregation (1822) he mentions that the current minister of the congregation was William Shenstone. A summary of an informative manuscript letter by Shenstone that deals with James Fall's ordination, the refusal of help from the Baptist Board, and the origin of Little Allie Street, is contained in F. G. Hastings, 'Calendar of Letters, 1742-1831', *Baptist Quarterly*, Vol. 7:4 (October 1934), pp. 180-181.

to be ordained was Joseph Gwennap (1730-1813) who was a nephew of the prominent Baptist minister Andrew Gifford.²⁰⁶ He was born in Falmouth and after a remarkable conversion experience in a cave on the Cornwall coast²⁰⁷ he became a member of his uncle's church on Eagle Street, in London. In accordance with Baptist practice, where congregations set



Andrew Gifford (left) and his nephew Joseph Gwennap.

apart men for the ministry, Gwennap was set apart as a supply-preacher and deputed at Eagle Street when his uncle was away. Due to Gifford's connections with Saffron Walden, Gwennap became a supply-preacher at an Independent church in the town and was eventually called to be the minister in 1763.

206. Andrew Gifford (1700-1784) was a Baptist minister and a numismatist (coin collector). Both his father and grandfather were Baptist ministers. His second marriage brought him a fortune of £6,000. In January 1730, Gifford became Baptist minister at Little Wild Street, London, where, five years later, a member of the congregation accused him of sodomy in his youth; the charge was never proved, but it led to his ostracism by other London Baptists. In February 1736, Gifford, with many former Little Wild Street members, formed a new congregation in Eagle Street. He was awarded a D.D. in 1754 by Marischal College, Aberdeen. Gifford had a great knowledge of coins and his own collection was purchased by George II for his private cabinet. He was a fellow of the Society of Antiquaries and an assistant librarian in the British Museum. In 1780 Gifford gave £100 to the Bristol Education Society to erect a museum to house his valuable collection of Bibles, books, manuscripts, pictures, and curiosities, given to the Bristol Baptist College in his will. Among the Bibles was a complete first edition (1526) of William Tyndale's New Testament, which in 1994 was purchased from Bristol Baptist College by the British Library. Gifford edited a book of *Eighteen Sermons* by George Whitfield, published in 1771. He died on 19th June 1784 and was buried in Bunhill Fields. For biographical details, see L. G. Champion, *Farthing Rushlight: The Story of Andrew Gifford*, (Carey Kingsgate Press, London, 1961); ODNB.

207. A letter from Gwennap to Gifford detailing his conversion is included in John Potts, *A sermon preached at the ordination of the Rev. Joseph Gwennap* (London, 1764), pp. 5-9. It was also printed in an article written by Gwennap's son, Thomas, in *The Evangelical Magazine*, new series, Vol. 22 (1844), pp. 55-56.

He was ordained on 29th June 1764 when Potts was both the preacher and the one who conducted the day's proceedings. Following an introductory speech by Potts, a Saffron Walden office-bearer gave an account of their choosing Gwennap to be their minister and of his election and call by the congregation. Potts called upon the congregation to ratify what had been said by raising their hand. Gwennap then gave some account of his motives in his acceptance of the call in which he explained his delay in responding and made it quite clear that he differed from them respecting the mode of baptism. He went on to state that his acceptance of the call was based on the assurances they had given him that they would accept into Church-fellowship both Baptists and Paedobaptists. He then made a thirteen-point confession of faith which included an infralapsarian statement with regard to predestination and made clear his mixed-communion position by stating in article twelve: 'But in my conscience, I do not think it a bar to communion with believers of different persuasion; believing, that the Lord's Supper is designed for the strengthening of faith and hope of all his people, by which they show forth His death till He come.'²⁰⁸ Potts then preached a sermon from the words in Revelation 1:12-13, 'And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks, one like unto the Son of man.' Towards the end of the discourse Potts reflected on their views on toleration and revealed his own:

I do with pleasure acknowledge unto you, that your conduct as Christians, in your mutual forbearance with one another in point of the modes of baptism, affords me this day an auspicious prospect of the prosperous run the gospel may have amongst you, while you thus continue to forbear with one another in these things, which have so unhappily rent the Churches of Christ. We, particularly some of us, who are ministers, and nearly concerned in the work of this day, though it is our unanimous sentiment, namely, of my Reverend Father and dear Brother, as well as my own, that the imposition of hands is a Gospel rite; yet, that we might give you an example of our forbearance and tenderness towards you, who we understand, as a Church, are otherwise minded, we dispense therewith at present for your sakes.²⁰⁹

The proceedings were concluded by Andrew Gifford exhorting his nephew with respect to his duties as a minister of the Gospel from the text, 'Take

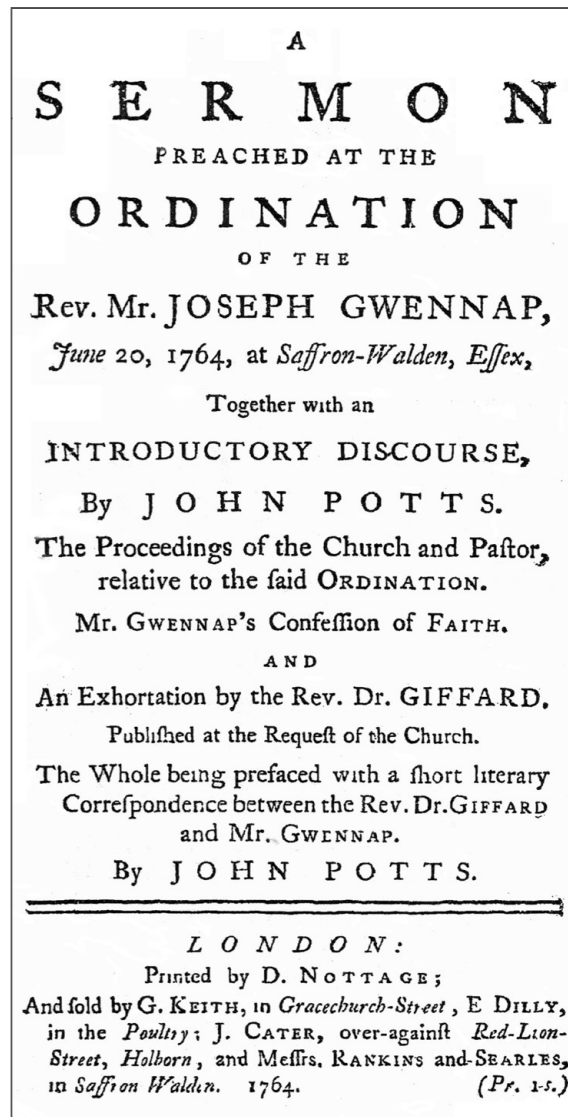
208. Potts, *A sermon preached at the ordination of the Rev. Joseph Gwennap*, p. 36.

209. Potts, *A sermon preached at the ordination of the Rev. Joseph Gwennap*, pp. 49-50.

heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine, continue in them: for in so doing thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee' (1 Tim. 4:16).

Gwennap's career proved to be a turbulent one. A high point for him was taking part in April 1767, along with Gifford and Robert Robinson,²¹⁰ in the public baptism of forty-eight people in the River Granta, at Whittlesford Mill. The Granta is a tributary of the River Cam. The baptisms were conducted before a vast crowd of fifteen hundred, with some looking on from trees and windows.²¹¹ Whilst Gwennap was in Saffron Walden, he was a close friend and coadjutor of John Berridge, the eccentric evangelical vicar of Everton in Bedfordshire. Rowland Hill used to tell the anecdote regarding Berridge that as Gwennap was a Nonconformist he could not ask him to preach from his pulpit. Accordingly, Berridge would announce in a stentorian voice, 'Mr Gwennap will preach upon my horseback this evening; I wish I could ask him to preach in the church.'²¹² More difficult times were swiftly to follow when Gwennap's marriage broke down, which resulted firstly in a separation and eventually in divorce. Divisions began to appear

in the congregation, partly as a result of distaste for his conduct with respect to his wife. The trustees of the Independent congregation, disturbed by these



*Title-page of the of John Potts' sermon
at Joseph Gwennap's ordination.*

210. Robert Robinson had led the Baptist separation from the Hog Hill Church in Cambridge after Joseph Hussey had become the minister at Crispin Street.

211. Ivimey, *History of the English Baptists*, Vol. 4, p. 451.

212. Edwin Sidney, *The Life of Rowland Hill* (3rd edn., London, 1835), p. 395.

divisions, after a vote, excluded Gwennap from using either the pulpit or the building. This resulted in the Baptists seceding, in 1774, to form the Upper Meeting Baptist Church in Saffron Walden where Gwennap remained the minister until 1783 when he moved to London to become the minister of Baptist congregation in Piccadilly. William Wilson describes the Piccadilly congregation in this way: ‘They were mostly Calvinists of the higher sort who left their churches because their pastors were not sufficiently instructed in what they called the mysteries of the gospel.’²¹³ His ministry proved very popular and he continued to preach there, with at first much apparent success, until 1798 when he embraced the views of Martin Madan²¹⁴ expressed in his two volume work *Thelyphthora*²¹⁵ in which he argued for the social benefits of polygamy. Madan was entreated by both the Countess of Huntingdon and Richard Hill not to allow the book to be published. Madan was, however, obdurate. He was also opposed by his cousin, William Cowper, and the main body of evangelicals.²¹⁶ Due to Gwennap adopting Madan’s views, he was

213. Wilson, *Dissenting Churches*, Vol. 4, p. 51.

214. Martin Madan (1725-1790) was educated at Westminster School and Christ Church, Oxford and was called to the bar at Inner Temple. His career took a dramatic turn when he went to hear John Wesley in order to caricature him. Wesley’s text was, ‘Prepare to meet thy God.’ Hearing Wesley preach resulted in Madan’s conversion and his entering the Anglican ministry. Through the influence of Lady Huntingdon and William Romaine, he was appointed to All Hallows, Lombard Street in 1750, but later moved to become chaplain to Lock Hospital, an institution that had opened in 1747 and specialized in treating sexually transmitted diseases. During the eighteenth century several evangelical clergymen held the position of chaplain, two of whom were Thomas Scott and Thomas Haweis. Madan was closely connected with the Calvinistic Methodist movement and was a first cousin of William Cowper. For biographical details, see *DNB*; *ODNB*; L. E. Elliott-Binns, *The Early Evangelicals: A religious and social study* (London, 1953), pp. 241-244; John Julian, *A Dictionary of Hymnology* (2 vols., New York, 1907), Vol. 1, pp. 709-710.

215. Martin Madan, *Thelyphthora: Or, A Treatise on Female Ruin, in Its Causes, Effects, Consequences, Prevention, and Remedy: Considered on the Basis of the Divine Law Under the Following Heads, Viz. Marriage, Whoredom, and Fornication, Adultery, Polygamy, Divorce* (2 vols., London, 1780). Arthur Pollard in *ODNB* says that the crux of Madan’s case was expressed in a single sentence, ‘Every man who has seduced a woman, whether with or without a promise of marriage, should be obliged to wed her publicly’ (*Thelyphthora*, Vol. 2, p. 67). His labours with prostitutes had led Madan to hold the view that Deuteronomy 22:29 taught that the seducer was to marry his victim even though he was already married. Madan thought that polygamy would assist in solving the problem of prostitution.

216. The *DNB* article on Martin Madan was written by Falconer Madan (1851-1935), the librarian at the Bodleian Library in Oxford, and it provides a complete list of the twenty-four works written in response to Madan’s *Thelyphthora*.

deserted by his congregation and the Piccadilly Church was dissolved. Ivimey says that he then joined the Moravians.²¹⁷ Joseph Gwennap died a wealthy man at Waltham, near Deptford, in 1813 aged 82 and was buried in Bunhill Fields.²¹⁸ From his London ministry it appears that Gwennap, like James Fall, was associated with High Calvinism.

London Board of Congregational Ministers

In the early years of the eighteenth century the Presbyterian, Congregational, and Baptist ministers residing in the cities of London and Westminster were accustomed, on special occasions, to address the reigning Sovereign on behalf of the three Nonconformist denominations. They also conferred with the Government on matters relating to the interest of their respective organisations.²¹⁹ In 1688 at the time of the Revolution, William Bates, on behalf of the three denominations presented an address of congratulation to William and Mary, by whom he and a number of Nonconformist ministers were received graciously. Similar addresses were made at the accession of both Queen Anne in 1702 and of the George I in 1714. Following the death of the first Hanoverian monarch in June 1727, a numerous meeting of Nonconformist ministers in the metropolis took place that led to a more formal arrangement being devised whereby the Nonconformists would be able both to address the monarch and to oversee the Dissenting interest. This was the formation on 11th July 1727 of the ‘General Body of Protestant Dissenting Ministers of the Three Denominations residing in and about the cities of London and Westminster’. No one was permitted to be a member of the General Body who was not approved by one of the three Nonconformist denominations, and in addition no one was eligible for membership who resided at a greater distance than ten miles from the metropolis. It was also agreed that a committee should be appointed to conduct the affairs of the General Body comprised of seven Presbyterian ministers and six ministers from both the Congregational and the Baptist denominations. This organisation, and particularly its committee, kept an unremitting watch over Bills brought into Parliament that in any way affected Dissenters. They

217. Ivimey, *History of the English Baptists*, Vol. 4, p. 337.

218. Jones, *Bunhill Memorials*, pp. 76-77.

219. In consequence of the dominance of London and its population in relation to the rest of the country, and its proximity to Government, the ministers in the metropolis acted on behalf of their entire denominations. For population statistics, see John Wolfe, *The Expansion of Evangelicalism* (IVP, Nottingham, 2006), pp. 22, 26.

also kept before the public mind, and before the Government, the desire of Dissenters for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts that required a person to take communion in the established Church of England in order to be eligible for public employment.

The need to maintain a list of Congregational ministers eligible to be members of the General Body, and to appoint the six ministers that would represent them on its committee, led to the formation in September 1727 of the London Board of Congregational Ministers.²²⁰ In addition to organising its relationship to the General Body of the three denominations, the stated purpose of the Congregational Board was ‘to take cognisance of everything affecting the interests of the denomination, and of religion in general.’²²¹ John Potts was proposed and admitted as a member of the Congregational Board on 6th October 1761 but not without the acceptance of his membership being subject to query. The minute of the Board details the initial objection to his acceptance:

October 6. 1761. Agreed, Messrs Brewer, Conder, Hitchin, Olding, & Stafford having proposed Mr. Potts to this body, that he be admitted a member of it, he having given full evidence that, his sentiments relating to the Toleration are satisfactory to this Board, & so removed the objection some of our Brethren had against him upon that head from a sentence in a Funeral Sermon preached for Mr. Fall.²²²

A passage in Potts’ sermon that he had preached after James Fall’s death had caused some Board members to query whether he held a view on religious toleration different from that commonly held by dissenters. The passage was as follows:

It is observed by Ammianus,²²³ an heathen writer, and a great friend to Julian, that, amongst other devices with which Julian used to root

220. For the history of the formation of the London Congregation Board, see Thomas James, ‘History of the Congregational Board’, in *The Congregational Year Book* (London, 1867), pp. 406-417. The minutes of the Board from 1727-1771 are in *TCHS*, Vol. 2 (1905-1906), pp. 50-60.

221. Albert Peel, *These Hundred Years: A History of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, 1831-1931* (London, 1932), p. 6.

222. *TCHS*, Vol. 2 (1905-1906), p. 59.

223. Ammianus Marcellinus (c. 325/330- c. 391/ 400) was a Roman soldier and historian who wrote the work known as the *Res Gestae* which chronicled in Latin the history of Rome from the accession of the Emperor Nerva in 96 to the death of Valens at the Battle of Adrianople in 378. Ammianus served as a soldier in the army of Constantius II and Julian in Gaul and Persia.

out Christianity, this was one, That he gave toleration, openly, to all the different professions that were amongst Christians, (which then, after the Council of Nice, were very many) and required no more of them, but that they should abstain from civil discords; and so, without fear, follow any religion they pleased. But God had indulged your late Pastor with light to discern the danger of that way, which Julian, that expert child of the devil, had invented for the destruction of all religion; namely, the toleration of all.²²⁴

Six years after his admission, Potts' behaviour, along with that of a Mr. Richardson, brought them into conflict with other Board members.²²⁵ The simple minute reads as follows:

October 17, 1766. Mr. Dalton admitted impropriety of the behaviour of Mr. Richardson & Mr. Potts as members of ye Board.

Six months later the two ministers, with some reservation, seem to have satisfied the other members of the London Congregational Board. The minute reads:

March 24, 1767. Mr. Phillips admitted. Messrs. Richardson & Potts, upon the whole, explained themselves to the satisfaction of the Board.²²⁶

What the improper behaviour of Potts and Richardson was that required them to explain themselves in order to remain on the Board cannot at this stage be determined. Given Potts' ecumenical approach to other churches, we could well believe it was in relation to his being involved with other denominations than his own.

John Potts' preaching at Crispin Street

Besides Potts' sermons preached on special occasions, and his pamphlets regarding the Seceders, he published two volumes of sermons that had been preached at Crispin Street. The first issued in 1758 was a series of sermons he had preached on Jonah 3:2, 'Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great

224. John Potts, *A Sermon occasioned by the death of the Rev. James Fall* (London, 1756), pp. 33-34.

225. Though we cannot be certain, this is very probably a reference to John Richardson, one of the successors of Robert Bragge at Paved Alley, Lime Street. He resigned his charge in 1755 and with part of his congregation was then the minister at a meeting-house in Artillery Street, which was very near Potts' church at Crispin Street. For John Richardson, see Wilson, *Dissenting Churches*, Vol. 1, p. 250.

226. *TCHS*, Vol. 2 (1905-1906), p. 60.

city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee'.²²⁷ In the front of the volume is a list of subscribers which includes the names of John Gill, Thomas Haweis, and George Whitefield – chaplain to the Honourable Countess of Huntingdon.

The second volume was published eight years later and was entitled *Twenty Sermons on various and important subjects preached upon several occasions in Crispin Street, London*. It is a substantial volume of four hundred and forty pages; seventeen of the twenty sermons are three short series of sermons. The first series of three sermons were some of the earliest he preached as minister of Crispin Street. They are on Genesis 22:14, 'And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah Jireh: as it is said to this day, in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen.'²²⁸ The second series of five sermons was on Ezekiel 16:63,²²⁹ whilst the third series of nine sermons are entitled 'The Marvels of the Month Abib' and are based on Exodus 12:2 and Deuteronomy 16:1, 'This month shall be unto you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you', and 'Observe the month Abib, and keep the Passover unto the Lord thy God: for in the month Abib the Lord thy God brought thee forth out of Egypt by night.'²³⁰ Two of the remaining three sermons are the ones preached on the Sabbath before and the Sabbath after the Monday on which his young son was killed. The final sermon was preached on the occasion of the death of Sarah Fisher, a forty-seven-year-old member of his congregation. Mrs Fisher as a young woman in her mid-twenties had written to Ralph Erskine. She had benefitted from his writings and had written to him seeking his advice as she lacked the sealing testimonies of the Lord's love. Erskine's letter, which he sent to her giving his advice, is printed before Potts' sermon.²³¹ Potts' *Twenty Sermons* was also a subscribers' edition, and in front of the volume is the list of subscribers. In the list are Andrew Gifford and Joseph Gwennap, who subscribed for fourteen copies, along a number of people from Saffron Walden. Interestingly, again one of subscribers is George Whitefield.

227. John Potts, *The Preacher's Plan: Or, Jonah's Commission Opened: in a Course of Sermons Delivered at Crispin-Street, Spitalfields, London, Upon These Words: Jonah 1:2 'Arise, Go Unto Nineveh that Great City, and Preach Unto it the Preaching that I Bid Thee'* (London, 1758).

228. Potts, *Twenty Sermons*, pp. 17-71.

229. *ibid.*, pp. 72-170.

230. *ibid.*, pp. 171-346.

231. *ibid.*, pp. 414-418.

Resignation

It is not clear how long John Potts was the minister at Crispin Street or what were the circumstances that led to his resignation. Potts lived until 20th June 1792 – five years into John Love’s ministry at Crispin Street. The *Surman Index of Congregational ministers* at the Dr William’s Library in London states that his ministry ended in 1764. This cannot, however, be accurate as his name appears in a list compiled by Josiah Thompson – a retired Baptist minister in London – surveying English Nonconformity in 1773, where Potts is named as the minister of ‘Crispin Street, Spittle Fields’.²³² When after that date he resigned, or retired, we do not know. It seems probable there was a vacancy of a decade after his ministry ended. If that assumption is correct, it would put the date when his ministry ended as very little after 1773. Unlike the man who would eventually succeed him, his name does not appear in the published edition of John Love’s *Letters*.

Alexander Simpson, D.D. (1733-1793)

Education and Conversion

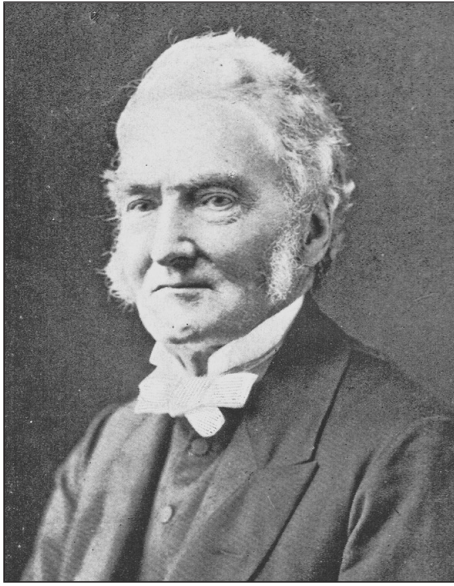
The man who was the immediate predecessor of John Love as minister of the Crispin Street congregation had, like him, been born and brought up in Paisley.²³³ He matriculated in 1753 at the University of Glasgow and graduated M.A. three years later in 1756, when he was twenty-three, having pursued his studies very much to the satisfaction of his professors.²³⁴ Simpson was a ministerial student of the Church of Scotland and it is very probable that his ministerial training was also undertaken at Glasgow University.²³⁵ If that was the case, the divinity professor who would have

232. ‘Thompson’s List’, as it is known, is among the manuscript treasures of the Dr Williams’ Library. A good summary of its contents was published in the *TCHS*, Vol. 5 (1911-1912), pp. 205-222, 261-277. Potts is mentioned on p. 268.

233. Simpson was born on 24th February 1733. The year of his birth was that in which Ebenezer Erskine, James Fisher, Alexander Moncrieff, and William Wilson separated from the Church of Scotland to form the Secession Church.

234. John Wilson, *Narrative of the Origin and Progress of the Relief Church, Bellshill* (Glasgow, 1847), p. 25.

235. The details of Simpson’s early life are based on Gavin Struthers, *The History of the Rise and Progress of the Relief Church* (Glasgow, 1843), p. 193; Wilson, *Narrative of the Origin and Progress of the Relief Church, Bellshill*, pp. 23-25; W. R. Thomson, *The First Relief Church in the West* (Glasgow, 1913), pp. 13-14; and information on his academic career gathered from the Glasgow University website – www.universitystory.gla.ac.uk/biography.



John Wilson was a successor to Simpson as minister of Bellshill Relief Church and served the congregation for over fifty years. He was its first historian.

instructed Simpson was William Leechman (1706-1785) who himself had been mentored by his friend, Francis Hutcheson (1694-1746), the Professor of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow University. Hutcheson carefully monitored Leechman's career and when the Glasgow divinity chair became vacant in late November 1743, Hutcheson was quick to nominate Leechman, remarking that 'if he succeeds, it will put a new face upon theology in Scotland.'²³⁶ He did succeed, and was chosen in preference to the outstanding evangelical minister, John MacLaurin. Although change did take place, it was not to the extent that Hutcheson desired. Once Leechman

had become the divinity professor, as the historian of the Glasgow Divinity Professors observes, 'His theology was in essentials that of the Westminster Assembly; but expressed more genteelly.'²³⁷

Leechman's teaching in the Divinity Hall followed the usual practice of the Scottish universities. Though he and most of the other university divinity professors were Moderates, two orthodox volumes predominated as their main theology textbooks. These were Johannes à Marck's *Compendium Theologiae Christianae* (1686), and Benedict Pictet's *Theologia Christiana* (1696).²³⁸ Leechman used a shorter version of Pictet and in later years changed to Jean-Fredrick Osterwald's *Theologiae*

236. H. M. B. Reid, *The Divinity Professors in the University of Glasgow, 1640-1903* (Glasgow, 1923), p. 249.

237. Reid, *Divinity Professors*, p. 261.

238. Johannes à Marck (1656-1731) was a Dutch Reformed theologian and Church historian at Leiden University in Holland. It is indicative of the extensive use of Marck in Scottish ministerial training that his *Medulla* was the textbook of Archibald Bruce, the theological professor of the conservative Old Light Anti-Burghers, see David Scott, *Annals and Statistics of the Original Secession Church* (Edinburgh, 1886), p. 605. Benedict Pictet (1655-1724) was a professor of theology in Geneva and opposed Jean Alphonse Turretin's policy of abandoning credal subscription. For a discussion of the literature used in Scottish ministerial training in the eighteenth century, see Whytock, *An Educated Clergy*, pp. 126-131.

Compendium (1739).²³⁹ The change to Osterwald is not without significance as Osterwald had studied both at Saumur, a centre of Amyraldianism, and at Orleans under Claude Pajon, who taught that the sum total of external circumstances is sufficient to explain the conversion or non-conversion of an individual.²⁴⁰ Osterwald spent most of his life in Neuchatel where, in addition to lecturing in the Academy of Theology, he was a minister. He was a close friend of Jean Alphonse Turretin in Geneva and his teaching was said to show a leaning towards Socinianism and Arminianism. H. M. B. Reid has noted with respect to Leechman's classes, 'It is significant that many students came from England and Ireland and that even "Seceders" were found in his classes.'²⁴¹ Though Simpson was most probably taught by Leechman, there is no evidence that his theology was anything other than that of the Westminster Standards. He seems to have been unaffected by the views of his professor. Indeed, later on in his life he wrote against a fellow Relief minister whom he accused of drifting into Socinianism and of holding a view of the atonement at variance with the Confession of Faith.

Whilst we know nothing of the circumstances surrounding Simpson's conversion, it is clear, that by the time of his licensing in 1762 he had adopted evangelical convictions. Within a year of his finishing his Arts course in 1756, two evangelical ministers were settled in Paisley with whom Simpson would form close friendships and who doubtless would have encouraged him to become a gospel minister. James Baine, jun. (1710-1790) became the minister of the High Kirk in Paisley in 1756. Ten years later he left the Church of Scotland to join Thomas Gillespie as a minister in the Relief Church. As we shall notice, Simpson would also join the Relief Church and he and Baine would become lifelong friends and frequently stand side by side in the Relief Church's internal controversies. The other Paisley minister to whom Simpson had a close attachment was John Witherspoon. He was translated from Beith to Paisley Laigh Kirk in 1757 and ministered there until 1768 when he emigrated to America to become the sixth President of Princeton College in New Jersey. Whilst in Paisley, Witherspoon was the

239. For a detailed account of Leechman's method of teaching, see William Leechman, *Sermons, to which is prefixed some account of the Author's life, and of his Lectures by James Wodrow* (2 vols., London, 1789), Vol. 1, pp. 28-71; Reid, *Divinity Professors*, pp. 254-257.

240. See article on Claude Pajon in *New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* (12 vols., New York, 1908-1912), Vol. 8, pp. 306-307; B. B. Warfield, *The Plan of Salvation* (Grand Rapids, 1966), pp. 90-95; Albert Gootjes, *Claude Pajon (1625-1685) and the Academy of Saumur* (Leiden, 2013).

241. Reid, *Divinity Professors*, p. 254.

leader of the evangelical party in the General Assembly of the Established Church.²⁴² Both these men would have a lasting influence on Alexander Simpson.

The first minister of Bellshill Relief Church 1763-1771

Simpson was licensed by the Church of Scotland's Presbytery of Paisley in July 1762. Within a month of his being licensed, he wrote a letter to the Presbytery of Paisley intimating to them that he had made up his mind to accept a call to the Relief congregation in Bellshill as the people there could not reconcile themselves to a minister put in by patronage. Bellshill in the 1760s was a village in the parish of Bothwell; it was situated around nine miles south-east of Glasgow. It was the place where the fifth congregation in connection with the Relief Church was formed in 1762 and was the first Relief congregation in the west of Scotland.

The immediate occasion of the congregation's formation was an unpopular settlement in the nearby parish church of Bothwell. James Baillie, the minister of Shotts, was presented to Bothwell parish by the Tutors of the Duke of Hamilton – the Duke, who was the patron, was at the time a minor. It is clear from minutes that both the Presbytery and Baillie were uneasy about the proposed settlement.²⁴³ The Presbytery minute of 29th March 1762 reads, 'Mr. Baillie represented to the Presbytery that if none were concerned in the affair but himself, he would make all easy, and was willing, as far as was consistent with the principles of honour, the interest of the church, and regard to his own character, to give quiet to all parties; that if the Presbytery thought fit to give delay for a month, that something might happen that would contribute to peace, at least it would give time to consult with himself and friends what part they should act; which request the Presbytery thought reasonable and therefore granted the delay.'²⁴⁴ James Baillie was not a hardened Moderate. He would

242. For biographical details of Witherspoon, see Ashbel Green's article on Witherspoon in William B. Sprague, *Annals of the American Pulpit* (9 vols., New York, 1857-1869), Vol. 3, pp. 288-300; D. W. Woods, *John Witherspoon* (Chicago, 1906); M. L. L. Stohlman, *John Witherspoon: Parson, Politician, Patriot* (Westminster Press, Louisville, 1976); J. Walter McGinty, *An Animated Son of Liberty: A Life of John Witherspoon* (Bury St Edmunds, 2012); Hew Scott (ed.), *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae* (8 vols, 2nd edition, Edinburgh, 1915-50), Vol. 3, pp. 174-176 (cited afterwards as Hew Scott, *Fasti*); and Ned C. Landsman in *ODNB*.

243. The minutes relative to the Baillie case are reprinted in full in Wilson, *Narrative of the Origin and Progress of the Relief Church, Bellshill*, pp. 14-18.

244. Wilson, *Narrative of the Origin and Progress of the Relief Church, Bellshill*, p. 15.

later become the Professor of Divinity at the University of Glasgow and teach John Love. Among the books he encouraged his students to read were John Owen on Justification, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, and Ebenezer Erskine on Assurance of Faith. Baillie, in his lectures, seems to have controverted the erroneous views held by many in the Moderate party who controlled the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland at the time of the Marrow Controversy.²⁴⁵

The Relief Church was formed in consequence of the deposition of Thomas Gillespie (1708-1774), the Church of Scotland minister of Carnock in 1752.²⁴⁶ Gillespie was born in Duddingston, near Edinburgh and was educated at the University of Edinburgh. He then went to Perth to study under William Wilson with a view to entering the Secession ministry. His stay at Perth lasted just ten days in consequence of his disagreement with the teaching of the Secession regarding terms of communion and the continued obligation of the Covenants. Gillespie then moved to the Dissenting Academy in Northampton taught by Philip Doddridge. He was licensed at Northampton on 30th October 1740 and ordained by a class of Dissenting ministers, of which Doddridge was the moderator, on 22nd January 1741. Later the same year he was inducted as the Church of Scotland minister of Carnock.

Gillespie, along with other members of the evangelical party in the Dunfermline Presbytery of the Church of Scotland, supported the Inverkeithing congregation in opposing the settlement of the patron's presentee, Andrew Richardson, as their minister. In consequence, they refused to obey the General Assembly's instruction to induct a presentee unacceptable to the congregation. Several members of the emerging Moderate party in the General Assembly were determined to use the Inverkeithing case as a means of disciplining those who refused to obey the Assembly's orders. Accordingly, in 1752, by a vote of ninety-three to sixty-five, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland determined to depose one of the six ministers in the Dunfermline Presbytery who refused to induct Richardson. The following day Gillespie was chosen as the one of

245. For biographical information on Baillie, see Reid, *Divinity Professors*, pp. 266-267; Hew Scott, *Fasti*, Vol. 7, p. 401; James Coutts, *A History of the University of Glasgow* (Glasgow, 1909), p. 326.

246. For biographical details of Gillespie, see K. B. E. Roxburgh, *Thomas Gillespie and the Origins of the Relief Church in 18th Century Scotland* (Berne, 1999); William Lindsay, *Life and Times of Thomas Gillespie* (Edinburgh, 1849); Gavin Struthers, *The History of the Rise, Progress and Principles of the Relief Church* (Glasgow, 1843).

whom they would make an example by deposing him from the ministry.²⁴⁷ George Whitefield, in a letter to a correspondent in Scotland just days after Gillespie's deposition, writes, 'I must now be away; but not before I have wished Mr. Gillespie joy. The Pope, I find has turned Presbyterian.'²⁴⁸ After his deposition, Gillespie formed a congregation in Dunfermline and was a dissenter holding liberal Presbyterian principles for nine years with no connections to any ecclesiastical body. Gillespie was not able to participate actively in a presbyterial organisation until 1761 when a further two ministers, Thomas Boston, jun. and Thomas Colier, associated with him to form the Relief Presbytery.²⁴⁹

Thomas Boston, jun. (1713-1767) was the youngest son of Thomas Boston of Ettrick. He became the minister of a congregation in Jedburgh who had seceded from the Church of Scotland in consequence of the forced settlement of a minister. Thomas Colier (died 1769), the minister of a Protestant Dissenting congregation in Ravenstonedale in Westmoreland,²⁵⁰

247. See Struthers, *History of the Rise, Progress and Principles of the Relief Church*, pp. 71-121; Roxburgh, *Thomas Gillespie and the Origins of the Relief Church*, pp. 65-94; ODNB account of Thomas Gillespie by K. B. E. Roxburgh.

248. *The Works of George Whitefield* (6 vols., London, 1771-1772), Vol. 2, p. 431. Whitefield would almost certainly have met Gillespie a decade earlier when both were preaching in Kilsyth at the time of the revival there in 1742. On 16th June 1742, Whitefield wrote to John Cennick: 'On Monday I preached again in Edinburgh. On Tuesday, twice at Kilsyth, to ten thousand; such a commotion, I believe you never saw. O what agonies and cries were there!', *Weekly History*, 3rd July 1742, cited in Luke Tyerman, *The Life of the Rev. George Whitefield* (2 vols., London, 1876-7), Vol. 2, p. 5. James Robe, the minister at Kilsyth, said of Gillespie's contribution to the work at Kilsyth: 'But of all others the Rev. Mr. Gillespie, minister of Carnock, was most remarkably God's send to me', *Narrative of the Revival of Religion at Kilsyth, Cambuslang and other places in 1742* (Glasgow, 1840), p. 60.

249. See Small, *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church*, Vol. 2, pp. 376-377.

250. The Ravenstonedale congregation in Westmoreland, of which Colier (or Collier) was the minister, is one of which several detailed accounts have been written by some of the most careful Nonconformist historians of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. See Benjamin Nightingale, *Lancashire Nonconformity: The Churches of Preston, North Lancashire and Westmoreland* (6 vols., Manchester, 1890-1893), Vol. 1, pp. 309-318; Thomas Whitehead, *History of the Dales Congregational Churches* (Keighley, 1930), pp. 89-105; Bryan Dale and T. G. Crippen, 'The Ancient Meeting House at Ravenstonedale', *THCS*, Vol. 3:2 (May 1907), pp. 91-103; J. Hay Colligan, 'Nonconformity in Cumberland and Westmoreland', *TCHS*, Vol. 3:4 (February 1908), pp. 212-232. Yet, rather surprisingly, none of them mention Colier as being a minister of the Ravenstonedale congregation. However, P. L. Woodger and J. E. Hunter in *The High Chapel: The Story of the Ravenstonedale*

was called to be the minister of the Colinsburgh Relief congregation which came into existence following a further forced settlement in nearby Kilconquhar in 1760. On 22nd October 1761, Gillespie from Dunfermline and Boston from Jedburgh inducted Colier as minister of Colinsburgh and then constituted themselves into the Presbytery of Relief. The main reason why the men who formed the Relief Church were opposed to the National Church was due to ministers being intruded on vacant congregations without a call from the membership. Their unwillingness to join with either the Burgher or Anti-Burgher Seceders was rather different. Patrick Hutchison, the Relief minister of St. Ninian's, near Stirling, from 1774, was a staunch defender of Relief principles; he mentions three reasons for refusing to join with the Seceders: their anti-toleration principles; their opposition to occasional hearing of evangelical ministers not of their own party; and what the Relief ministers considered to be their unscriptural narrowness with regard to terms of communion.²⁵¹

The influence of Philip Doddridge on both Gillespie and the early Relief Church was very significant. From his tutor, he had imbibed a commitment to the ideal of Christian unity that was very different from that held by the Seceders on terms of communion. Doddridge, an Independent, could have discussions with the Archbishop of Canterbury as well as with Baptist pastors and other Dissenters. In addition, he was on terms of friendship with both John Wesley and George Whitefield. Doddridge was opposed to creedal subscription and proved to be a major influence on Gillespie's thinking

Congregational Church (Kendal, 1962) include a table of ministers in their front pages in which they state that Thomas Colier's date of arrival at Ravenstonedale is not known but his date of departure was 1761. However, Benjamin Nightingale, *The Ejected of 1662 in Cumberland and Westmorland: Their Predecessors and Successors*, Vol. 2, p. 1286 says that a 'Mr. Collier' became pastor of the Ravenstonedale congregation in 1746.

251. Patrick Hutchison, *A Compendious View of the Religious System maintained by the Synod of Relief* (Falkirk, 1779). This work by Hutchison is divided into three parts, each with separate pagination. The seventy-six-page third part is 'An Account of the Points, in which the Synod of Relief differ from the Seceders.' The three-point summary of Hutchison detailed above is by John Wilson, *Narrative of the Origin and Progress of the Relief Church, Bellshill*, p. 20. Roxburgh writes with respect to the principles of the new organisation: 'In 1762, Gillespie founded the Relief Presbytery, noted for its commitment to religious liberty, open communion and tolerant attitudes to other Churches.' Roxburgh, *Thomas Gillespie and the Origins of the Relief Church*, p. x. Gavin Struthers, the historian of the Relief Church, contributed a lengthy chapter to the volume *Essays on Christian Union* (London, 1854), pp. 349-449. Struthers's essay, entitled, 'Party Spirit: Its prevalence and insidiousness,' accurately expounded the principles of the Relief Church.

on this question. When the twenty-eight-year-old Gillespie returned to Scotland in 1741 he was faced with a dilemma. In order to become a minister of the Church of Scotland he was required to subscribe the Westminster Confession of Faith. This he did reluctantly, but only with a qualification which, surprisingly, the Dunfermline Presbytery was prepared to accept. He did not endorse the Confession of Faith as it related to the power of the Civil Magistrate in religious matters. So strong were Gillespie's convictions on this matter that he did not require any of the elders, whom he ordained during his Carnock ministry, to subscribe the Confession of Faith.²⁵²

The new Relief Church building at Bellshill was finished in August 1763 and was built to accommodate a congregation of between six and seven hundred. Alexander Simpson was ordained and inducted as the first minister of the congregation two months later on 27th October 1763 by the fledgling Presbytery in which Thomas Gillespie took a major role in the proceedings. For a short period after his ordination, Simpson lived just over three and a half miles away in Uddingston, and rode by horse to Bellshill on Sabbath morning with his wife seated behind him. He was married to Catherine Boston, a granddaughter of Thomas Boston of Ettrick, and one of the three daughters of Thomas Boston, jun., the Relief minister of Jedburgh.²⁵³ Immediately after the erection of the church, the congregation set about building the Simpsons a manse. An acre of land was purchased on part of which they erected a manse; the rest they set apart for an orchard and a garden.²⁵⁴

Prior to his induction, Simpson had written to the Church of Scotland's Presbytery of Paisley requesting an 'extract of his license, and certificates of his moral character.' The Presbytery refused his request and instead presented him with a libel accusing him of 'Schismatical and disorderly courses, in having, on the 27 October 1763, received ordination from Mr Thomas Gillespie, late minister of Carnock, now under sentence of deposition and others, assuming the name of "Ministers of the Presbytery

252. Roxburgh, *Thomas Gillespie and the Origins of the Relief Church*, pp. 20-22. Struthers, *History of the Rise, Progress and Principles of the Relief Church*, pp. 8-9; Lindsay, *Thomas Gillespie*, p. 227.

253. Thomas Boston, jun. had four children. His son, Michael, after a five-year ministry at Alnwick in Northumberland, became the first Relief minister of Falkirk. His other two daughters were also married to Relief ministers – Margaret married William Campbell of Dysart and Jean married Robert Paterson of Largo. See Small, *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church*, Vol. 2, p. 260.

254. Wilson, *Narrative of the Origin and Progress of the Relief Church, Bellshill*, p. 23.

of Relief”, in having thereafter entered on the exercise of the ministry, and continuing it, in the parish of Bothwell, without consent of the incumbent; and in having since administered the sacrament of baptism in the High church of Paisley, and the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper in the College church of Glasgow.’²⁵⁵

The libel was read to Simpson at a meeting of the Paisley Presbytery on 18th January 1764 where he spoke in his own defence. After it was carried that the libel be served, Simpson indicated that he did not require any time to make his answers to the charges, and he assured the Presbytery that he would give them no trouble, acknowledging ‘his having been ordained by the Presbytery of Relief and all the other facts charged.’²⁵⁶ He then stated that ‘neither he nor the Presbytery of Relief, taught any separating principles; that he was affording temporary relief to a part of the parish of Bothwell, who were still desirous to continue on the establishment; and that he apprehended he was doing a service to the establishment: he consented, that the Presbytery should proceed immediately to give a decision; adding, that he very much desired to continue on the establishment, and that he did not think that he had done anything to prevent it.’²⁵⁷ The Presbytery

255. *Scots Magazine*, Vol. 26 (May 1764), pp. 289-290 contains a report of Simpson’s case as it came before the Commission of the General Assembly which sat on the 5th and 6th of June 1765. The wording of the libel is on p. 289. Abbreviated versions of the charges against Simpson are in Roxburgh, *Thomas Gillespie and the Origins of the Relief Church*, p. 186 and Small, *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church*, Vol. 2, p. 223. The minister of the High Church in Paisley was James Baine who joined the Relief Church in 1766. John Gillies (1712-1796) was the minister of the College Church in Glasgow and was a friend of George Whitefield, his first biographer, and the editor of his *Works*. Gillies was a leading member of the ‘Popular’ or evangelical party in the Church of Scotland and an important member of an international letter-writing network involving Jonathan Edwards, Philip Doddridge, and John Erskine. He also issued in 1754 a valuable history of revivals, *Historical Collections Relating to Remarkable Periods of the Success of the Gospel*. An enlarged edition of this volume, with a preface and continuation to the 1840s, edited by Horatius Bonar, was reprinted by the Banner of Truth in 1981.

256. *Scots Magazine*, Vol. 26 (May 1764), p. 289.

257. *Scots Magazine*, Vol. 26 (May 1764), p. 289. Following the forced settlement of James Baillie at Bothwell, as John Wilson indicates, there was reluctance among the people to desert the Church of their fathers. He writes: ‘The people here were very unwilling to abandon the church in which they had been reared, and form themselves into a separate party; they, on the day of Mr Baillie’s induction, went so far as to ask of the Presbytery to allow the elders to grant lines to persons who wished to observe sealing ordinances in the neighbouring parishes, and that they [might] continue to attend the ministry of Mr. Baillie on ordinary occasions, that they might judge for themselves; but this could not

referred the case to the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr with the express wish that the judgment of the General Assembly be sought. Simpson seems to have objected to the matter being transmitted to Assembly for their judgment. He considered that in expressing this wish, the Presbytery were being judges in their own cause. The case went to the Assembly who referred the matter to its Commission. After a period of 'long reasoning' the Commission repelled Simpson's objections and came to the following resolution without a vote:

The Commission having considered the libel exhibited against Mr. Alexander Simpson by the Presbytery of Paisley, and his acknowledgment of the facts therein charged against him, viz, his having received ordination from Mr. Thomas Gillespie and others, who take to themselves the name The Presbytery of Relief, and his exercising the office of the ministry within the parish of Bothwell, and dispensing sealing ordinances in other places, upon the said ordination; find his conduct to be such as to be sufficient ground of declaring, and accordingly the commission did and hereby do declare, the said Alexander Simpson incapable of receiving a presentation or call, as a licentiate of this church, to any of the parishes within the same.²⁵⁸

As Kenneth Roxburgh notes, 'on this occasion the Commission did not forbid ministers of the Established Church allowing Simpson to preach in their churches.'²⁵⁹ Simpson's first pastorate was probably the most fruitful of his ministerial career. Gavin Struthers, in describing Simpson's years at Bellshill, says that 'he was a warm, able, evangelical preacher, who often in the pulpit wept, like his Saviour, over lost souls; and that he collected around him a numerous congregation, and contributed greatly to give a savour to the name of the Relief Presbytery along the whole vale of the Clyde from Tinto to the Mull of Kintyre. Bellshill was for many years a favourite preaching locality, where thousands annually assembled at the dispensation of the Lord's Supper, so long as tent preaching was kept up on those solemn occasions.'²⁶⁰ It was not long before the meeting-house had to be enlarged.²⁶¹

be granted. On this request being refused, they quietly separated, and resolved to erect a church for themselves.' Wilson, *Narrative of the Origin and Progress of the Relief Church, Bellshill*, pp. 18-19.

258. *Scots Magazine*, Vol. 26 (May 1764), pp. 289-290.

259. Roxburgh, *Thomas Gillespie and the Origins of the Relief Church*, p. 187.

260. Struthers, *History of the Rise, Progress and Principles of the Relief Church*, p. 194.

261. Wilson, *Narrative of the Origin and Progress of the Relief Church, Bellshill*, p. 21.

Alexander Simpson was the minister of the Relief Church at Bellshill for almost eight years which seem to have been the most contented of what was to become a turbulent life. John Wilson, the first historian of the Bellshill Relief Church, says



Original Communion Cups and Flagons: with Token. The letters "M.A.S." indicate Minister, Alexander Simpson.

Bellshill Relief Church communion vessels.

that after he left the congregation, 'It does not appear that he felt at home: his affections seem to have lingered around his former charge. Nor is this to be wondered at, Bellshill was his first charge. By the people he had been almost idolized, and with them he had spent eight years of almost unbroken harmony.'²⁶² The occasion of his departure from Bellshill was his friendship with Alexander Pirie (1737-1804).

Simpson and Alexander Pirie

The controversial career of Alexander Pirie was to cause division in three Scottish Churches: both the Anti-Burgher and Burgher Seceders, and the Relief Church. Virtually nothing is known regarding his origins, his family, or his early education. William Mackelvie says, 'he was a native of the parish of Abernethy.'²⁶³ From 1756 he was a ministerial student in the Anti-Burgher branch of the Secession church in Abernethy, Perthshire where he was taught theology by Alexander Moncrieff (1695-1762) and philosophy by John Mason.²⁶⁴ Moncrieff was the only one of the four

262. *ibid.*, pp. 28-29.

263. Mackelvie, *Annals and Statistics of the United Presbyterian Church*, p. 600.

264. John Mason (1734-1792) was born near Mid-Calder, in Linlithgowshire. He identified himself with the Anti-Burgher branch of the Secession Church and pursued his theological studies at Abernethy, and became the tutor of logic and moral philosophy at the theological school. In 1761 he was ordained for the office of the ministry, and sent as a missionary to the United States of America as pastor of the, then, Cedar Street Church, New York. Mason believed that the causes which divided the Presbyterians of Scotland did not exist in America, and in consequence laboured, from the moment of his arrival, for the union of

secession fathers who, at the Breach in the Secession Church in 1747, adhered to the Anti-Burghers. Ebenezer Erskine, James Fisher, and William Wilson took the Burgher side. Following the urging of Moncrieff, prior to the Breach, a philosophical class was begun at Abernethy in 1742. The purpose of the class was to afford students an opportunity to study the various branches of philosophy without being exposed to the errors within the Scottish universities.²⁶⁵ In 1760 Pirie was appointed Moncrieff's assistant to teach the philosophy class.²⁶⁶ This partnership was not to last long as Moncrieff died on 7th October 1761 and was replaced as the Theological Professor by his son William Moncrieff of Alloa for the 1762 session.

Pirie was licensed as a probationer in September 1762 with a view to missionary service in America. In April 1763 he pleaded illness to excuse himself for not fulfilling this commission. However, by then his teaching was under suspicion. Just a few months later, in September 1763, he was answering charges before the Anti-Burgher Synod that he had recommended several erroneous books that were subverting his students. The only title named was that by Henry Home (Lord Kames), *Essays on the Principles of Morality and Natural Religion*, which the Synod claimed espoused a theory of philosophical necessity that was inconsistent with human responsibility and divine sovereignty. Pirie boldly declared that the sentiments in the *Essay* were in unison with his own, and, furthermore, were in harmony with the doctrinal standards of the Secession, and he challenged his accusers to prove the contrary. He then protested to the court of heaven and left the Secession Court, 'uttering offensive expressions

Presbyterians. This displeased the Anti-Burgher Synod who suspended him. Undaunted, Mason pushed on with his project, and on 18th June 1782 a union was achieved, consisting of the greater part of the Seceders that had their origin from Scotland and a section of the Reformed Presbyterians. The new denomination was called the Associate Reformed Church. Mason had the honor to be the first moderator of this body. The degree of D.D. was conferred upon him by New Jersey College, of which he was a trustee from 1779 to 1785. An account of Mason's life, written by John B. Dales is in William B. Sprague, *Annals of the American Pulpit*, Vol. 9, pp. 4-11. For the background to Mason's endeavours, see Ray A. King, *A History of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church* (Charlotte, 1966), pp. 65-72.

265. Whytock, *An Educated Clergy*, p. 184. A list of the tutors of the philosophical class is given in Landreth, *The United Presbyterian Divinity Hall*, pp. 97-98 and in Whytock, *An Educated Clergy*, p. 204.

266. The class was held in various places. It seems to have been held at Abernethy when Pirie was the tutor but it also met for a time at Kirkcaldy and was ultimately moved to Edinburgh. See Mackelvie, *Annals and Statistics of the United Presbyterian Church*, p. 654 footnote*.

in a low voice.²⁶⁷ This behaviour was considered irreverent, and contributed to the Anti-Burgher Synod's sentence of deprivation of licence and lesser excommunication.²⁶⁸

Moncrieff was succeeded as pastor of the Abernethy Anti-Burgher congregation by his son, Matthew, who had been ordained as his colleague twelve years earlier in 1749. Notwithstanding a further Moncrieff as minister, and the sentence passed on Pirie by the Associate Synod, there were members of the Abernethy congregation who appreciated Pirie's preaching and sought his ordination. This was obtained from the Burgher Presbytery of Perth on 17th July 1765.²⁶⁹ His supporters built a place of worship in Abernethy and invited Pirie to take the oversight of their souls in the newly constituted Burgher congregation. Further difficulties were soon to follow: a treatise written by him on National Covenanting,²⁷⁰ and some careless expressions about the humanity of Christ, resulted in his suspension by his Presbytery on 27th June 1767. Some in his congregation had construed that he believed elements of the Saviour's body to be of heavenly origin. From this heretical doctrine, they had drawn the conclusion that Pirie did not believe the Saviour to be flesh of our flesh. It should be noted that he vigorously denied that he held such views and he asserted his adherence to the teaching of the Westminster Confession and Catechisms. When the matter came before the Burgher Synod on appeal in May 1768, they were disposed to mollify Pirie and they referred the case back to the Presbytery on procedural grounds. To this he was unwilling to submit, and was ready to libel the Presbytery for injustice. After returning home Pirie set himself to scrutinize the publications of the Secession and concluded that their distinguishing principles were not the principles of the oracles of God. He then published *A Review of the Principles and Conduct of the Seceders* in which he indicated his abandonment of Secession principles and took his leave of the Secession in both its branches.²⁷¹ John Warden, the first

267. *Scots Magazine*, Vol. 27 (September 1763), p. 525.

268. Struthers, *History of the Rise, Progress and Principles of the Relief Church*, p. 235.

269. Small, *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church*, Vol. 2, p. 587.

270. Alexander Pirie, *An Essay on National Covenanting* (Edinburgh, 1766).

271. Alexander Pirie, *A Review of the Principles and Conduct of the Seceders, with Reasons for the author's separation from the Burghers in particular* (Edinburgh, 1769). For the historical background, see Struthers, *History of the Rise, Progress and Principles of the Relief Church*, pp. 236-239; Small, *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church*, Vol. 2, pp. 586-587.

Relief minister of Blairlogie, near Stirling, had died on 29th December 1768 after a pastorate of six and a half years. His widow had remarried in April 1770 to another Relief minister, Thomas Scott of Auchtermuchty,²⁷² who was a near neighbour to Pirie; his congregation was less than eight miles from Abernethy. In looking for a successor to Warden, the Blairlogie congregation had their attention drawn to Alexander Pirie by Scott, and on three occasions elders and others in the congregation went to Abernethy to hear him. The reports they brought back being favourable, they petitioned the Relief Presbytery in June 1769, at a meeting held at Dunfermline, for a 'moderation at large'²⁷³ with a view to calling him to be their minister. Pirie was, however, a marked man; his trial for heresy before a Burgher Presbytery had made him a man of notoriety.

The Relief Presbytery was almost evenly divided on how to proceed. William Cruden, the Relief minister of Glasgow, was determined that Alexander Pirie should never be in fellowship with them, and Gillespie threatened to leave the Presbytery if a moderation with any such design were granted. Thomas Bell of Jedburgh took the same side, as did Thomas Scott – rather surprisingly, since he had suggested Pirie to the congregation. Hence the Presbytery decided to refuse the moderation, a decision against which James Baine, Thomas Monteith, and Alexander Simpson protested and dissented. The eighth clerical member at that time, James Pinkerton of Campbeltown, was absent owing, doubtless, to distance. The Blairlogie people waited four months, and then petitioned again. Thomas Bell was now prepared to give way, and had written to Gillespie, Cruden, and Scott informing them that they ought to let the congregation proceed with their call; and had he been able to be present at the meeting, the decision to proceed with the call to Pirie would have carried. In the event, an elder from Edinburgh was present who took the opposite side and the motion which carried was: 'Grant the moderation of a call, exclusive of Mr Alexander Pirie, minister of the gospel at Abernethy.' Simpson of Bellshill denounced the attempt to limit Blairlogie in the choice of a minister as

272. For biographical information on Scott, see Small, *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church*, Vol. 1, pp. 165-166. Prior to coming to Auchtermuchty, Scott had been the minister of a Presbyterian Church in Hexham and had been ordained by the Class of Northumberland.

273. The term referred to the congregation's request to be able to suggest the name of any suitably qualified minister. As the Relief Church had very few licentiates of its own, such a procedure allowed congregations the liberty of calling a minister from another denomination in Scotland or, quite commonly, from England.

destructive of the foundation principle on which the Presbytery of Relief stood.²⁷⁴ Thomas Gillespie and his brother Robert travelled to Blairlogie on 25th January 1770, where they encountered a hostile congregation who refused to accept the decision of the Presbytery. Robert Gillespie is said to have harangued the people in the porch, telling them: ‘If you knew Mr Pirie as well as I do, you would thank the Presbytery for what they have done.’

Following a further refusal in February 1770 the Presbytery eventually relented and Simpson went to Blairlogie on 10th July 1770 to moderate in a call at large. The result was, as might have been expected, that the Blairlogie congregation extended a call to Pirie. At this stage, the charges previously raised against Pirie in the Secession were circulated in the Relief Church – charges concerning the Incarnation, along with those regarding liberty and necessity. Thomas Gillespie, the founder of the Relief Church threatened to resign if the call was sustained. Alexander Simpson abated none of his support and held that if there were doubts about Pirie’s orthodoxy they should be dealt with before the call was sustained. The greater part of the ministers agreed with Simpson; however, a minority of the ministers, assisted by a majority of the elders, carried a motion to reject the call. Against this decision Simpson protested and published his protests along with an account of a dispute he had with William Cruden of Glasgow.²⁷⁵

The Blairlogie church refused to be frustrated in the object of their choice. Having been denied, as they perceived it, justice, they took the matter into their own hands. Pirie, having no formal church connections, just came among them and without any formal induction commenced his ministry on 19th August 1770. The Blairlogie congregation were now in virtual separation from the Relief Church. This made no difference whatever to Simpson. His friendship with Pirie now led him into actions that would precipitate his departure from Bellshill. At Pirie’s first communion season at Blairlogie, Simpson was his assistant. Then shortly afterwards, when Simpson was scheduled to be away from Bellshill he invited Pirie to occupy his pulpit. Rebellion is infectious, and the Bellshill congregation copied

274. Small, *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church*, Vol. 2, pp. 695-696.

275. Alexander Simpson, *Reasons of Dissent: From two arbitrary and oppressive sentences of the Presbytery of Relief by which they have robbed the congregation of Blair Loggie of their right to call a minister and destroyed the very foundation whereon the Presbytery stands, to which is added a true account of the late unhappy difference between the Rev. Messrs Cruden and Simpson* (Glasgow, 1770).

their minister who was following a divisive course. Learning that Pirie was to preach, they locked the church-door and kept him out. Pirie, undaunted and accustomed to such critical situations, retired to the manse garden and conducted the service from there, preaching to a considerable assembly from a manse window. As the twentieth-century historian of the Bellshill congregation notes, perhaps that day ‘may be regarded as the most eventful day in the history of the congregation. It was the day of Bellshill’s dramatic intervention in the Pirie case.’²⁷⁶

On his return Simpson was incensed. Strong words passed between him and the managers and on the spur of the moment, in June 1771, he threw up his charge as minister of Bellshill Relief Church. Emotions were strong on both sides and at an irregular meeting of some of the managers and part of the session it was resolved, in a moment of passion, to accept their minister’s demission and sever the bonds by which pastor and people had been linked. The people were filled with astonishment and regret.²⁷⁷ This is not surprising if the description of his ministry by John Wilson is correct. He gives this testimony to Simpson by a fellow-minister before he went to Crispin Street: ‘His zeal for the Master’s glory ever burns, and his

276. Thomson, *The First Relief Church in the West*, p. 22. After having applied to the Relief body for regular admission as a minister on three occasions, and each time been refused, Pirie left Blairlogie on 14th June 1778 and ministered to a Glassite congregation in Newburgh, Fife near Abernethy. In order to supplement his income, he sold medicine. The Blairlogie congregation was received back into the Relief Church after Pirie left. The six volumes of Pirie’s *Miscellaneous and Posthumous Works* (J. Pillans and Sons, 1805–6) display his range and vigour. Things first (Genesis) and last (Revelation) were a special interest to him. Most of his pamphlet contributions to his own ecclesiastical trials were published separately, as were his *Psalms or Hymns* (1777) of which some fourteen found wider use in the Relief’s *Sacred Songs and Hymns* (1794), and his *Dissertation on the Hebrew Roots* (1807). See ODNB; William D. McNaughton, *The Scottish Congregational Ministry, 1794-1993* (Glasgow, 1993), pp. 127, 442.

277. Struthers, *History of the Rise, Progress and Principles of the Relief Church*, pp. 241-242. The above account is based on Struthers, the Relief historian. However, Robert Small, the United Presbyterian historian, in his *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church*, Vol. 2, p. 223 gives a somewhat different analysis of Simpson’s departure from Bellshill based on a letter dated 17th April 1771 written two months before Pirie’s engagement to preach at Bellshill. The letter is printed in James Bennett, *Memoirs of the Life of David Bogue* (London, 1827), pp. 20-23, and is to Bogue from John Allan. Bogue and Allan had been students together. The relevant sentence reads, ‘Simpson from Bethel [should read Bellshill] is determined for Dunse, *O tempora, O mores!* [O the times! O the customs! – Cicero]’ (p. 22). It seems from this that Simpson was already at least under a call to Duns (modern spelling) when he demitted his charge at Bellshill.

love for all the saints is warm; and yet an habitual humility would say that he knows not that he is possessed of these things. The darling topic of his sermons is the cross of Christ, and his pleasant work appears to be to exalt Christ and to humble and gain the sinner.²⁷⁸

The controversy over Alexander Pirie's call to Blairlogie, and a similar dispute over the call of James Cowan to succeed Thomas Colier as minister of the Colinsburgh congregation, led to a division in the Relief Presbytery. The same ministers were again divided. The acceptance of Pirie was urged by James Baine and Simpson and opposed by Thomas Gillespie, Cruden, and Scott, whilst the position was reversed with respect to Cowan's going to Colinsburgh. Cowan was eventually ordained by Gillespie, Cruden, and Scott, with Baine and Simpson strongly opposed. The immediate consequence of these two controversies was that the Relief Church, in 1771, divided into two Presbyteries, those of Edinburgh and Glasgow. The division was not, however, geographical but because of the sharp differences of opinion concerning Pirie and Cowan.²⁷⁹ Before his death in January 1774, Thomas Gillespie had become profoundly disappointed with what was taking place in the Church of which he had been the founder. So much was this the case that at a meeting of the original donors who had contributed towards the cost of his meeting-house in Dunfermline, his brother Robert asserted that shortly before his death Thomas Gillespie had expressed the desire that his congregation should become a Chapel of Ease in connection with the Church of Scotland.²⁸⁰ The attitude and stance of Alexander Simpson was a major element in Gillespie's discomfort. Robert Small's assessment is surely correct when he writes: 'As a member of the Relief Presbytery Mr Simpson did much to help the rupture which took place between the two parties in that Court...He had also a sharp correspondence with Cruden of Glasgow, which brought their friendship to an end. Thus irritation wrought on till the Relief ministers formed themselves into two Presbyteries, with a chasm of personal estrangement between.'²⁸¹

278. Wilson, *Narrative of the Origin and Progress of the Relief Church, Bellshill*, p. 25.

279. Roxburgh, *Thomas Gillespie and the Origins of the Relief Church*, pp. 221-225; Small, *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church*, Vol. 1, Appendix III, 'Division of 1771 in the Relief Presbytery', pp. 708-710.

280. Roxburgh, *Thomas Gillespie and the Origins of the Relief Church*, pp. 229-235.

281. Small, *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church*, Vol. 2, p. 223. Kenneth Roxburgh has accurately analysed the overall situation when he writes: 'For all its professions of unity and fellowship, the Relief Church was soon torn by conflict, and Gillespie found himself embroiled in controversy with men like James Baine and Alexander

Minister of Duns Relief Church, 1771-1783

The congregation to which Simpson was admitted as minister in June 1771²⁸² originated following another enforced settlement in the Established Church at Duns. Kenneth Roxburgh has pointed out that ‘between 1752 and 1792 the population of Duns doubled in size and by 1792 it contained an Anti-Burgher, a Burgher, and a Relief church in addition to a Church of Scotland congregation.’²⁸³ When in August 1748, the patron, John Hay of Belton, presented Adam Dickson to the vacant Established Church at Duns, a great majority of the heads of families objected and asked the Presbytery to moderate a call to James Lindsay of Dumbarney. The dispute reached the House of Lords, which decided against the congregation, and on 21st September 1750, the General Assembly instructed the Presbytery to ordain Dickson. If the military had not intervened there would have been a serious disruption of the ordination service by angry parishioners.²⁸⁴ Several people subsequently joined the Anti-Burgher congregation. Others, however, continued to attend the parish church. When the Presbytery of Relief was formed in 1761, the unhappy parishioners expressed interest in creating a Relief congregation in Duns. The strength of the Secession movement in the area led Thomas Boston of Jedburgh to write to the parishioners, informing them of the liberal terms of communion in the Relief Church, and warning them against the *Acts and Testimonies* of the Seceders, and contrasting the moderation of the Relief Church with the rigidity of the Secession.²⁸⁵

Simpson, who themselves had left the Church of Scotland on issues of principle and who were adamant that their conscientiously held views were as valid as those of Gillespie. Following the conflicts within the Relief Church surrounding the settlements of Alexander Pirie at Blairlogie and James Cowan at Colinsburgh, Gillespie became disillusioned with the Relief Church and evidently longed to return to the Church where he had begun his spiritual pilgrimage. His deathbed request that his congregation return to the Church of Scotland reflected his enduring commitment to the ideal of a national Church.’ *Thomas Gillespie and the Origins of the Relief Church*, p. 243.

282. This is the date given by Small, *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church*, Vol. 1, p. 401 and Struthers, *History of the Rise, Progress and Principles of the Relief Church*, pp. 241-242. Mackelvie, *Annals and Statistics of the United Presbyterian Church*, p. 96 gives Simpson settlement at Duns three years later at June 1774 – which seems to be an error.

283. Roxburgh, *Thomas Gillespie and the Origins of the Relief Church*, p. 183.

284. Hew Scott, *Fasti*, Vol. 2, p. 10; Mackelvie, *Annals and Statistics of the United Presbyterian Church*, p. 96.

285. Small, *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church*, Vol. 1, p. 401.

The congregation first called Michael Boston of Alnwick, the son of Thomas Boston, jun. but he declined. They then called Thomas Monteith, a Church of Scotland minister in Berwick.²⁸⁶

Following his acceptance of the call he was inducted at Duns on 9th July 1767. His stay there was brief owing to troubles which arose over the question of free communion. Monteith went to Newcastle to assist James Murray, an Independent minister, at the dispensation of the Lord's Supper. This gave offence to a number of his people, who deemed it to be a breach of Presbyterian order. Though Monteith was backed by the Relief Synod, who held that he had done nothing wrong, on receiving a call to succeed Simpson's brother-in-law, Michael Boston, at Alnwick, in December 1770, he thought it better to leave the scene of discord.²⁸⁷ Alexander Simpson now received a harmonious call from the vacant congregation and was loosed from Bellshill by the Relief Presbytery. Regarding this translation, Struthers observes: 'thus a branch of the Boston family – Mrs. Simpson was a daughter of Thomas Boston of Jedburgh – took up their abode in the very town where old Boston of Ettrick was born.'²⁸⁸ His ministry at Duns was the longest of Simpson's five pastorates. However, though he was there for twelve years, it is the period of his life of which we know the least.

Simpson seems either to have taken a personal interest, or to have been encouraged to become involved, in the question of who should be the minister of the Glasgow Relief congregation. The Relief Church in Glasgow came into existence in 1763 as a result of the action of the Town Council who were the legal patrons. The normal practice of the Council when a vacancy occurred was to appoint the man whom the Kirk Session of the vacant congregation had recommended to the General Session in Glasgow. However, in 1762, encouraged by the Moderates in the Established Church, the Town Council

286. Thomas Monteith (d. 1786), as a licentiate of the Church of Scotland, had been usher of the Grammar School at Berwick, and after that had conducted a private academy of his own. A church was built for him on Chapel Street, Berwick-upon-Tweed in 1756, of which he became minister in connection with the Scottish Establishment; the congregation was called the Middle Meeting. In 1778, eleven years after Monteith left for Duns, the congregation became part of the Relief Church. For biographical details of Monteith, see Hew Scott, *Fasti*, Vol. 7, pp. 504, 506; Small, *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church*, Vol. 1, p. 401.

287. Small, *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church*, Vol. 1, p. 401. Roxburgh states that Duns was a centre of conservative Presbyterianism, *Thomas Gillespie and the Origins of the Relief Church*, p. 184.

288. Struthers, *History of the Rise, Progress and Principles of the Relief Church*, p. 242.

decided to flex its muscle and, abandoning its previous practice, it presented George Bannatyne, a Moderate minister, to the vacant Wynd Church.²⁸⁹ On account of the opposition of the General Session, the Presbytery refused the presentation. This decision was reversed by the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr and the Synod's decision was sustained by the General Assembly on 31st May 1764. The initial response to Bannatyne's settlement was the resignation of the entire Kirk Session of the Wynd Church. Most of the congregation followed the elders and a Relief congregation was opened in Cannon Street with seating for 1,800 which was designated 'The Meeting house of the Free Presbyterian Society.' It was opened by Simpson's friend, James Baine, on 17th August 1766.²⁹⁰ There were few ministers to select from and Thomas Gillespie endeavoured to direct the congregations attention to Thomas Monteith who was then at Berwick-upon-Tweed. Their first choice was, however, Thomas Boston, jun. of Jedburgh, and a line of communication was opened up with Boston through Alexander Simpson, then at Bellshill, who was Boston junior's son-in-law. It was envisaged that Boston would become the pastor, assisted by his son Michael Boston, Simpson's brother-in-law, who was then minister at Alnwick. Though Gillespie and Baine did not favour the translation of the ill and ageing minister of Jedburgh, a date was appointed for the moderation of the call, but before the meeting could be held Boston, jun. had died.²⁹¹

The congregation's attention now turned to William Cruden, the Church of Scotland minister of Logie-Pert,²⁹² who, following a unanimous

289. Small, *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church*, Vol. 2, p. 32; Mackelvie, *Annals and Statistics of the United Presbyterian Church*, pp. 296-297; Roxburgh, *Thomas Gillespie and the Origins of the Relief Church*, pp. 193-196.

290. Hew Scott, *Fasti*, Vol. 3, pp. 442-443; Small, *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church*, Vol. 2, p. 32.

291. Struthers, *History of the Rise, Progress and Principles of the Relief Church*, pp. 222-223.

292. William Cruden (1726-1785) was inducted to Logie-Pert near Montrose on 12th September 1753. Six years later he was the people's choice to become the minister of Logie parish in Stirlingshire. In the days of Moderate ascendancy, following an appeal to the 1759 General Assembly, the choice of the patron prevailed over that of the congregation and he was not translated. The result was the formation of the Blairlogie Relief congregation. See Nathaniel Morren, *Annals of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland from 1752-1766* (Edinburgh, 1840), pp. 171-173; Roxburgh, *Thomas Gillespie and the Origins of the Relief Church*, pp. 180-181; Small, *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church*, Vol. 2, pp. 32, 695. For further biographical details of Cruden, see Hew Scott, *Fasti*, Vol. 5, p. 404; Mackelvie, *Annals and Statistics of the United Presbyterian Church*, p. 297; Wilson, *Dissenting Churches*, Vol. 4, p. 9; George C. Cameron, *The Scots Kirk in London* (Oxford, 1979), pp. 90-91.

call, demitted his charge in the Established Church and was inducted as the first minister of the congregation on 16th June 1767. When the question of free Communion came before the Relief Synod in 1773, Cruden, along with James Cowan of Colinsburgh, stated his opposition to a cherished Relief principle. When the supreme court of the Church subsequently carried that it was in accordance with Relief practice to hold occasional communion with Episcopalians and Independents, both Cruden and Cowan withdrew from the Relief Church.²⁹³ At the beginning of 1774, Cruden became the minister of Crown Court Church, London where he remained until his death in 1785.²⁹⁴

Following Cruden's departure, the Glasgow congregation split into three parts: the largest part joined the Establishment as a Chapel of Ease and retained the place of worship; the second part continued in connection with the Relief Church and built a place of worship in Dovehill capable of seating 1,400; whilst the third and smallest portion formed the Old Scots Independent Church in Greyfriars Wynd.²⁹⁵ The Glasgow Dovehill Relief Church now wished Thomas Bell of Jedburgh to become their minister, and Simpson, who was now at Duns, became deeply involved in who should be settled as minister of the Glasgow Relief congregation.

Thomas Bell (1733-1802) was a native of the town of Moffat, and a licentiate of the Edinburgh Relief Presbytery. Shortly after being licensed he was ordained as minister of the Relief congregation of Jedburgh, which had difficulty in securing a minister after the death of Thomas Boston, junior. Bell's ability as a preacher, as a theologian, and as a warm friend of evangelical religion, soon resuscitated the Jedburgh congregation, and imparted to it all its early vigour and life. He was minister at Jedburgh for ten years, and laboured with great acceptance and success. Bell became

293. Small, *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church*, Vol. 2, pp. 32-33.

294. By a strange twist of events, for all but eight months of the time that Alexander Simpson was the minister of the Independent Church at Crispin Street in the English capital, his former Relief colleague, whom he had written against, was the minister of a London congregation in connection with the Scottish Establishment. Following Cruden's death in 1785, a volume of sermons that he had preached at Crown Court was published at the instigation of his widow – William Cruden, *Sermons on Evangelical and Practical Subjects* (London, 1787). Among the subscribers to the excellent volume was Rev. Dr. Simpson, who by then had left Crispin Street and was the minister at Alnwick in Northumberland.

295. Mackelvie, *Annals and Statistics of the United Presbyterian Church*, p. 297; Small, *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church*, Vol. 2, p. 33. For a most useful article on the smallest of the three sections, see Donald Beaton, 'The Old Scots Independents', *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, Vol. 3:2 (1929), pp. 135-145.

one of the ablest ministers that the Relief Church possessed throughout its entire existence as a separate body.²⁹⁶ To translate him to Glasgow was considered to be hurtful to the Jedburgh congregation. Accordingly, the Presbytery of Edinburgh referred the case to the Synod without giving any decision in both 1776 and 1777. On each occasion the Relief Synod refused to translate Bell from Jedburgh to Glasgow. As Gavin Struthers points out, ‘They evidently proceeded, both years, upon the old Presbyterian principle, that a church court has a controlling judgment over all the parties concerned in a translation, and can prevent it if the edification of “the body of Christ” is in danger of being injured thereby.’²⁹⁷

At this point Simpson intervened; he and several other members of court protested against the decision as tyrannical in the extreme. They held that, as Bell was willing to be removed, and the Glasgow congregation were petitioning for his translation, and, further, that as the Jedburgh people did not wish to retain him unless he willingly gave up the Glasgow call, that he ought not to be detained by the mere arm of ecclesiastical authority. No doubt encouraged by the strength of Simpson’s language, the Glasgow congregation now took matters into their own hands, ‘appealed to the first free and unbiased Relief presbyterian synod when it should meet at Edinburgh or elsewhere’, and threw off the authority of court. Bell gave in his demission, and translated himself to Glasgow, where he was welcomed in 1777 by the Dovehill congregation, though it was at the expense of ecclesiastical order.

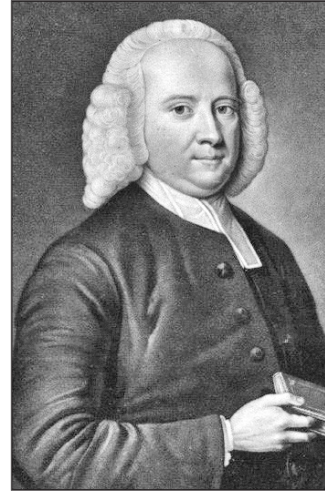
To the satisfaction of all parties, a reunion took place in April 1783, but not before the infliction of sharp ecclesiastical censures. Bell and the commissioners of the congregation confessed their sorrow before the Presbytery for what they had done, and were rebuked by the moderator. Struthers details the further steps taken: the minister was suspended for two

296. For biographical information on Thomas Bell, see Small, *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church*, Vol. 2, pp. 33-34, and the article by David Lachman in Nigel M. de S. Cameron (ed.), *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology (DSCHT)* (Edinburgh, 1993), p. 69. Small writes regarding Bell that he ‘was a weighty preacher, with more of the doctrinal in his discourses than was usual among his brethren of the Relief. His publications include *A Treatise on the Nature and Effects of Saving Faith* and *Discourses on the Supreme Deity of Jesus Christ*. He even approximated to the Anti-Burgher standard on certain points, being opposed to the use of hymns and paraphrases in public worship, besides writing with vigour in defence of Covenanting. He translated Witsius on the Antinomian and Neonomian Controversies, and his scholarship is attested by his translation from the Dutch of Dr [Dionysius Van] Wynpersse on *The True and Eternal Godhead of our Lord Jesus Christ* [Edinburgh, 1795].’

297. Struthers, *History of the Rise, Progress and Principles of the Relief Church*, p. 303.

Sabbaths from the office of the ministry and the congregation was treated as a vacant church under the care of the Presbytery. The Presbytery took charge of the pulpit, appointed the Sacrament, and the person who should preside on the occasion. An extract of the sentence, and of the censure, were read before the congregation; and a day was appointed for the admission of Bell, according to the rules of the Church.²⁹⁸

Inexplicably, following his heavy involvement in the affairs of the Glasgow Relief Congregation, and just months before Bell's reconciliation with the Relief Presbytery, Alexander Simpson forsook his charge at Duns, either in December 1782 or very early in January 1783. He did so without either the approval of his Presbytery or providing any reason for his action and became the minister of the Independent Church at Crispin Street in London. Why this occurred after twelve years at Duns, we do not know. Robert Small has provided what information is available: 'the Presbytery of Edinburgh complained to the Supreme Court that Mr Simpson had thrown up his charge without assigning to them a single reason for his conduct, and he was declared "incapable of holding any charge in the Relief".'²⁹⁹



*Thomas Gibbons
(1720-1785) whose
diary records Simpson's
ordination at
Crispin Street.*

Minister at Crispin Street, 1783-1786

What the factors were which brought Simpson to London for a short pastorate in 1783 are unclear. Prior to the move to the English capital, it does not appear that he had any direct connections with the Crispin Street congregation. Thomas Gibbons,³⁰⁰ the minister of the Independent

298. *ibid.*, p. 304.

299. Mackelvie, *Annals and Statistics of the United Presbyterian Church*, p. 96 states that Simpson resigned in 1784. This is inaccurate on two counts. Firstly, the 1784 date is incorrect as he was inducted to the Crispin Street congregation in January 1783. Secondly, he did not resign; Robert Small's account is correct and is supported by the fact that when Simpson later rejoined the Relief Church, as the minister at Pittenweem, the Relief Synod of 1789 required him 'to acknowledge that he did wrong in leaving Duns without owning the Presbytery, or asking to have the pastoral relationship dissolved.' Small, *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church*, Vol. 2, p. 387.

300. Thomas Gibbons, D.D. (1720-1785) is spoken of by Walter Wilson as being an 'eminent and pious Divine.' He was also a voluminous author; Wilson lists forty-six different works

congregation at Haberdashers' Hall in London, records in his diary Simpson's induction on 15th January 1783:

Attended the Separation of the Revd. Alexr. Simpson, lately Minister of Dunse in North Britain, but now chosen Pastor to the Church meeting at Crispin Street, Spittal-fields. Mr. Davies began in Prayer. Dr. Wilson asked the Questions, &c. I prayed, & Dr. Hunter preached an excellent Sermon from Rev. 21:22. Mr. Fisher concluded in Prayer. I hope a profitable opportunity. Dined with the Ministers & Members of the Church.³⁰¹

The reference to Dr Wilson, who asked Simpson the questions at his induction, is most probably a reference to David Wilson the minister of the Anti-Burgher congregation at Oxenden Street in London.³⁰² If this identification is correct, it may give a clue as to how Simpson came to Crispin Street. Wilson was the first minister of the congregation and had succeeded John Potts who had effectively been its minister whilst still a probationer. Wilson became the minister at Oxenden Street a year before Potts returned to London as the minister at Crispin Street. Knowing Potts' desire for wide ministerial fellowship, it is almost certain that Potts, an ex-Seceder, would have been on friendly terms the minister of his old congregation.

David Wilson had been brought up under the ministry of Ebenezer Erskine whilst he was at Portmoak. He joined the Secession in 1743 whilst a student for the ministry in connection with the Established Church. He then studied under Alexander Moncrieff at Abernethy in 1743 and was very probably a fellow-student of Potts who had begun his training with Moncrieff just a year earlier.³⁰³ At the Breach in 1747, Wilson adhered to the Anti-Burghers and was ordained in 1748 as the minister of Pathhead in the Presbytery of Kirkcaldy, being translated to London four years later in 1752.³⁰⁴ Intriguingly, Wilson's induction to Oxenden Street in London took place at the Duns Anti-Burgher church. Small details the reasons:

produced by him. For biographical details, see Wilson, *Dissenting Churches*, Vol. 3, pp. 178-183; *DNB*; *ODNB*.

301. *TCHS*, Vol. 2 (1905-1906), p. 35.

302. Although Gibbons' printed diary speaks of Dr. Wilson, there is no record that David Wilson had a doctorate. This may have been an error on Gibbons' part. The writer has been unable to locate another Wilson in London at that time that could have taken part in Simpson's induction.

303. See Mackelvie, *Annals and Statistics of the United Presbyterian Church*, pp. 652-653 which lists Moncrieff's students and the year in which they commenced their studies.

304. For biographical information on David Wilson (1721-1784), see Mackelvie, *Annals*

On 16th July 1751 Edinburgh Presbytery met at Duns, as there were ‘extraordinary and obvious difficulties in getting the said admission gone about in London’, the distance being so great. Two representatives of Bow Lane congregation were present with written authority to act for their constituents. The edict had been duly served in London, and at the close of the services the two commissioners took their minister by the hand. A Minute of the induction was then drawn up, which the preacher supplying at Bow Lane should read from the pulpit, the Sabbath morning on which Mr Wilson was to enter on his labours. The London call was signed by only 38 (male) members and 15 adherents, and though there was gradual increase, his congregation was never large, and owing to infirm health he often required assistance from Scotland.³⁰⁵

Though there can be no certainty, it seems very probable that when Potts resigned or retired, probably for health reasons, he and Wilson had some involvement in bringing Simpson to Crispin Street. The other ministers who took part in Simpson’s induction to Crispin Street indicate that Presbyterians and Independents acted together on such occasions. Dr Henry Hunter who preached at the induction was the first Clerk of the Scots Presbytery in London.³⁰⁶ The minister who began the proceedings in prayer was Dr. Benjamin Davies, a Welshman, who had been a minister in Abergavenny in Monmouthshire where he was also tutor of an Independent Academy.³⁰⁷ In 1781, he succeeded Daniel Fisher as the classics tutor at the Independent Academy at Homerton.³⁰⁸ In addition, a few months later

and Statistics of the United Presbyterian Church, pp. 443, 494-495; Small, *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church*, Vol. 2, p. 357; Wilson, *Dissenting Churches*, Vol. 4, p. 54. Walter Wilson records of him, ‘He was considered a judicious preacher; but his voice was feeble, and notwithstanding his long residence in London, he retained the Scotch tone and accent in full perfection till the last.’

305. Small, *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church*, Vol. 2, p. 357.

306. For biographical details of Henry Hunter, see Roy Middleton, ‘John Love in London, Part 1: From licensing in Scotland to ordination in London’, pp. 184-189.

307. For the Abergavenny Academy, see Noel Gibbard, ‘Abergavenny Academy (1757-1781)’, *Dissenting Academies Online: Database and Encyclopedia*, Dr Williams’ Centre for Dissenting Studies, October 2012.

308. For the important Homerton Academy in north-east London, see Geoffrey F. Nuttall, ‘Homerton Academy and the Beginnings of Sub Rosa’, *Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society*, 5:2 (July 1993), pp. 80-85; T. H. Simms, *Homerton College, 1695-1978: From Dissenting Academy to Approved Society in the University of Cambridge* (Cambridge, 1979); David Thompson, ‘Homerton Academy (1769-1850)’, *Dissenting Academies Online: Database and Encyclopedia*, Dr Williams’ Centre for Dissenting Studies, March 2012.

he would be set apart as the minister of the Independent congregation at Fetter Lane, London. The other minister who took part, in addition to Thomas Gibbons, was Daniel Fisher (1731-1807). After Davies became the classics tutor at Homerton, Fisher became the tutor in theology. He was said to be ‘a rigid Calvinist and a staunch dissenter.’³⁰⁹ Homerton under Fisher had ‘a reputation second to none for evangelical learning and learned evangelism.’³¹⁰ Such was the rather prestigious group of Dissenting ministers who inducted Simpson to the Independent charge at Crispin Street in 1783.

During Alexander Simpson’s ministry in London he was awarded a doctorate of divinity.³¹¹ John Wilson believed the doctorate was conferred on him by the College of New Jersey, the forerunner of Princeton University.³¹² John Witherspoon, with whom Simpson had been on terms of the closest intimacy whilst they were together in Paisley, had become the President of the College of New Jersey in 1768, a position he held for twenty-six years until 1794. In addition to his role at the College, Witherspoon was very active politically. He was a delegate from New Jersey to the Second

309. For Fisher, see the article by J. M. Rigg in *DNB*. William Walford, a student at Homerton between 1793 and 1798, was critical of Fisher’s abilities as a tutor, describing him as ‘extremely grave, regular and punctilious, but possessed of as little ingenuity, adroitness, and presence of mind, as almost any man I ever knew’. He also questioned Fisher’s ability to teach effectively and to motivate his students. John Stoughton (ed.), *Autobiography of the Rev. William Walford* (London, 1851), p. 102. According to Walford, Fisher’s method of reading out his lectures and letting his students take notes from them was formulaic and unsophisticated in nature, rendering them ‘irksome and disgusting’ to the point of futility. Walford did, however, acknowledge that Fisher was an intelligent and kind man ‘of respectable talents’, *Autobiography*, pp. 104-6.

310. Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *New College, London and its Library* (Friends of Dr Williams’ Library, 1977), p. 49.

311. Mackelvie, *Annals and Statistics of the United Presbyterian Church*, p. 362 gives Simpson a medical doctorate (M.D.). This is incorrect; he does not appear to have had any medical training.

312. Wilson, *Narrative of the Origin and Progress of the Relief Church, Bellshill*, p. 29. The accuracy of this has been confirmed by Kenneth Henke of the Archives and Special Collections at Princeton Theological Seminary Library. In response to a query, he emailed on 17th July 2017 stating, ‘Alexander Simpson was awarded the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity in 1784 by the College of New Jersey (now Princeton University)’. For the history of Princeton University, see Mark Noll, *Princeton and the Republic, 1768-1822* (Princeton University Press, 1989); Thomas Jefferson Wertebaker, *Princeton, 1746-1896* (Princeton University Press, 1946).

Continental Congress and a signatory to the Declaration of Independence of 4th July 1776. He was the only active clergyman and the only College President to sign the Declaration. He served in Congress from June 1776 until November 1782 and became one of its most influential members and a workhorse of prodigious energy, serving on over 100 committees, most notably the powerful standing committees, the Board of War and the Committee on Secret Correspondence or Foreign Affairs. It seems, therefore, that it was through the influence of Witherspoon, one of the Founding Fathers of the United States, that Simpson was awarded a doctorate.

Alexander Simpson was an able evangelical preacher; and, as we have noticed, a fellow minister testified to his zeal for his Master's glory, his love to fellow believers, his Christ-centred preaching, and his desire for conversions.³¹³ In the only reference to the previous ministers at Crispin Street in his published *Letters*, John Love, writing to his parents, nineteen months after becoming the minister of the congregation, states, 'One man became a member of the meeting some months ago, in whom there appears much of the power and unadulterated purity of Divine grace, though he was never taught to read, and continued in total estrangement from God till near, I suppose the age of fifty. His conversion was introduced by a severe affliction while Dr. Simpson was here. He and his wife are a singular example of the first effectual visitation of grace happening in advanced years, though his wife had more of a liking of religion formerly than he.'³¹⁴

Simpson's ministry in London was brief; after less than three and a half years at Crispin Street he was inducted to the pastorate of an independent congregation in Alnwick in July 1786.³¹⁵ John Wilson has provided the reason for Simpson's short pastorate and why he left London. He writes: 'For the metropolis Mr. Simpson had a strong attachment, and would willingly have ended his days in it, but his children lost their

313. Wilson, *Narrative of the Origin and Progress of the Relief Church, Bellshill*, p. 25.

314. *Letters of the late John Love* (Glasgow, 1838), pp. 85-86.

315. The date of his leaving London is not absolutely clear; a date of 1787 is given by Mackelvie, *Annals and Statistics of the United Presbyterian Church*, p. 96 and the *Surman Index* at the Dr Williams' Library. However, a local history states that the previous minister died 'on the 12th of May 1786. He was succeeded the month of July following by the Rev. Dr. Simpson of London.' *A Descriptive and Historical View of Alnwick and Alnwick Castle* (Alnwick, 1822), p. 209. This date of July 1786 is corroborated by Wilson, *Narrative of the Origin and Progress of the Relief Church, Bellshill*, p. 29.

health, and one of them died; after which, he agreed to become pastor of a church at Alnwick, in the county of Northumberland.³¹⁶

Simpson's ministry after Crispin Street

(i) *Alnwick*

The church in Alnwick of which Simpson became the pastor after he left Crispin Street had a long and chequered history. It was formed in 1731 when a group of members separated from the Pottergate congregation that had originated around 1689 following the Act of Toleration. The Act allowed freedom of worship to Protestant Nonconformists who pledged to the oaths of allegiance and supremacy. The first minister of the congregation was Dr Jonathan Harle who was the pastor from 1693 until his death on 24th December 1729.³¹⁷ Though the Deed of Conveyance of the Pottergate Meeting House speaks of it being a congregation of Protestant Dissenters, it seems to have been a congregation in some way connected with the Church of Scotland.³¹⁸ Following Harle's death, a division took place due to dissatisfaction caused by the appointment of his son, who was also called Jonathan. This resulted in the formation of the Bondgate Meeting of which the first minister was John Sayers. After Sayers became blind he engaged several assistants, the last of whom was James Murray.³¹⁹ George Tate has recorded the further division that occurred in 1762 as a result of Murray's appointment:

The manners and personal appearance of the new assistant were singular and far from prepossessing; for he was careless in his dress and when preaching spoke loudly, and with a broad Scotch accent, and frequently paused in the course of his sermon and took snuff; but though he improved in manner and gave proof of ability, he failed to secure the approval of the

316. Wilson, *Narrative of the Origin and Progress of the Relief Church, Bellshill*, p. 29.

317. Jonathan Harle (1667-1729), besides being a minister of the gospel, was a physician. He received the degree of doctor of medicine from Edinburgh University in 1710. For biographical information, see George Tate, *The History of the Borough, Castle and Barony of Alnwick* (2 vols., Alnwick, 1866-69), Vol. 2, pp. 162-167.

318. For the text of the Deed of Conveyance, see George Tate, *The History of the Borough, Castle and Barony of Alnwick*, Vol. 2, pp. 167-168. This volume provides an excellent account of the Nonconformist congregations in Alnwick on pp. 159-202 to which I am indebted. See Hew Scott, *Fasti*, Vol. 7, p. 504 for the congregation's connection to the Church of Scotland.

319. For biographical information on James Murray (1732-1782), see *DNB*, Hew Scott, *Fasti*, Vol. 7, pp. 513-514.

old minister and the more aged members of the congregation; and he was therefore dismissed. A large number of the younger members, however, became attached to him; and considering him ill-used, they separated from the Bondgate meeting, and called him to be their minister. First they worshipped in the Town Hall, and then in a malt kiln in Fenkle Street, and at last built for themselves a meeting house in Bailiffgate Square...and here he laboured with success till 1764, when he removed to a dissenting congregation in Newcastle.³²⁰

After Murray left Alnwick, Michael Boston was ordained as the minister of the Bailiffgate meeting on 28th October 1765. He was the son of Thomas Boston of Jedburgh, and hence, the grandson of Thomas Boston of Ettrick.³²¹ In the first few years of Boston's ministry, a better feeling grew between the Bailiffgate and Bondgate congregations and a union was achieved in 1767. The old Bondgate meeting-house was too small and was taken down and a rebuilt on a larger plan. After five years' ministry in Northumberland, Boston left Alnwick in 1770 and was inducted as the first minister of the Relief congregation in Falkirk where he remained until his death in 1785 at the early age of forty. Boston was succeeded, as we noted

320. Tate, *The History of the Borough, Castle and Barony of Alnwick*, Vol. 2, p. 173.

321. Michael Boston (1745-1785), after his ordination at Alnwick, in the early months of 1767, was called by the Relief Congregation of Duns to be their first minister. However, at that stage in his career he was unwilling to become a minister of the denomination of which his father had been a founder. According to Robert Small, 'some cloud had come between him and the Relief Presbytery.' After his father's death on 13th February 1767, he was called to succeed him at Jedburgh. The Relief Presbytery, meeting in August 1767, refused to receive the call because Boston had expressed a disinclination to become a member of the Relief Presbytery when the Duns congregation had called him earlier in the same year. For details of Michael Boston's life, see the biographical account by William Campbell attached to Michael Boston, *Discourses on Important Subjects of the Gospel delivered on public occasions* (Edinburgh, 1787), and Small, *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church*, Vol. 1, pp. 401, 665-666; Vol. 2, pp. 259-260. Michael Boston took a great interest in the publication of his grandfather's works. He published an edition of the *Fourfold State* in 1784 and provided the manuscripts for a five-volume edition of Boston of Ettrick's sermons in the early 1770s. The printer's proposal concludes by stating, 'It is almost unnecessary to say, that these sermons ... are intended to be published by the consent and under the inspection of the Rev. Mr Michael Boston, the author's grandson, who furnishes the manuscripts to the transcriber, and compares the transcript with the original before printing.' Publisher's proposal at the end the second volume of Thomas Boston, *An Illustration of the Doctrines of the Christian Religion, with respect to the Faith and Practice upon the plan of the Assembly's Shorter Catechism, comprehending A Complete Body of Divinity* (3 vols., Edinburgh, 1773).

earlier, by Thomas Monteith, the Relief minister of Duns, who continued as pastor till his death from paralysis in 1786. During Monteith's ministry the congregation flourished and by the time of his death it was the largest in Alnwick. Most of the old members who had called Michael Boston in 1765 were still living; and having a favourable recollection of his brother-in-law, Alexander Simpson, who had preached to them, a correspondence was entered into with him with a view to his accepting the charge. From the correspondence, it seems that Simpson negotiated the terms of his appointment and the level of his stipend.³²² Financial arrangements, however, were at length agreed, and a call was given to him to become their minister, signed by upwards of 500 people. He was then inducted to the charge in July 1786. In becoming the minister of this congregation, Alexander Simpson had succeeded Thomas Monteith for the second time, first in Duns and then in Alnwick.

It was during his ministry at Alnwick that Simpson produced the second of the three pamphlets that were written by him which we have been able to identify. All three were produced in the midst of controversy. On the Whitsunday 1788 (11th May), John Johnson, a curate of the Church of England in Alnwick, preached a sermon in the parish church in which he appears to have accurately expounded the Bible's witness regarding the Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. This resulted in an anonymous pamphlet being written against the curate by a writer calling himself 'Rationalis' in which he denied the Saviour's divinity.³²³ Simpson had been in Scotland, and when he returned to Alnwick a copy of the pamphlet was given him by a friend, urging him to answer the arguments put forward by Rationalis due to their pernicious tendency. After he read the pamphlet, Simpson regarded the argument as so weak that he thought it was unnecessary to attempt a refutation. However, other people whom he regarded as 'judicious Christians', and who were in a better position than Simpson to

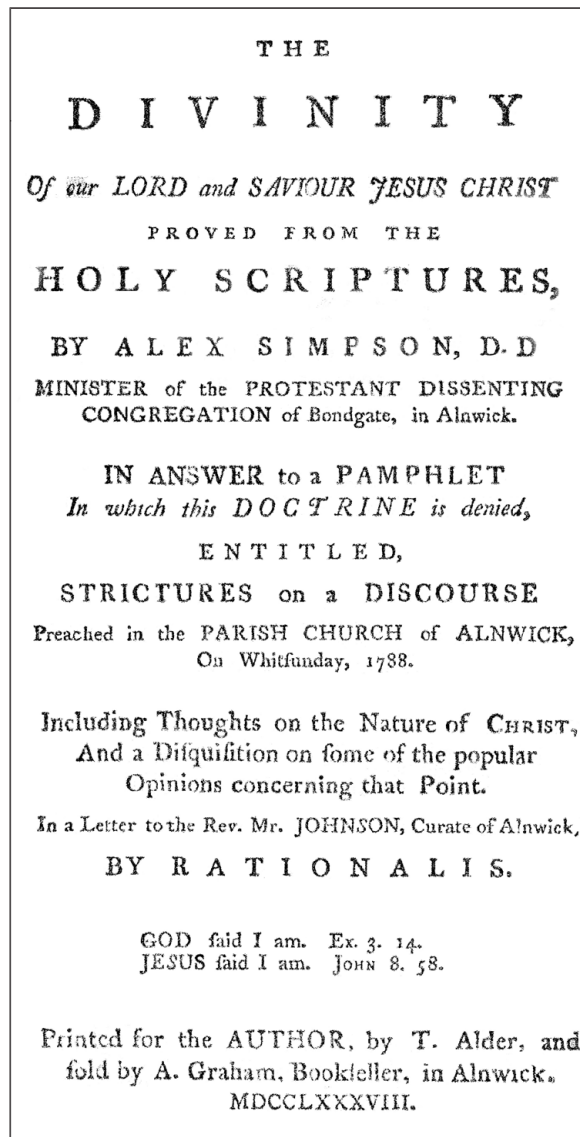
322. The minutiae of these discussions are recorded by Tate, which, besides the cost of renting convenient accommodation for a family of ten persons, included the cost of coal, milk, mutton, a housemaid's salary, and the keeping of a horse. Tate concludes, 'Dr. Simpson...seems to have been a shrewd Scotsman, and careful about the conditions of the appointment'. Tate, *The History of the Borough, Castle and Barony of Alnwick*, Vol. 2, pp. 174-175.

323. Rationalis, *Strictures on a Discourse in the parish church of Alnwick, on Whitsunday 1788; including thoughts on the nature of Christ, and a disquisition on some popular notions concerning that point, in a letter to the Reverend Mr. Johnson, curate of Alnwick* (Berwick, 1788).

observe the effect that the pamphlet was having, particularly on the minds of young people, urged him to publish a reply.

He first contacted the Anglican curate, John Johnson, to ascertain whether he intended to respond to the pamphlet by Rationalis; on being informed that he ‘did not intend to take any notice of the production’ he at last yielded to his friends’ desires to produce a reply and to ‘throw this little mite of service into the hands of the public, in support of so glorious a cause.’ Accordingly, Simpson published later that year a thirty-nine page refutation in which he ably defended the divinity of the Saviour from Scripture.³²⁴ He concludes with these words addressed to the Alnwick curate, ‘Go on Mr. Johnson, to merit the esteem of the intelligent, the judicious, the wise and the good, by continuing to preach in defiance of reproach that Jesus is the true God and eternal life. And let us drop a tear of tender compassion over poor Rationalis

(who seems to be better acquainted with the disquisitions of Dr Priestley on this subject, than the divine fountain of revelation) if God peradventure will give him repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.’³²⁵



*Title page of Simpson's Alnwick pamphlet
against Rationalis.*

324. Alexander Simpson, *The Divinity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ proved from the Holy Scriptures in answer to a pamphlet in which the doctrine is denied entitled Strictures on a Discourse preached in the parish church of Alnwick on Whitsunday, 1788, including thoughts on the nature of Christ and a disquisition on some of the popular opinions concerning that point in a letter to the Rev. Mr. Johnson, Curate of Alnwick, by Rationalis* (Alnwick, 1788).

325. Alexander Simpson, *The Divinity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, p. 39. The

Though he had defended this central doctrine of the faith, Simpson did not prove to be a suitable minister for the Protestant Dissenters in Alnwick. His conduct caused some of the members to leave, and others to complain to the elders. Their letter of complaint indicates the religious tone of the congregation; they had apparently spoken directly with Simpson ‘telling him that his conduct in attending and countenancing various public amusements and indulging in other improprieties is such a conformity to the world, as is inconsistent with the profession of any Christian, much more so a minister of the gospel; that he had neglected to visit the sick, a shameful omission of his ministerial duty; that he had left off annual religious visitation and the annual diet of catechising; and that he had departed from a religious course of lecturing, contrary to the practice of his predecessors and the wishes of the congregation; and they offer to cooperate with him in any method towards revival of religion amongst them, of the promotion of the Redeemer’s kingdom amongst them in the present state of infidelity and profanity.’³²⁶ Following this rebuke, Simpson did not stay long in Alnwick. After being in Northumberland for just three years, in July 1789, he moved to Pittenweem in Fifeshire. No respect was shown to him when he left; perhaps his keenness over financial matters had been carried too far as the congregation resolved ‘that Dr. Simpson should be fully paid for the time he had preached among us, but no further’.³²⁷

(ii) *Pittenweem*

Pittenweem was a fishing village in Fife, one and a half miles south of Anstruther. The Relief Church congregation in the town had been formed in 1777 whilst Simpson was at Crispin Street. In March 1776 James Nairn, whose father and grandfather had been ministers of nearby Anstruther-Easter, was ordained to the Established Church parish of Pittenweem in opposition to the wishes of the majority of the parishioners. This

reference to Dr. Priestley is to the Presbyterian minister and scientist, Joseph Priestley (1733-1804), whose beliefs became increasingly unorthodox. At first he held Arian views on the Person of Christ but later became completely anti-Trinitarian. He also rejected the doctrine of the atonement and the inspiration of Scripture. In the realm of science, Priestley is chiefly known for his discovery of oxygen. For biographical details, see the lengthy article in *ODNB*.

326. Tate, *The History of the Borough, Castle and Barony of Alnwick*, Vol. 2, p. 175. See also Small, *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church*, Vol. 1, pp. 401-402.

327. Tate, *The History of the Borough, Castle and Barony of Alnwick*, Vol. 2, p. 175.

resulted in an application to the Relief Presbytery for sermon, and in the erecting of a place of worship. The building that was able to seat 500 people served the congregation for eighty years, but was regarded as cold, damp, and unsuitable.³²⁸ In the twelve years since its commencement the congregation had two ministers; the second, Alexander Hunter, had left them and joined the Established Church in 1788. The congregation now called Simpson to be their pastor and accordingly the Relief Synod of 1789 received a petition that he be inducted by their Dysart Presbytery.³²⁹ Due to the manner in which he had left the Duns Congregation six years earlier, the Synod refused simply to receive Simpson back into the Relief Church. They required him to acknowledge that he had behaved improperly in leaving Duns without the approval of his Presbytery, thereby denying his fellow presbyters the opportunity to review the matter and regularly to dissolve the pastoral relationship. In response, Simpson stated that in his estimation wrongdoing meant the transgression of God's Law, and he knew of no Law of God which he had transgressed in that affair, and neither was he convinced that his conduct was inconsistent with Presbyterian government. After hearing this response, the Synod dismissed the congregation's request and refused to receive Simpson back into the Relief Church. Undeterred, Simpson commenced his pastorate of the Pittenweem congregation. However, at the next Synod he gave in a paper containing an apology for leaving the congregation of Duns in the way he did, whereupon it was agreed to receive him back into the Relief body.

It seems very probable that family ties played a considerable part in Simpson's reception back into the Relief Church; as Robert Small points out, 'the fact that he was son-in-law to Boston of Jedburgh, and that he had two brothers-in-law in Dysart Presbytery, may have inclined them to compass an accommodation with him.'³³⁰ We noted earlier that Thomas Boston of Jedburgh had three daughters married to Relief ministers.

328. For the Established Church at Anstruther and Pittenweem, see Hew Scott, *Fasti*, Vol. 5, pp. 179-185, 226-229; and for the Relief Church, see Small, *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church*, Vol. 2, pp. 386-389.

329. The Dysart Presbytery had been formed in 1776. The Relief Church then had four Presbyteries – Glasgow, Edinburgh, St. Ninians (formed in 1781), and Dysart. The formation of the St. Ninians and Dysart Presbyteries was due to the growth of the Relief Church in the area north of Glasgow and in Fife. See Struthers, *History of the Rise, Progress and Principles of the Relief Church*, pp. 305, 335.

330. Small, *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church*, Vol. 2, p. 387.

Catherine was married to Simpson; Margaret to William Campbell, the Relief minister of Dysart; and Jean to Robert Paterson, the Relief minister of Largo.³³¹ Both Campbell and Paterson were members of the Dysart Presbytery that approved Simpson's reception back into ministerial status in the Relief Church.

Simpson was the minister of Pittenweem for just less than four years, during which he contributed significantly to the work of the Dysart Presbytery. Besides acting as the Clerk of the Presbytery, he took a major role in opposing the errors of James Smith of Dunfermline. Following Thomas Gillespie's death in 1774, James Smith (1749-1810), who was born at Leslie in Fife, was called to succeed him in the prestigious charge of Dunfermline. The call, however, was not harmonious, and after it was confirmed by the Presbytery, the main complainant stated that he would not trouble the Relief Synod by a further appeal but would appeal to a civil court. The Presbytery ignored the threat and ordained Smith during 1777, although the exact date cannot be determined. Six years later, in 1783, Smith published his *Historical Sketches of the Relief Church*³³² in which he exposed unsparingly the defections of the Established Church. He was, however, soon to find that his own teaching was being subject to scrutiny. In 1787 he published a treatise entitled *The Carnal Man's Character*³³³ which purported to expound the teaching in Romans 7:14-25. His brethren in the Presbytery regarded the volume as propounding the Arminian view of the section of Paul's epistle in question. Smith responded in terse terms by affirming that those who opposed him 'are chargeable with the most criminal abuse of the inspired writings, give lie to the Holy Ghost, and are exposed to the curse of God.'³³⁴ The following year, in what Smith regarded as an attempt at refuting the errors of William M'Gill of Ayr, he published a volume entitled *An Essay on Confessing the Truth: with an illustration of the necessity, nature and design of Christ's sufferings, in*

331. For biographical details of Campbell, see Small, *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church*, Vol. 2, p. 385. His mother-in-law, the wife of Thomas Boston of Jedburgh, seems to have lived with Campbell after her husband's death in 1767. She died at Dysart in 1787; Margaret Campbell was her youngest daughter. For Paterson, see Small, *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church*, Vol. 2, pp. 382, 409.

332. James Smith, *Historical Sketches of the Relief Church and a few subjects of controversy discussed with an address to the Burgher Clergy* (Edinburgh, 1783).

333. James Smith, *The Carnal Man's Character: being an illustration of part of the seventh chapter of the epistle to the Romans, from verse 14 to the end of the chapter* (Edinburgh, 1787).

334. Small, *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church*, Vol. 1, p. 294.

*which the doctrine of the atonement is explained and vindicated.*³³⁵ It was to this volume that Simpson produced a reply three years later in 1791. It was Simpson's contention that instead of refuting the teaching of the Ayrshire minister, James Smith had in some areas embraced M'Gill's views. This was particularly the case when he asserted that he had found common ground on which all could agree.

Dr William M'Gill (1732-1807) was the Church of Scotland minister in the second charge in Ayr and a committed member of the Moderate party in the Establishment. His treatise that Smith was attempting to refute was published in 1786 and was entitled *A Practical Essay on the Death of Jesus Christ*.³³⁶ M'Gill's principal motive in publishing the book seems to have been financial. His wife had died the previous year and he was in debt and in poor health and sought to make provision for his large family. The book was regarded as teaching Socinianism and his Presbytery appointed a committee of inquiry to examine and report on the heresies which the doctor's writings were alleged to contain. In their report, this committee charged M'Gill with having inculcated, in his publications, erroneous notions on the following points: the original and essential dignity of the Son of God; the doctrine of atonement by Christ's sufferings and death; the priesthood and intercession of Christ; the method of reconciling sinners to God; and the Church's requirement of subscription to the Westminster Confession of Faith. M'Gill's case eventually came to the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr in April 1790 when, following an artfully worded apology and amidst great rejoicing, he was acquitted. All that M'Gill admitted to in his apology was that he was 'sensible that there are ideas contained in these publications which may appear improper, and modes of expression ambiguous and unguarded, particularly respecting the original and essential dignity of the Son of God.'³³⁷

This was regarded by very many, quite understandably, as less than satisfactory, and money was raised to hire an advocate in order to prosecute a libel against M'Gill. When this came to the General Assembly in 1791, it was dismissed without considering the merits of the case. The Assembly

335. James Smith, *An Essay on Confessing the Truth: with an illustration of the necessity, nature and design of Christ's sufferings, in which the doctrine of the atonement is explained and vindicated* (Falkirk, 1788).

336. William M'Gill, *A Practical Essay on the Death of Jesus Christ* (Edinburgh, 1786).

337. *Proceedings of the very reverend the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr held at Ayr on the 13th & 14th April 1790 relating to some late publications of the Rev. Dr. William M'Gill with the final decisions in that cause* (Glasgow, 1790), p. 12.

declared that the complainers had no particular right or interest in the affair to become libellers of M'Gill, because they were not of his parish; they then added that the cause had been already determined, and on these grounds dismissed the complaint as both groundless and unreasonable. John Macleod made an accurate assessment of the case when he wrote: 'The shuffling unbelief of the Ayrshire Moderates came out of cover when M'Gill of Ayr ventured to give to the world his *Essay on the Death of Christ*, in which he showed himself to be a Socinian. He was brought to book, and had to withdraw this publication; but though so far it came under censure, its writer was let off lightly, for the case was huddled up. The Moderates were very easy in their dealing with errorists.'³³⁸

James Smith published his treatise against M'Gill in 1788 whilst he was the Relief minister of Dunfermline; shortly afterwards he was called to a newly formed Relief congregation at Chapelshade, Dundee. The Dysart

338. John Macleod, *Scottish Theology* (Edinburgh, 1946), p. 212. Until recently, the secondary literature on the M'Gill case was slight. The only substantive treatment was Alexander McNair, *Scots Theology in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1928). Brief accounts will be found in Henry F. Henderson, *The Religious Controversies of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1905), pp. 86-94; M'Kerrow, *History of the Secession Church*, pp. 359-371; Struthers, *History of the Rise, Progress and Principles of the Relief Church*, pp. 355-367. More recently, work on the extensive correspondence held in the Dr Williams' Library in London between James Wodrow, the son of Robert Wodrow of Eastwood, and the Unitarian Samuel Kenrick, between c.1750-1810 has thrown very considerable light on the M'Gill case. Wodrow, a Moderate, was a close friend of M'Gill and assisted in brokering a solution which enabled him to retain his living. The correspondence is being edited by a small group of scholars, one of which is Martin Fitzpatrick, formerly of the University College of Wales in Aberystwyth. Fitzpatrick discusses the M'Gill case at length in his article 'Varieties of Candour: Scottish and English Style', *Enlightenment and Dissent*, No. 7 (1988), pp. 35-56. See also two recent unpublished theses on M'Gill: Robert Richard, 'An examination of the life and career of William McGill (1732-1807), Controversial Ayr Theologian' (PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, 2009); Luke G. Breeke, "'In an age so enlightened, enthusiasm so extravagant": Popular religion in Enlightenment Scotland, 1712-1791' (PhD thesis, University of Minnesota, 2009). The contemporary works written against M'Gill are quite extensive and include William Peebles (Church of Scotland), *The Great Things which the Lord hath done for the Nation, illustrated and improved; two sermons in which appeared 'Remarks' on a sermon preached the same day by William M'Gill, D.D.* (Kilmarnock 1788); John Jamieson (Anti-Burgher Seceder), *Socinianism Unmasked in four letters* (Edinburgh, 1787); John Dick (Burgher Seceder), *The Conduct and Doom of False Teachers* (Edinburgh, 1788); Associate Synod (Burgher Seceder), *A warning against Socinianism; in which, particular notice is taken of a late publication, entitled 'A practical essay upon the death of Jesus Christ', by Dr. M'Gill, one of the Ministers of Ayr* (Falkirk, 1788); Reformed Presbytery, *A Testimony and Warning against Socinian and Unitarian Errors* (Glasgow, 1793).

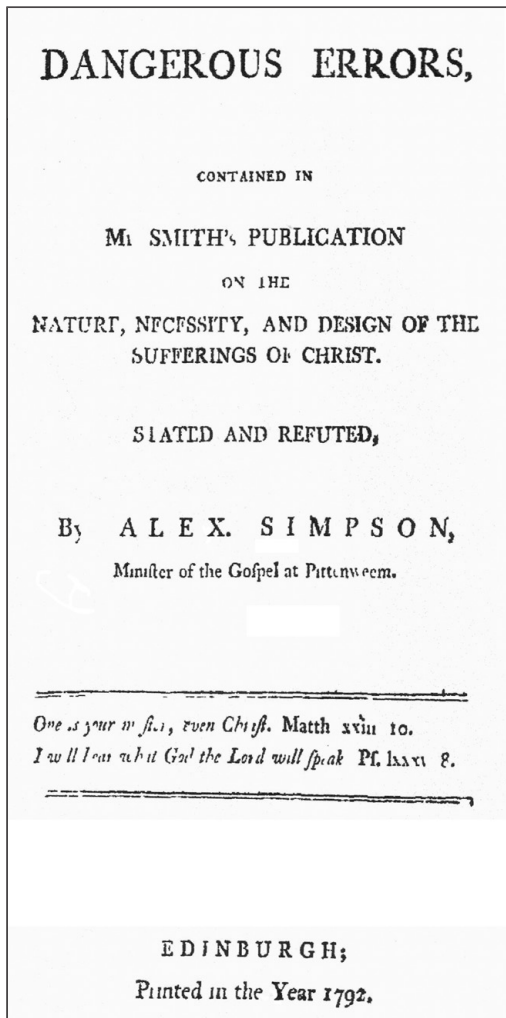
Presbytery was uneasy at transferring him from Dunfermline to Dundee, largely due to his earlier book on *The Carnal Man's Character*. The Relief Synod, however, took a different view and in May 1790 he was inducted to the Dundee charge. The following year the case was again before the Synod, and it was arranged that in each of the four Relief Presbyteries a committee should be appointed to examine the book, and afterwards these would coalesce, and draw up a joint report for the Synod of 1792. Meanwhile the Dysart Presbytery was recommended to treat Smith with brotherly tenderness. Then, in a move which seems to have been to protect Smith from those who opposed him, the Synod disjoined Smith and another three ministers from the Dysart Presbytery and formed them into the Presbytery of Perth. At the first three meetings of the new Presbytery, Smith occupied the chair, but on 9th September 1791 a *pro re nata* meeting was held at Perth, when it was 'certified that the Rev. James Smith had deserted them and was off to the Establishment.' Eight days later, Smith's former brethren, finding him guilty of attempting to detach the congregation of Dundee from the Relief body, 'deposed him from the ministry in all its parts.'³³⁹ On 7th December 1791, Smith's application for admission to the Established Church was granted, and on the following Sabbath one of the town's ministers preached in Chapelshade, and declared the former Relief Church to be a Chapel of Ease in connection with the Church of Scotland in Dundee. Smith had left the Relief Church in order to avoid discipline and had taken the building and congregation with him to the National Church.

This was the background against which Alexander Simpson published in 1792 his eighty-page refutation of Smith's publication which he regarded as being tainted with the views of William M'Gill. It was entitled *Dangerous Errors contained in Mr. Smith's publication on the Necessity, and Design of the Sufferings of Christ, stated and refuted*.³⁴⁰ Simpson's treatise, which was begun two months before Smith left the Relief Church, is in the form of thirteen letters addressed to the Relief Presbytery of Fife, to the Elders and Managers of their several congregations, and to the Heads of Families and pious Christians under their pastoral care. Simpson was gravely concerned regarding Smith's views. On a personal level, one aspect of his concern was that he had been part of the Presbytery that had ordained Smith to his

339. Small, *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church*, Vol. 1, p. 295.

340. Alexander Simpson, *Dangerous Errors contained in Mr. Smith's Publication on the Necessity, and Design of the Sufferings of Christ, Stated and Refuted* (Edinburgh, 1792).

original charge in Dunfermline in 1777 as successor to Gillespie. His main concern was expressed with clarity in his first letter. He writes, ‘His *Carnal*



Title page of Simpson's pamphlet against James Smith.

Man's Character hath made the greatest noise, and given the greatest alarm to the Christians under the inspection of the Relief Presbytery of Dysart; but his performance on the *Nature, Necessity, and Design, of the Sufferings of Christ*, is filled with the most deadly poison, as it contains doctrines contrary to the true nature of God; to his holy law, in the nature and design of it; and to the atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ.³⁴¹

Smith's position is ably summarised by Gavin Struthers: 'The penalty connected with the moral law he considered arbitrary on the part of God. "It is wisdom and goodness, rather than justice," said he, "which regulates the nature and extent of the penalty." "This arbitrary penalty being incurred, God appointed his Son to bear it without mitigation; but in his sufferings there was no satisfaction made to the essential or vindictive

justice of God against sin, for there was no such attribute in God. The sufferings of Christ were merely intended to prevent the law from losing its force, and, by an example of suffering, to establish the authority of the Law-giver, and to enforce obedience to its precepts."³⁴² The view that Smith held with respect to the atonement was that maintained by Abelard against Anselm and has been termed the Moral Influence theory of the Atonement.³⁴³ Simpson, in refuting Smith, asserts and defends the

341. Simpson, *Dangerous Errors*, p. 11.

342. Struthers, *History of the Rise, Progress and Principles of the Relief Church*, pp. 361-362.

343. See Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Banner of Truth, 1963), pp. 386-387.

doctrine of God's essential justice, the penal substitutionary character of the atonement, and he recommends to his readers the more extensive treatments by the able Relief minister Thomas Bell.³⁴⁴

Within a year of his work against Smith being published, Alexander Simpson was dead. He died on 6th January 1793, in the sixtieth year of his age and thirtieth of his ministry. Robert Small's discerning assessment of Simpson ministerial career is as follows, 'Had he possessed more stability, and been less self-willed, his talents might have been of much greater service both to the Relief cause and to the Church at large.'³⁴⁵

Crispin Street Congregation in 1787

It is almost certain that John Love would have known very little of the history that we have detailed in this article when he accepted the call to Crispin Street in succession to Alexander Simpson. The congregation with respect to its ecclesiastical polity since its inception, ninety years earlier, had been that of Independency. Its first four ministers were, by explicit profession, Independents with regard to their view of Church government. Potts had been in the Scottish Secession Church but had renounced Presbyterianism and embraced Independency. Alexander Simpson had been ordained in the Relief Church, the least committed to Presbyterianism of the Scottish Presbyterian Churches. The founder of the denomination, Thomas Gillespie, had been trained by Philip Doddridge and ordained by English Dissenting ministers, added to which, at his tutor's instigation, he had served briefly in an Independent Church in Hartbarrow, near Cartmel Fell in Cumbria before being called to Carnock in Fife. Several Relief ministers, like Thomas Colier and Michael Boston, had been ministers in English Independent Congregations before accepting calls in Scotland. When Simpson left Crispin Street, as we have seen, he became the minister of an Independent congregation in Alnwick before returning to Scotland. Why then the office-bearers at

344. For his statement of the orthodox Reformed doctrine of the atonement, see Simpson, *Dangerous Errors*, pp. 53-60 (Letter 10). He had clearly read and agreed with the teaching of Francis Turretin regarding the Death of Christ, both with respect to its nature and its extent. The treatises of Thomas Bell that he recommends are his translation from the Dutch of Peter Allinga, *The Satisfaction of Christ stated and defended against the Socinians*, and his refutation of M'Gill entitled *The Articles of Ayr contrasted with the Articles of Truth*. These were published together (Glasgow, 1790) with separate title-pages but continuous pagination.

345. Small, *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church*, Vol. 2, p. 387.

Crispin Street turned to the Scots Presbytery in London to seek John Love's ordination we do not know. As Simpson had been inducted after an Independent pattern four years earlier it seems unlikely that ordination by a Presbytery had been at the instigation of the Crispin Street office-bearers. What appears more probable is that after the protracted vacancy following Potts' retirement and Simpson's short pastorate they desired John Love, who was without any charge, to become their minister and that it was Love who had insisted on presbyterial ordination. Prior to setting in motion the procedure to call John Love, the congregation at Crispin Street does not appear in the minutes of the London Presbytery. It seems, therefore, most probable that Love's view of Church polity, and that of his office-bearers and congregation, were very different.

The Independent congregation at Crispin Street was decidedly Calvinistic. All the ministers that preceded Love were Calvinists. From a consideration of John Love's *Letters*, written whilst he was the minister the congregation, which we intend to consider in a subsequent article, it seems that the Hyper-Calvinism of Hussey and the High Calvinism of Bentley was still a predominant aspect of the witness at Crispin Street. John Potts, though a student in the Secession Church with its commitment to 'Marrow Theology', whilst not completely abandoning that theology, as he had his Presbyterianism, seems to have been readily accepted by the London High Calvinists. The separation from Crispin Street on Potts' arrival was clearly a secession of Baptist High Calvinists who were unhappy with a minister whose background was the Scottish Secession Church. The influence of Hussey, and the long and appreciated ministry of Bentley – though he had been dead for thirty-six years, seems still to have been fragrant to the Crispin Street people. John Love, on the other hand, was a Scottish evangelical Calvinist in the mould of Thomas Boston. The men who appreciated Love when he returned to Scotland were the great Highland evangelicals in the Church of Scotland, men like Peter MacBride, Archibald Cook, and John Macdonald. The evangelical Calvinism of John Love, along with his Presbyterianism, seems to have placed him at variance from a significant number in the membership of the congregation to which he had been called to serve.