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ENGLISH NONCONFORMIST HOME MISSIONS 1796-1901

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PREFACE

The task of mission has been of paramount importance to the church ever since she received her commission from her resurrected Lord (Matt. 28:19). But the experience of the church in England during the twentieth century, which has caused many to question her ability to survive, has brought a fresh urgency to the task of mission at home. Even among those who are confident of its future there is a recognition that her survival depends on her adopting a missionary role and overcoming the false assumption that she is self-sufficient merely as a pastoral community.

The Nonconformists have historically been more consistently missionary in orientation than the Established Church and a study of the rise and development of their home missionary work in the nineteenth century is richly rewarding for an understanding of our own day. This is especially true in the light of the fact that the twentieth century church has inherited many of the structures and attitudes of the last century whilst not being so willing to adopt the same adventurous creativity.

I wish to acknowledge my debt to many who have encouraged me in this study and made the presentation of this thesis possible. I am especially grateful to the staffs of several libraries for their patient and untiring help, namely, The Baptist Union Library, London; The Congregational Library, Memorial Hall, London; The British Library; the Methodist Church Archives, John Rylands Library, Manchester and Dr. Williams's Library, London. In addition the staffs of a number of societies, indicated in the bibliography, have generously provided me with resource material for which I am grateful.

On a more personal basis I wish to thank Win Clarke and Olive Barnett for their typing of successive drafts of this thesis. I am also grateful to my secretary, Marilyn Wagnell, not only for typing some of this thesis but also for shouldering extra responsibility whilst the research was in the final stages. My thanks are due too to Steve Pike for his willingness to undertake the laborious task of proof-reading at a difficult time. Most of all I wish to acknowledge my debt to my supervisor, John Briggs, for his stimulous in so many ways during the past few years. Lastly, I wish to thank my parents for their unfailing support and help over many years.

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ABBREVIATIONS

B.F.B.S.	British and Foreign Bible Society
B.H.M.S.	Baptist Home Missionary Society
B.&I.B.H.M.	The British and Irish Baptist Home Mission
B.M.	Baptist Magazine
B.Q.	Baptist Quarterly
B.R.	Baptist Record
B.T.S.	Baptist Tract Society
B.U.	Baptist Union
B.U. Handbook	Baptist Union Handbook
C.I.S.	Christian Instruction Society
Con. Mag.	Congregational Magazine
C.Y.B.	Congregational Year Book
E.A. Mins	Minutes of the Evangelical Alliance Council
E.M.	Evangelical Magazine
F.C.C. Mins	Minutes of the General Committee of the Free Church Council
F.C.Y.B.	Free Church Year Book
H.M.S.Mag.	Home Missionary Society Magazine
L.B.A.	London Baptist Association
L.C.M.	London City Mission
L.C.M. Mins.	Minutes of the London City Mission
L.M.S.	London Missionary Society
M.M.	Methodist Magazine
M.T.	Methodist Times
Mins. of B.H.M.S.	Minutes of the Baptist Home Missionary Society
Mins. of Meth. Conf.	Minutes of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference
R.T.S.	Religious Tract Society
S.E.	Societas Evangelica
T.E.S. Mins.	Minutes of The Evangelisation Society
V.I.S.	Village Itinerancy Society

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines an important dimension of nineteenth century English Nonconformist life, namely, their missionary endeavours as directed towards the home population. Whilst recognising the significance of other recent studies on the periodic phenomenon of revival, the statistical growth of Nonconformity and its social and political influence, the purpose of this thesis is to investigate the rise and development of Nonconformity's routine attempts to evangelise England over the course of the whole century from the time when their evangelists were persecuted Dissenters, through the days of influential Nonconformity to the waning of their social and spiritual influence at the turn of the century.

The thesis revolves around the twin axes of unity and diversity. Chapter 1 outlines the unified point of departure which gave rise to a new wave of missionary endeavour and illustrates it by reference to some of the early itinerant societies. The following three chapters trace the diverse and individual developments of home missions within the Methodist, Baptist and Congregational churches respectively. Appendix B outlines, more superficially, developments in other Nonconformist bodies. Chapter 5 further recognises the dimension of diversity as it extended beyond the denominations to the organisation of evangelistic societies. Special attention is paid to the way in which they handles the problems implicit in their non-church based inter-denominationalism. Chapter 6 returns to the theme of unity and examines evidence of greater theological and methodological coherence as exhibited in the united mission of 1901. It also reflects on the century and suggests that it is possible to trace a common framework of experience to which all denominations, despite their differences, were ultimately subject.

The final chapter approaches the home missionary endeavour from a theological, not structural, perspective and examines four different theological orientations to the task together with their methodological implications. It concludes with an overall assessment of the movement.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION: THE CREATIVE PERIOD OF NONCONFORMIST HOME MISSIONS

1.1 Recent Studies in Nineteenth Century Church History

In a recent critical appraisal of the study of Victorian religious history, which aptly summarizes the current position, Hugh McLeod has identified the principal characteristics of the new direction such studies have taken in the last ten years.¹ The chief feature of this new direction has been the historian's concern with the religion of the people in contrast to the religion of the religious intellectuals or church leaders.² They have written sympathetically, yet in a detached way, concerning their subject matter; they have not written from the sectarian standpoint of the older denominational historians and they have shown a good deal of interest in the perspective of the sociology of religion.

The works reviewed by McLeod fall into three main areas of interest, namely, the origins of the early nineteenth century revival of religion and its social context; the relationship between religion, social class and politics and the decline of Victorian religion and the growth of

1 H. McLeod, 'Recent Studies in Victorian Religious History', Victorian Studies, xxi (1978), 245-255.

2 Recent studies are therefore fulfilling the hope expressed by G. Kitson Clark for a religious history from 'more nearly the ground level of the ordinary, not very intelligent, not very erudite human being ...', The Making of Victorian England (London, 1972), p. 147.

its ideological rivals.¹ Since McLeod's review it would be necessary to add a fourth area of interest in the phenomenon of revivalism which, although it relates to each of the areas mentioned by McLeod, deserves to be treated as a separate issue.²

McLeod concludes his review with two general comments. Firstly, he argues that there has been a tendency to lay a one-sided emphasis on the social determinants of religious movements and an insufficient stress on the religious context of religious movements. Secondly, he laments the continuing trend to confine the study of religious history within the limits of organised religion despite the efforts of some of the authors he mentions to break out of such boundaries.

To this second charge the present study would need to plead guilty. As a study of the nineteenth century home missionary movement among the Nonconformists, it will largely be concerned with the structures, activities and thought of the major denominations of revived Dissent. Even so, home missionary activity often originated outside the organised structures of Dissent and was in the first place a lively expression of the desires and mood of ordinary Christians until it was either captured by the denominational structures, or became institutionalized itself, or was left in isolation to shrink into insignificance.

1 The principle works McLeod cites are P. Backstrom, Christian Socialism and Co-operation in Victorian England (London, 1974); I. Bradley, The Call to Seriousness (London, 1976); S. Budd, Varieties of Unbelief (London, 1977); A.D. Gilbert, Religion and Society in Industrial England (London, 1976); T.W. Laqueur, Religion and Respectability (London & New Haven, 1976); E.R. Norman, Church and Society in England 1770-1970 (Oxford, 1976); J. Obelkevich, Religion and Rural Society, South Lindsey 1825-1875 (Oxford, 1976); W.R. Ward, Early Victorian Methodism (London & New York, 1976) and S. Yeo, Religion and Voluntary Organisations in Crisis (London, 1976). He modestly omits his own work, H. McLeod, Class and Religion in the Late Victorian City (London, 1974).

2 See R. Carwardine, Transatlantic Revivalism (Westport, 1978) and J. Kent, Holding the Fort (London, 1978).

The first criticism offered by McLeod is one which the present study seriously acknowledges. The importance of the social context in which religious movements arise and in which their fortunes fluctuate is fully recognized. The social context in which people live not only has crucial significance for their responsiveness to a particular political or religious message¹ but is in itself a contributory factor in determining the availability of people who wish to spread a particular message and the way in which those people organise or fail to organise the propagation of their message.

This has been the emphasis of recent studies² and has provided much illumination into the phenomenon of Nonconformist growth. Such an interpretation of Nonconformity is not however the whole picture³ and an examination of factors within religion itself is an important contribution to a more complete interpretation.⁴ It is not therefore the purpose of this thesis to examine the social determinants of the nineteenth century Nonconformist home missionary movement. It is its purpose to document the rise and the development of the nineteenth century Nonconformist attempt to evangelise England, examining principally

1 D. McGavran, Understanding Church Growth (Grand Rapids, 1970), ch. 12

2 The most thorough-going attempt to analyse these social factors in relation to church growth and decline in Great Britain is that of R. Currie, A.D. Gilbert and L. Horsley, Churches and Church-goers: Patterns of Church Growth in Great Britain since 1700 (Oxford, 1977).

3 Analysts of contemporary American Church Growth stress the relevance of four dimensions in determining growth. They are: national contextual factors; national institutional factors; local contextual factors and local institutional factors. See, Understanding Church Growth and Decline 1950-1978, eds. D.R. Hoge and D.A. Roozen, (New York, 1979), pp. 317-325.

4 The present writer sees no need to adopt the either/or explanations which are apparent in some recent writing, e.g. Bradley, op. cit., pp. 54 & 56 or for the opposite viewpoint A. Armstrong, The Church of England, the Methodists and Society 1700-1850 (London, 1973), p. 172.

the religious and theological issues which were involved. It chiefly sets out to unravel the patterns of missionary activity; the organisations and structures which developed and the theological thinking which underlay the missionary task of the church.

The background framework for this study owes much to A.D. Gilbert's Religion and Society in Industrial England with its stimulating analysis of the overall growth and decline of the major churches between 1740 and 1914. Having outlined the social and ecclesiastical context of the eighteenth century, Gilbert turns to a detailed investigation of the rise of New Dissent which, he argues, exhibited the marks of an evangelical consensus which was more significant than the denominational or doctrinal differences that remained. This revived Dissent developed rapidly in numerical terms, so much so, in fact, that Gilbert is able to label Nonconformity in this period up to 1840, as 'essentially a phenomenon of growth'. For him Nonconformity was a 'plurality of non-Anglican religious organisations which have shared a common pattern of quantitative development.'¹

During this early phase Nonconformity held the making of converts to be a priority and organised a rapid mobilization of its resources to that end. This phase was to give way to one of organisational maturity and consolidation and this phase in turn was to be followed by one of organisational decline. During these later phases there was to be an increasing emphasis on church buildings; on entry to church membership through socialization, especially through the Sunday School, as distinct

1 The quotations are from A.D. Gilbert, The Growth and Decline of Nonconformity in England and Wales (Oxford University D. Phil. thesis, 1973) p.21 on which the published work, op. cit., is based. The definition of Nonconformity as a growth phenomenon needs to be treated with caution since it tends to make Gilbert's argument both circular and eclectic. It naturally leads him to include Methodism and revived Dissent amongst the Nonconformist denominations whilst discounting old Dissent because it demonstrated a different numerical pattern.

from through conversion; and on the more varied tasks of the church. From the 1830s Nonconformity also faced competition on the form of an Anglican revival. By the end of the century, however, both Anglicanism and Nonconformity were suffering a relative decline in the face of the more powerful effects of secularism. Industrialisation, which had been a key factor in making religion more important had the effect, long-term, of making it less important in the lives of the majority of people.

Gilbert's thesis is that 'the great quantitative strength of Victorian Nonconformity was produced by extremely rapid growth spanning only a few decades' at the beginning of the century.¹ Although it is possible to criticize Gilbert's work on specific details and perhaps also because the overall effect is too neat to account for the complexities of nineteenth century church developments, this central argument is well substantiated by his statistical evidence. The purpose of the present thesis is to investigate further the methods and concepts which enabled that phase of rapid growth to take place and to see how the Nonconformists continued to grapple with the need to recruit new members after that initial phase was over, even if ultimately they were unsuccessful in their recruitment in the face of growing secularization.²

1 Gilbert, Growth & Decline, p. 68. See also ch. 2 & table 3.4, p. 124.

2 The efforts made by the Nonconformists have not always received the recognition they deserve especially by K. S. Inglis, The Churches and the Working Classes in Victorian England (London & Toronto, 1963) and perhaps not even by A. D. Gilbert. The one aspect of home evangelisation which has received a good deal of attention is the phenomenon of revivalism which is related to, but not synonymous with, the more mundane attempts of the churches to organise the recruitment of new members.

1.2 The Significance of the Study of Home Missions

A number of reasons may be advanced to justify the interest in home missions as a significant area of study in nineteenth century Nonconformity.

Firstly, home missionary discussion and activity were central to the life of revived Dissent.¹ By the end of the eighteenth century old Dissent had 'lost all capacity for propaganda'² either because of hyper-Calvinism or because of Socinianism. If Dissent had persisted in either course uncorrected it would have been destined to dwindle to obscurity as is evidenced by the history of Unitarianism on the one hand and the strict Baptists on the other. But new vitality was to come to the churches and to provide them with 'a buoyancy, an ardour, a courage, a zeal' which led them to a desire to make converts and enabled them to make advance.³ This new aggressive confidence was to be characteristic of the atmosphere of New Dissent until Victorian times and it was to be reinforced as success initially followed success in their efforts to win converts. The varying moods of Nonconformity are not unrelated to its achievements on the home missionary front.

Secondly, the theological discussion which arose as a result of the concern for evangelism had crucial implications for other doctrinal positions adopted by the Nonconformists. Perhaps the doctrines which were most affected by the rise of home missions were the doctrines of election and of the church.⁴ The secure understanding of election held by most Dissenters was threatened by the offering of the gospel to those outside the boundaries of the church. The conception of the church as a pastoral

1 The importance of home missionary activity has often been overshadowed by the parallel phenomenon of overseas missionary activity to which much more attention has been paid by researchers.

2 E. Halevy, A History of the English Peoples in the Nineteenth Century (2nd Edn., London, 1949) i. 407.

3 R. W. Dale, The Old Evangelicalism and the New (London, 1889), p. 14.

4 See G. Nuttall, The Early Congregational Conception of the Church (London, 1946) pp. 4f and W.R. Ward 'The Baptist and the Transformation of the Church', Baptist Quarterly xxv (1973), 167-184

fellowship, a gathered community of the saints inevitably had to undergo some changes when the church came to see the need to evangelise as the early nineteenth century Dissenters did. The appeal for conversion and the presence of young converts or even the unconverted among the saints had repercussions on the church's view of itself.

These doctrines are not alone in this respect. Among other doctrinal issues which needed re-examination were the doctrines of grace, of the sacraments, of conversion, of the Holy Spirit and of eschatology.

Thirdly, home missions have a significance well beyond the church. Asa Briggs has commented on the sweep of this wider contribution.

Because the Evangelicals were a minority, the methods they pursued to secure their objectives were in some ways as significant as the objectives themselves. Just as the Methodists, for all their habitual loyalty to the state, bequeathed to working-class radicals useful forms of effective organisation ... so the Evangelicals, whose deepest hopes were centred not on this world but on the next, bequeathed to middle-class liberals a whole apparatus of efficient organisation.¹

Fourthly, a study of home missions often takes one beyond the religion of denominational leaders and officials nearer to the heart of the religious experience of the ordinary believer. Whilst one cannot neglect the weightier theological pronouncements on evangelism nor discount the enormous contribution of the religious leaders, it remains true that a study of home missions takes one to popular religion. The work of home missions owes much to the contribution of laity. The enormous machinery of home missions which was eventually constructed owed its smooth running to armies of volunteers who were prepared to invest hours of toil in its cause. Its spokesmen were often initially outside the channels of religious officialdom. Its preachers articulated

¹ Asa Briggs, The Age of Improvement 1783-1867 (London, 1959), p. 175. See also H. Perkin, The Origins of Modern English Society (London, 1969), pp. 347-364.

the gospel or spoke of its theology when otherwise they may have been silent. Here is reached the centre of Nonconformist culture and life-style.

1.3 The Early Home Missions and their Context

The date 1796 as the starting point of this thesis is not intended to imply that a sudden and new departure took place in the life of Nonconformity during that year, nor that the origin of all home missions took place at precisely that time. It does however have symbolic significance. The Societas Evangelica had been founded in 1776 but little is known about its activities until its revival in 1796.¹ In 1796 The Evangelical Association for the Propagation of the Gospel, which became generally known as the Village Itinerancy Society, was also founded. It was also the year in which the Rev. P. J. Saffery and the Rev. W. Steadman undertook a significant preaching tour of Cornwall which led to the formation of the Baptist Home Missionary Society.²

In the following year both The Congregational Society for the Spread of the Gospel in England and the London Itinerant Society were formed. Neither of these societies were very influential since both existed for a limited time and operated in a limited geographic area. Nonetheless they were representative of a number of societies formed between the end of the eighteenth century and the end of the Napoleonic Wars, in order to spread the Christian message by means of itinerancy. In 1798 the Northern Evangelical Society was formed with the aim of uniting Baptists and Independents to adopt itinerancy as a means of evangelising the four

1 This revival led Andrew Mearns to give 1796 wrongly as the date of its foundation, England for Christ (London, 1886), p. 22.

2 The society was originally called The Baptist Society in London for the encouragement and support of Itinerant and Village Preaching. Its name was changed in 1817 to the Baptist Itinerant & Home Missionary Society and again in 1822 to the Baptist Home Missionary Society.

northern counties.¹ Surrey² and Sussex³ were among other counties to have their own itinerant societies in the years which immediately followed. Both of these were of an interdenominational nature and proudly so, for as the Plan of the Sussex Missionary Society boasted, 'This society knows no party; it militates against nothing but sin, and its powerful auxiliaries, Ignorance and Infidelity.'⁴

The formation of the Home Missionary Society, which was to become one of the most significant societies devoted to evangelism and was Congregational in orientation, took place at the relatively late date of 1819. It was the last society to be formed which expressed the spirit of this creative period. In nearly all respects, except size and organisational influence, it was identical to those already mentioned.

This creative period of home missions is seen not only in the formation of societies specifically devoted to itinerancy but in the formation of other societies which were devoted to the ancillary needs of home or overseas missions such as the Religious Tract Society (1799), the British & Foreign Bible Society (1804) and the Sunday School Union (1804).⁵

1 The Northern Evangelical Society was inspired by the Baptist Home Missionary Society. David Douglas, History of Baptist Churches in the North of England (London, 1846), p. 241. It was also a successor to the Northern Baptist Association formed in 1778.

2 The Surrey Mission Society was formed in 1797 prior to 1800. J. Leifchild, Memoir of the late Rev. Joseph Hughes (London, 1835), p. 172 and T. Crippen, 'The Surrey Mission', Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society, vi (1915), 297-314.

3 Formed 1809. J. Burder, Peace with Heaven (London, 1811), Appendix

4 ibid., Appendix.

5 For an impressive, but still incomplete list of evangelical societies formed in this period see Ford K. Brown, Fathers of the Victorians (Cambridge, 1961), pp. 334-337.

The origin of the new concern with home missions is, furthermore, closely connected with the revival of association life which took place from 1791 onwards. Associations had long been a part of the Nonconformist tradition but the earlier associations, founded in the late seventeenth century or early eighteenth centuries, were altogether different from those founded in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries. The earlier associations had met together to regulate the life of the churches and, in the Presbyterian case at least, to control entry into the ministry by administering ordination. The later associations, which were often concerned with a smaller geographic area, were very different in aim. They were 'out to convert, not conserve'. After a detailed examination of the evidence Geoffrey Nuttall concludes that, 'in every case their purpose was, in the words of the Somerset Association formed on 10 November 1796 at South Petherton a "Missionary-design" for "village preaching".'¹

It is perhaps a trifle dogmatic to assert that the motivation for the formation of these associations was a missionary motive 'in every case'. The Norfolk Association which was formed in 1799 mainly worked as a benevolent society rather than as an evangelistic agency. Both the East Kent and the Bedfordshire Union of Christians uncharacteristically began with much broader aims.² But, in spite of these qualifications, Nuttall's claim is substantially true. The missionary motive was not however, exclusively limited to a home missionary concern.

1 G. F. Nuttall, 'Assemblies & Associations in Dissent 1689-1831', Councils and Assemblies, ed. G. J. Cumming & D. Baker (Studies in Church History, vii, 1971), pp. 289-309. For an analysis of associations mentioned in the Evangelical Magazine between 1791 and 1815 see Appendix A.

2 E.M., vi (1798), p. 511. J. Brown, The Bedfordshire Union of Christians (London, 1946). Evangelism was the fourth motive for its formation according to Samuel Greatheed; but the one which nevertheless assumed great importance, pp. 23-26.

Some associations, for example, the Kent Association, expressed an equal concern for both home and overseas missions, whilst others, for example Warwickshire, were primarily concerned about work overseas. It is safe to say that the aims were, to begin with, usually specific and usually mission related. It was with the passing of the years that they broadened, often with ecumenism becoming an end in itself rather than a means to evangelism.

It is worth remarking too that this evident willingness to co-operate in the cause of evangelism, although not universally shared, is a serious objection to the myth that such co-operation was inherently opposed to the principles of Independency.

The usual methods by which an association worked out its evangelistic concern were by the organising of a monthly prayer meeting; the raising of support for a national missionary society or by the appointment and support of an itinerant. Occasionally ministers of settled churches would spend some time itinerating but this was exceptional. Despite the inclination of some ministers to do so it seems that the chief obstacle was the reluctance of their own churches to let them.¹ As late as 1836 Dr. F.A. Cox, inspired by a visit he had made to investigate the revival in the United States of America, was still urging that ministers should be released to itinerate and pointing out the inconsistency of their doing so to raise funds but not doing so for the express purpose of promoting revival or diffusing religion.² The failure of Dissenting ministers to grasp the new opportunities resulted in the churches sending out

1 Eumenes, 'Thoughts on Itinerant Preaching', E.M., xviii (1810), 468-471.

2 F.A. Cox, Suggestions Designed to Promote the Revival and Extension of Religion founded on Observations made during a journey in the U. S. A. in the Spring and Summer of 1835 (London, 1836), p. 18.

dedicated but ill-equipped young single men as itinerants. The need for training became urgent and associations were not slow to see the vision. But, as in the case of the Staffordshire Association who wished to introduce a training course of up to two years for itinerants, it was not always so easy to turn the vision into a reality.¹

The undenominational nature of this missionary activity has often been the subject of comment. The spirit of the age was epitomized by David Bogue in his sermon to the London Missionary Society in 1795 on the Funeral of Bigotry. Schism and bigotry were held to be the chief evils of the age and the 'diminution of bigotry' one of its glories. The extent of evangelical catholicity in this creative period of the Home Missionary movement is remarkable. Nonetheless it should not be overestimated. R. H. Martin has demonstrated that it was the natural successor to a number of attempts earlier in the eighteenth century to encourage evangelical unity.²

Furthermore, the extent of catholic feeling was far from universal. The London Itinerant Society held that 'it is the opinion of this committee that the paedobaptist and antipaedobaptists can best serve the general interests of our Lord Jesus Christ by preaching and teaching among societies of their own persuasion'.³ A number of the associations formed during the period were content to remain attached to their

1 E. M., vii (1799), 478f and viii (1800), 217.

2 R. H. Martin, 'The Pan-Evangelical Impulse in Britain 1795-1830 with special reference to Four London Societies' (Oxford University D. Phil. thesis, 1974) pp. 32-47.

3 'Minutes and Proceedings of the London Itinerant Society', MS, (Congregational Library, Memorial Hall) 16 Mar. 1798.

particular denominations.¹

Still other individuals who shared in the revitalized spirit of Dissent shunned relations with fellow ministers. The idiosyncratic and Calvinistic minister of Back Lane Chapel, Manchester, William Gadsby, 'invariably kept aloof'² from associations and academics and yet still drank of the same spirit which had been drunk by fellow Dissenters and which resulted in such remarkable growth. William Gadsby is said to have been the means directly or indirectly of the opening of nearly forty chapels in Lancashire, Yorkshire, Derbyshire and Cheshire in the early years of the nineteenth century.³ On one occasion William Gadsby was talking with a minister who had just attended a meeting of dissenting ministers in Manchester on the best method to preach the gospel. When Gadsby heard that their conclusion was that they should do so in such a way 'that the people could not discern whether they preached free will or free grace', Gadsby retorted that the devil must have been in the chair.⁴

Evangelical catholicity was eventually largely to be replaced by denominationalism, although the transition was not perhaps as uniform or neat as some have suggested. Ward, who has recently documented that progression, has associated it with the wider problem of control which

1 Ward in his analysis of the period admits only Suffolk and Essex as exceptions to the undenominational pattern. Suffolk does not appear however to have been denominational in character whilst others, as Appendix A shows were. W. R. Ward, Religion & Society in England 1790-1850 (London, 1972), p. 49. R. T. Jones, as a denominational historian tends to make the opposite mistake and slightly overestimates the denominational bias of the Associations. R. Tudor Jones, Congregationalism in England 1662-1962 (London, 1962), p. 175.

2 A Memoir of the late Mr. William Gadsby, ed. John Gadsby, (2nd edn., Manchester & London, 1847), p. 20.

3 ibid., p. 66.

4 ibid., p. 49.

the nation was facing at the time. He argues that there was a need to contain radicalism and cause it to be expressed through more acceptable religious channels and consequently there was an increasing exercise of authority by denominational leaders. Further, he argues that social and class conflict was transmuted into denominational conflict.¹ Perhaps the progression is most clearly demonstrated by Methodism, on which Ward bases most of his research. The progression is likely to be more complex if applied to other Dissenting traditions.

Ward's accolade that the generation at the end of the eighteenth century were 'the most important single generation in the modern history not merely of English religion but of the whole Christian world'² is rightly awarded. The significance for Dissenters lay not only in their own growing strength, nor simply in the implications of their missionary activity, both at home and overseas, but in that they exhibit the changes which were taking place in the wider society of which they were a part and in that they play a quite significant role in determining the shape of the new social order which was to emerge.

They were aware themselves of how momentous the times were in which they lived but were inclined to interpret them in spiritual terms. 'Probus', declared that the gathering of so many ministers for the formation of the London Missionary Society was 'a happy presage that some great event is drawing near'. This confident assertion of

1 Ward, op. cit.

2 W. R. Ward, 'The Religion of the People and the Problem of Control 1790-1830', Popular Belief and Practice, ed. G. J. Cumming & D. Baker (Studies in Church History, viii, 1972), p. 237. It makes J. Kent's comment that there was no English equivalent to the American revivals of 1780-1830 of somewhat secondary importance. op. cit., p. 22.

the Millenium he further supported by reference to 'the present convulsions in Europe (which), however impious, hostile and bloody the agents may be, shall help forward rather than hinder'.¹ Thomas Haweis believed that 'Britain seems preserved in a peculiar manner for the purposes of God's glory in the revival of religion in the earth'.²

Recent historians with greater objectivity have outlined the way in which the revival of Dissent was part of a much wider social and political upheaval. The old established order was under threat. The eighteenth century constitution, both of society and of state, was ill-equipped to meet the demands of an industrializing nation or a revolutionary Europe, and weak political control meant that it was not possible for the government to maintain the authority of the Ancien Régime. The revival of Dissent and the birth of home missions took place then at a time when, in Clyde Binfield's Words, 'Their world was overturning, not overturned'.³ The dynamics of the transition from the old social order to the new have been frequently recorded⁴ together with the significant role played by Dissenters in giving shape to that new order.⁵

1 E. M., iii (1795), 495f. See also Brown, op. cit., p. 19.

2 T. Haweis, An Impartial and Succinct History of the Rise, Declension and Revival of the Church of Christ from the Birth of our Saviour to the Present Time, (London, 1800), iii, p. 329.

3 C. Binfield, So Down to Prayers (London, 1977), p. 10f.

4 See, inter alia, A. Briggs, op. cit., pp. 8-183; Gilbert, Religion and Society in England 1790-1850, pp. 7-104.

5 See especially H. Perkin, op. cit., passim.

The social context in which this generation of Dissenters lived was revolutionary and they were one of the many expressions of the revolutionary spirit. The stirrings in society meant that the old bonds were loosened and new freedoms were possible, both to move out of one's social position and also to speak to one's mind on religious issues with less fear than would have previously been merited. It was still a risk to propagate dissenting views but greater toleration was now afforded them. Indeed 'toleration of Dissent became a useful check in the balanced system of the Whig supremacy'.¹ The values propagated by revived Dissent were those which fitted the needs of the rising artisan classes and provided them with the ideological rationale which their new lifestyles needed. The responsiveness to the gospel as preached by Dissenters was further heightened by the fact of mobility. Geographic mobility is often an outward sign of an inner openness of mind which is receptive to previously unheard messages. So it was in the late eighteenth century.

The assumption was often made that the home missionaries, as all Dissenters, were politically motivated. John Newton was not alone in believing all Dissenters to be republicans and enemies of the Government. John Newton even believed David Bogue to be 'as bitter against Government as any Frenchman or republican in the world!'²

Their protestations of political innocence failed to convince their opponents. In 1798 an anonymous pamphlet had been written and presented to the Bishop of Salisbury attacking the motives of some fifty itinerant preachers who were engaged in his diocese. They were concerned, so it was claimed, 'to alienate the attachment of the people to

1 Binfield, ibid., p. 10.

2 J. Bull, Memorials of the Rev. William Bull (London, 1864), p. 222f.

the established church as the ground work and foundation of some secret design in the field of politics.'¹

William Kingsbury in defending their activity, argued that they were the 'friends of good order and society' and that it was a gross lie, in fact, 'as palpable a falsehood, as ever dropped from the pen of an enemy' to suggest that they were engaged in a political conspiracy. Their motive, he said, was rather 'to counteract the poison of infidelity, which has been so assiduously spread through the land; to warn against the pernicious principles of Paine'. They were engaged in a spiritual task and their concern was to warn of the peril of eternal destruction.² People had been encouraged to attend the Parish Church and as a token of good faith the preachers never organised their own village services so as to interfere with public worship. It was only when the parish church was deficient in teaching that the converts were loath to attend. Far from having a politically subversive effect, William Kingsbury felt that the village preachers 'will draw off the attention of men from the politics of this world, to spiritual and everlasting things'.³

Mr. Kingsbury's critics were not to be so easily persuaded. Brian Monckhouse believed the nation must be warned against them since, given their Puritan ancestry, there were good grounds to be 'suspicious of what you may do, from what you have done'.⁴

1 Cited in W Kingsbury, An Apology for Village Preachers (Southampton, 1798), p. 8.

2 Similar arguments were used by R. Hall, 'Defence of Village Preaching', Complete Works, (London, 1866), iii., 329ff.

3 ibid., p. 41, p. 27, pp. 30-32. Mr. Kingsbury was nearer the mark than he knew when he speculated that the real cause of concern in the Church of England was its inability, due to its enfeebled state, to overturn the efforts of the itinerants. p. 29.

4 B. Monckhouse, A Letter to W. Kingsbury ... in reply to his Apology ... (London, 1798), p. 43.

Political suspicion of the Dissenters was deeply ingrained. When the Archdeacon of Leicester held a visitation at Melton Mowbray on 20 June 1805 the preacher, the Rev. R. A. Ingram, reviewed the growth of Methodism and Dissent 'with some unpleasant apprehensions, when it is recollected that the sentiments of many of the Dissenters, and of several of the Methodists also, are unfavourable to our civil, as well as ecclesiastical institutions; that religion is sometimes only a gloss, or watchword, to political disaffection'.¹ Mr. Ingram pleaded, however, that instead of continuing to suspect Dissenters of insincerity, the Church of England should obviate their success by emulating their good works.²

Political opposition to the Dissenters, because of their itinerating activity, reached both a climax and a defeat when Lord Sidmouth attempted to introduce a Protestant Dissenting Ministers' Bill in the House of Lords in 1811. Viscount Sidmouth believed that the provisions of the Toleration Act were being abused in such a way as to become 'injurious to society'. He propounded the view that 'it was a matter of importance to society that not every person, without regard to his moral character or his intellectual faculties,³ should assume to himself the office of instructing his fellow-creatures in their duty to God'.⁴ Although he denied any social snobbery he deplored the fact that there were 'cobblers, tailors, pig-drovers and chimney-sweepers' able to obtain a certificate at a Quarter Sessions and act as a Minister of Religion.

1 R. A. Ingram, The Causes of the Increase of Methodism and Dissension and of the popularity of what is called Evangelical Preaching and the means of obviating them ... (London, 1805), p. v.

2 ibid., p. 15.

3 In his research in preparation for the Bill, Sidmouth discovered that many preachers could neither read nor write and that there were many variations in the spelling of gospel', viz. ghosper, gospell, gosple, gople, etc.

4 Hansard, xix (1811), 1129.

He proposed that in the future only those who were in holy orders or were teachers of a congregation should receive certificates.¹

There was, however, a more liberal spirit abroad aptly caught by Lord Holland who proffered the opinion 'that every person had a right to preach those religious opinions which he conscientiously believed'.² And Earl Stanhope suggested that Lord Sidmouth would be better employed building places of worship than opposing Dissenters.³ These objections on the first reading of the Bill did not augur well for its future. In the event there was such a chorus of opposition to the Bill that Sidmouth never pressed it when it came to its Second Reading. Lord Liverpool was among the opponents who felt that the Dissenters had not caused any trouble for fifteen years but feared that if the Bill was passed against their will they might well ally with the Roman Catholics against the Establishment.⁴

Sidmouth was genuinely mistaken in thinking that he had the support of the Protestant Dissenters. Sadly, for him and the High Church supporters of his Bill, it was counterproductive in two respects. It drew the Methodists and the other Dissenting bodies together in an alliance of opposition. Thus it firmly established the dissenting nature of the Methodist cause. Secondly, it caused the Dissenters to organise their opposition in such a way as to be able to press for greater liberty thereafter.⁵

1 ibid., p. 1131.

2 ibid., p. 1132.

3 ibid., p. 1133. The same had been suggested to him in a letter from the Bishop of Gloucester, 24 May 1809. The Hon. George Pellew, The Life and Correspondence of the Rt. Hon. Henry Addington, (London, 1847) iii, 39.

4 Pellew, ibid., p. 62. For the numerous other objections to the Bill Lord Sidmouth received see pp. 51-64. For a full account of the course of the Bill see B. L. Manning The Protestant Dissenting Deputies, (Cambridge, 1952), pp. 130-143.

5 See H.S. Skeats and C. S. Miall, History of the Free Churches of England 1688-1898 (London, 1891), pp. 450-452.

It would be pointless to pretend that Dissenters did not have political radicals within their ranks.¹ The same tensions within society that cause some to look for religious answers cause others to look for political answers and still others to adopt a millenarian solution.² Yet much of Dissent at this time was essentially religious and only by implication, and often unwittingly so, was it political. The claim of the Evangelical Magazine in its Preface to its volume for 1802, 'No political sentiment, from any quarter, has ever obtained admission into our publication' testifies to the primarily religious nature of revived Dissent.³ The new energy of Dissent was channelled first and foremost into the work of missions both at home and overseas rather than politics.

1.4 The Religious Roots of the Home Missionary Movement

Members of the old Dissenting denominations would have found it difficult to understand Alexander Duff's⁴ confident assertion that missions were the chief end of the Christian Church and that 'an evangelistic or missionary church is a spiritually flourishing church and that a church which drops the evangelistic or missionary character speedily lapses into superannuation and decay'.⁵ Old Dissent was lapsing into superannuation and decay either because of the stranglehold

1 E.g. see E. P. Thompson The Making of the English Working Class (Revd. edn. Harmondsworth, 1968), pp. 427-431. There were also fears regarding Pitt's attempt to limit the Toleration Act.

2 For a recent examination of millenarianism in this period J. F. C. Harrison, The Second Coming (London & Henley, 1979).

3 Ian Sellars cites Walter Wilson, an old fashioned Congregationalist with an understanding of history as lamenting 'the "unaccountable notion" of the new Dissenters that "the affairs of government should be left to the wicked".' Nineteenth Century Nonconformity (London, 1977), p. 3.

4 Alexander Duff had been the first Church of Scotland missionary to India in 1830. He left the Church of Scotland in the Disruption of 1843.

5 A. Duff, Missions: the Chief End of the Christian Church (4th edn., Edinburgh, 1840), p. 15.

of hyper-Calvinism or the equally deadly threat of rationalism and missionary activity was foreign to their nature. They failed to see its importance because they envisaged the church as a pastoral community ministering to the needs of those whom God had gathered out from the world. No-one has stated the implications such a view of the church had as far as growth was concerned more perceptively than R. W. Dale did in 1880 when he wrote,

Both ministers and people (i.e. of Dissenting Churches) thought that the Christian church should grow and become strong by silent and gradual influence of Christian worship, of quiet Christian teaching, and of devout Christian conduct. It was not their way to make a sudden raid in the name of Christ on the irreligious by which they were surrounded. They were "keepers at home". They thought that the example of religious parents and their prayers and the catechising of their households should result in the formation of religious faith and the right habits in their own children, and that the peace and integrity of religious families should gradually influence irreligious friends and neighbours. The parable of the leaven contains their conception of the normal growth of the Christian Church ...¹

What was it then, from a religious perspective, that brought about the change in Dissent and caused them to become zealously evangelistic? Three causes can be traced which are all aspects of the same phenomenon. The second cause emerges from the first and the third from the second as the smaller barrels emerge from the larger barrels of a telescope.

a) The Evangelical Revival

Firstly, there was the influence of the Evangelical Revival which made four particular contributions to the revival of Dissent. The first contribution was to break through the old attitudes of the Dissenters who felt that since salvation was a matter of divine decree they could not do anything either to obtain it themselves, nor to aid their fellow creatures to obtain it. They had little choice, therefore, but to assume that they were elect and trust that their godly lives

1 R. W. Dale, The Evangelical Revival (London, 1880), p. 14.

were the fruit which indicated that they were so elected. The Evangelical Revival offered a broader gospel and demonstrated the possibility of men being converted in a sudden way. As Dale commented, 'It was hard to believe that a man who was a drunkard and a profane person in the morning could legitimately rejoice in "the full assurance of faith" at night.'¹ And yet it appeared to be so and despite all the reservations, of which there were many,

the flame (of Revival) could not be extinguished; it continued to burn fiercely and to spread rapidly; it became a conflagration. At last Baptists and Independents took fire, and even Unitarianism glowed, for a time, with a new fervour. At the beginning of the present century the temper and habits of the Evangelical Nonconformists were undergoing a surprising change; they had fairly caught what their ecclesiastical ancestors forty or fifty years before would have called the Methodist fever.²

The second contribution of the Evangelical Revival was to shape men who would be leaders in revived Dissent. Most notably there was Edward Williams, whose exposition of moderate Calvinism was to be so vital in releasing conversionist zeal. Williams incurred the displeasure of his Anglican father by being won over to Nonconformity by the Methodist Revival. Daniel Rowland, a follower of George Whitefield, was greatly influential in his conversion but Williams was converted in the end through the preaching of a Methodist lay preacher.³ As his recent biographer, W. T. Owen, has emphasised,

The importance of Edward Williams of Rotherham and of his contribution to the religious life of his time, lies in the fact that he combined in himself the best elements of both traditions (i.e. of Old and New Dissent). Reason never had a more enthusiastic advocate, and no one believed more in an

1 ibid., p. 15.

2 ibid., p. 16. See also R. Tudor Jones, op. cit., ch. 4 and R. H. Martin, op. cit., p. 17. Both emphasise, rightly, Whitfield's place in the Evangelical Revival as of greater significance to Dissent than Wesley.

3 J. Gilbert, Memoir of the Life and Writings of the late Rev. Edward Williams, DD (London, 1825), pp. 23ff and W. T. Owen, Edward Williams, DD, 1750-1813 (Cardiff, 1963), p. 5.

educated ministry than Edward Williams, On the other hand, no evangelist ever possessed the urge to save souls to a greater degree than he did.¹

Williams was the outstanding example of the link between old and revived Dissent and of the contribution made by the Evangelical Revival. But he did not stand alone. Mr. Tuppen, the first pastor of Argyle Chapel, Bath, had experienced a sudden conversion through the preaching of George Whitfield.² His illustrious successor, William Jay, was also converted through the preaching of a Methodist but became an Independent who rejoiced that Independency 'befriended, urged and employed means and exertions for the conversion of sinners; and presented a ready and unfettered medium for the extension of the Redeemer's cause, abroad and at home.'³

Among those who were influential in the actual formation of evangelistic societies and who had been influenced by the Evangelical Revival were John Eyre and Matthew Wilks. John Eyre was the founder of the Village Itinerancy Society in 1796 and Matthew Wilks became its leader on Eyre's death in 1803. Both men had trained at Trevecca College which had been opened by Selina, Countess of Huntingdon in 1768. Although the academy had been intended to 'prove a Nursery of Godly Men for the establishment', in the event it essentially trained Dissenting itinerants.⁴ Unlike many Dissenting Academies, however, there was an urgency about the training at Trevecca and its primary concern was to train preachers of the gospel, not men of learning.⁵ Trevecca College

1 ibid., p. 3.

2 Dale, Old Evangelicalism and the New, p. 9. For a traditional dissenting view of 'Sudden Conversions' which casts doubt on their authenticity see, E. M., xix (1811), 135-9 and 167-70.

3 The Autobiography of the Rev. William Jay, ed. G. Redford and J. A. James, (London, 1855), p. 23 and p. 163f.

4 John Eyre was an ordained Anglican clergyman who served parishes in Weston, Lewes and Reading before becoming minister at Ram's Chapel, Homerton in 1785.

5 G. F. Nuttall, The Significance of Trevecca College 1768-1791, (London, 1968).

also trained a number of men who were active in the formation of the county associations.¹

The third contribution of the Evangelical Revival to Dissenting home missionary activity was a methodological contribution. The new warmth evident in the preaching of Dissenters was due to the lessons which they had reluctantly learned from Methodist preaching. In William Jay's opinion, they did not adopt the Methodist style completely but combined its best elements with the best elements of the older Dissenting style of preaching and so they forsook preaching which was 'not only orthodox but studied, grammatically correct and methodical; but were very few exceptions pointless, cold and drawled from notes.'²

In terms of method, revived Dissent owed much to the experience of Methodism in the organisation of its itinerancy.³ Furthermore, a number of the newly founded societies considered themselves to be the 'firstfruits of the Evangelical Revival'. Such an explicit claim is made for both the Baptist Missionary Society and the Religious Tract Society.⁴

Bogue and Bennett claimed that there was a fourth contribution made by the Evangelical Revival to the growth of new Dissent. They argued that people were prepared to listen to Dissenting preachers because the way had been prepared for them by the Methodist preachers. The Methodists had enabled people to become accustomed to hearing sermons preached outside the parish churches and to join, without knowing it,

1 ibid., p. 19.

2 Redford and James, op cit., p. 141f.

3 E. Halevy, op. cit., i, 407.

4 C. Brown, The Story of Baptist Home Missions (London, 1897), p. 9f. and S. G. Green, The Story of the Religious Tract Society, (London, 1899), p. 1.

in the dissenting mode of worship.'¹ Under the guise of belonging to the Church of England Methodism had in fact made religious pluralism more acceptable than it had hitherto been and so Dissent found more fruitful fields in which to reap its harvest.

The contribution of the Evangelical Revival to the renewal of Dissent was not an unmixed blessing. Dale, who was loud in its praises, deprecated its carelessness regarding the theology of the church; disapproved of its exaltation of individualism and lamented that it had contributed little to 'a nobler and more Christian ideal of practical life.'² But, for all its shortcomings, Dissent would never have rediscovered its missionary task except for the Evangelical Revival.

b) Moderate Calvinism

The Evangelical Revival alone, however, is not sufficient to account for the renewed interest in evangelism among Dissenters. Much Dissent proved impervious to its influence. What was needed was a reformulation of Dissent's Calvinistic theology which would release the brake which held fast the Dissenting machinery and prevented it from making any move in the direction of missions. The hyper-Calvinist tradition of Brine and Gill which was pervasive in unrevived Dissent was as Ivimey described it, a 'non-invitation, non-application system'.³ It was 'a threatening and forbidding system of theology which seemed as a two-edged sword to protect the cross of Christ from intrusion of unbidden pilgrims' and made the gospel 'a poor shrivelled thing'.⁴ It

1 op. cit., p. 314.

2 Dale, Old Evangelicalism and the New, p. 17 and The Evangelical Revival, p. 35f. and p. 38.

3 cited in E. F. Clipsham, 'Andrew Fuller and Fullerism', Baptist Quarterly, xx (1963), 101.

4 A. G. Fuller, Andrew Fuller (London, 1882), p. 30.

rendered man completely unable to do anything of any spiritual value; left man totally to the mercy of divine decrees and insisted that it was not the duty of those who heard the gospel to believe since a warrant was necessary before faith could be exercised.

Two men were influential in releasing Nonconformity from this system and for reformulating Calvinism so as to make it both more faithful to the teaching of Scripture and more appropriate to the times in which they lived.

The first to provide the theological rationale for the modern missionary movement was Andrew Fuller (1754-1815). Fuller has excited strong opinions from Ryland's comment that he was 'the most judicious and able theological writer that ever belonged to the Baptist denomination',¹ to Gadsby's belief that he was the greatest enemy the church of God ever had.² Gadsby's view, however, was a minority view. The majority came to accept the doctrines which Fuller all too hesitantly began to expound.

The source of Fuller's theology was not to be found in the Evangelical Revival³ and his influence was to be felt where the Evangelical Revival made no impression.⁴ The source is rather to be found in his puritan heritage and in his own personal history.

Fuller himself attributes his own conversion to moderate Calvinism, to his study of the scriptures to which he was devoted, being absolutely determined not to accept anything second hand. Secondly, he acknowledges the influence of the biographies of such men as Eliot, Brainerd and others 'who preached Christ with so much success to the

1 cited in Clipsham, op. cit., p. 99.

2 Gadsby, op. cit., p. 27.

3 E. A. Payne, The Free Church Tradition in the Life of England (London, 1944), p. 81 and 'The Evangelical Revival and the Beginnings of the Modern Missionary Movement', Congregational Quarterly, xxi (1943), pp. 223-236.

4 Clipsham, op. cit., p. 100.

American Indians'. Thirdly, he read with satisfaction the distinction made by Jonathan Edwards between the moral and the natural inability of men in Edward's Inquiry into the Freedom of the Will.¹

The personal experiences of Fuller himself were probably more significant than he acknowledges. His own conversion appears to have been as a result of a long struggle, which ended in his determining to trust in God as an act of his own will, whether or not that was legitimate.²

Fuller's pastor, Mr. Eve, failed to provide him with satisfactory answers concerning moral questions in the church. Consequently he turned for friendship to a fellow church member, Mr. Joseph Driver, who encouraged him to become a preacher and guided his early reading to include the works of Abraham Taylor and John Martin, which argued that man's lack of power towards God generally arose from a lack of will.

To these factors Clipsham³ has rightly added the influence of the Northamptonshire Association, in which he discovered not only the friendship of Sutcliffe and Ryland but of other ministers who were questioning hyper-Calvinism. It was there too that he was introduced by Ryland to the works of Jonathan Edwards.

Andrew Fuller eventually wrote his views in a work called The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation in 1781, although elements of it were written as early as 1776. It is a judicious work which in some ways reflects the author's hesitancy in putting forward the new position. In his preface he explained that he had no wish to dispute the doctrine of election; nor about who ought to consider themselves entitled to the blessings of the gospel; nor whether men were bound to do what the

1 The Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller, ed. Andrew Fuller (London, 1837), ii, 1.

2 A. G. Fuller, op. cit., p. 38.

3 op. cit., p. 109.

law requires; nor whether men should believe anything which was not true; nor about the inability of the unconverted to turn to God; nor whether faith was a virtue which commended men to God; nor whether the unconverted were to be the subjects of exhortation.

The treatise went on to argue that the exercise of faith, which meant trust in Christ, was the solemn duty of all who heard the gospel. If a man heard the gospel he was under an obligation to believe it. This position he supported by six arguments. 1. That unconverted sinners were commanded, exhorted and invited to believe in Christ for salvation. 2. That every man was bound cordially to receive and appropriate whatever God had revealed. 3. That the Gospel, although not a law but a message of grace, required obedience and that to obey meant to exercise saving faith. 4. That the Scripture ascribed the lack of faith in men to man's depravity and called it a heinous sin. 5. That God had threatened and afflicted the most awful punishment on sinners for their not believing on Jesus Christ. 6. That other scriptural exercises, which sustained an inseparable connection with faith in Christ, were represented as the duty of men, for example, the duty of fearing God.

Having then dealt with likely objections, Fuller concluded that the preaching of the gospel was to be the leading theme of the work of the ministry. Such preaching demanded that exhortations, calls and warnings should be issued to sinners to believe. To those who would still object he retorted that both Christ and his apostles admonished sinners to repent and believe. He wrote, 'Christ and his apostles, without any hesitation, called on sinners to "repent, and believe the gospel", but we considering them as poor, impotent and depraved creatures, have been disposed to drop this part of the Christian

ministry.¹

Fuller concluded his argument by challenging the view of contemporaries who insisted that a person came to belief in Christ through a process which took place in an exact and particular order. Thereby, he said, they proved themselves to be more scrupulous than any of the preachers of the early church.

In writing Fuller's Obituary, the Evangelical Magazine remarked that 'to talk of converting sinners by preaching only to saints is an absurdity as great as well can be conceived of'. It was an absurdity on which many still acted at Fuller's death; insisting that they would only preach the gospel to those who had previously been called.³ And yet, owing to the fresh and original thinking of Andrew Fuller, it was an absurdity of which they need not have been guilty. He had breached the citadel of hyper-Calvinism, penetrated its restrictiveness and enabled energies to be released which could be used for the converting of sinners.

Among the Independents it was Edward Williams (1750-1813) who was responsible for the reformulation of Calvinism and the freeing of his denomination from the determinist grip. In contrast to Fuller, Williams owed much to the Evangelical Revival, but like Fuller his revised theological views owed much to his personal abilities and to Jonathan Edwards.⁴ Like Fuller he was committed to congregationalism as a form of Church government but, in contrast, he was also committed to paedobaptism. Again, in contrast to Fuller, his restatement of Calvinism was a mature work which was the fruit of many years of

1 Andrew Fuller, Complete Works, op. cit., ii, 84.

2 ibid., p. 91.

3 E.M., xxvi (1818), 3f.

4 Owen, op. cit., p. 111 & p. 57.

settled and scholarly thought about the issue. His Defence of Modern Calvinism was the final work he wrote to be published¹ and was a reply to the Bishop of Lincoln's Refutation of Calvinism.

Williams was a scholar who was President of the Academy of Oswestry (1782-91) and at Rotherham (1795-1813), but throughout his life he also demonstrated a very practical concern for the conversion of sinners. His diary for 1791 repeatedly demonstrates his concern.² On 27 June 1793 he wrote, by request, a circular letter to the ministers of Warwickshire under the title of 'What is the duty of Christians with respect to the spread of the Gospel?' It was a letter which was to be read much farther afield than Warwickshire and Gilbert claims that it was 'the first appeal published by any portion of the Congregational body on this subject'.³ The recommendations in the letter that monthly prayer meetings should be held to pray for the revival of religion; that funds should be raised to support home and overseas missions; that charity schools should be founded; that itinerating preaching should be undertaken and that missionaries should be sent overseas; were recommendations which met with a ready response.

He himself engaged in much activity on behalf of numerous evangelical societies. He also married his work in teaching with active pastoral work. Through his encouragement to students to engage in evangelistic work, churches at Doncaster, Thorne and West Melton were established.⁴

Owen asserts that his 'interest in missions was a logical consequence of his theological views'.⁵ It is probably wiser to argue

1 1812.

2 Gilbert, Edward Williams, p. 270.

3 ibid., p. 345.

4 Owen, op. cit., pp. 83-85.

5 ibid., p. 56.

that his missionary activity and theological reflection were influential on each other. Certainly, however, he had an impressive theological foundation for his missionary interest.

Williams believed that man was accountable to God and had the freedom of will to make a moral choice. Nothing less than this, combined with a belief that the reconciliation offered through Christ was a reconciliation which extended to all men, not merely to the elect, made sense, to him, of the offer of the gospel to sinners. Conversion was 'a voluntary act of the mind in turning from all forbidden objects and pursuits to God and holiness by Jesus Christ, as the consequence of regeneration'.¹ Faith, he insisted, implied a freedom of will. And yet,

This faith by which we are justified, though our own, is not of ourselves; it is the "gift of God", ... While the act and deed is our own, being the exercise of our own mind, will and heart, we are constrained by every consideration of the case, from Scripture testimony, from pious gratitude, and from rational analogy, to ascribe our possession of the living principle of faith, as of every other internal grace, to the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit, as the gift of the Mediator to the members of His mystical body.²

Although Owen's recent assessment of William's theology considers it to be unconvincing and full of problems, it nevertheless had a tremendous effect in its own time and justifiably earns him a place with Andrew Fuller as co-founder of moderate Calvinism. Equally they could be described as the co-liberators of all the energy imprisoned by hyper-Calvinism which could now be directed both at home and overseas into missionary activity.

1 The Works of the Rev. Edward Williams, DD, ed. Evan Davies, (London, 1862), iii, 34.

2 ibid., p. 81 and p. 67.

c) Overseas Missions

One other factor was essential before Nonconformity gave birth to a home missionary movement. The new zeal which resulted from the Evangelical Revival and the released energy which resulted from moderate Calvinism may not have been channelled in the direction of home missionary activity¹ except for the catalyst of overseas missions. In one sense it is appropriate to describe Home Missions in Andrew Mearns' words as 'a healthy and powerful reaction' to the efforts which attended foreign missions.²

The first phase of home missions owes its existence to overseas missions for a variety of reasons. The basest motive was that of selfishness or undisguised nationalism. In response to Thomas Coke's Address to the Pious and Benevolent proposing missionary work in Asia, Africa and America, a writer to the London Chronicle in 1788 pleaded that 'bowels of compassion' should yearn over England and reminded Dr. Coke that 'Charity begins at Home'.³ Bogue and Bennett refer to those who objected to there being too many missions to the heathen abroad and who argued that the heathen at home should receive priority treatment. A few such objectors, they record, were stung into action by the reply of the friends of missions overseas and began to engage in village preaching as a result.⁴ The Societas Evangelica was quick to point out that it existed to meet the very objection that the heathen abroad should not be converted until the heathen at home

1 G. Jackson, 'The Evangelical Work of the Baptists in Leicestershire 1740-1820' (London University MA thesis, 1955), pp. 82 f. Jackson claims that Robert Hall jnr. diverted energy from home missionary work which could have been expected to result from Carey's overseas work by his emphasis on Christian unity.

2 Mearns, op. cit., p. 26.

3 John Vickers, Thomas Coke, Apostle of Methodism (London, 1969), p. 138.

4 op. cit., p. 387.

had been converted first.¹

The reaction was not all negative. In many cases the work overseas had simply opened the eyes of English Nonconformists to the spiritual poverty of their own country. So. J. Rippon in his Baptist Annual Register, which was devoted to the cause of missions, rejoiced at the progress of overseas missions but pleaded with his readers not to forget 'the many myriads at home who have scarcely anything pertaining to Christianity besides the name - who are profoundly ignorant, if not notoriously profligate and profane'.²

Several itinerating societies saw themselves as a flattering imitation of the overseas missionary societies rather than an unhealthy reaction to them. Among these were the Congregational Society for Spreading the Gospel in England³ and the London Itinerant Society.⁴

In two cases the catalytic contribution of overseas missions was even more specific. The journey undertaken in Cornwall by P. J. Saffery and W. Steadman in July 1797 which resulted in the formation of the Baptist Home Missionary Society was undertaken at the request of the Baptist Missionary Society, whose primary concern was the heathen abroad.⁵

The Evangelical Magazine reported that the London Itinerant Society

ought to be considered one of the happy consequences resulting from the establishment of the Missionary Society. The transition from the view of the deplorable state of the heathen abroad to that of the heathen at home is easy and affecting.⁶

1 E. M., iv (1796), 119f.

2 ii (1794-7), 467.

3 Minutes (1797), Ms. (Congregational Library).

4 E. M., viii (1799), 83.

5. Rippon, op. cit., (1794-7), 459.

6 vii (1799), 83.

It then provides the additional information that the formation of the society occurred because of the concern for the spiritual state of Dulwich expressed by a missionary who, at the time of writing, was already overseas. Although their own minutes lack specific confirmation of the story it is indirectly confirmed in that the operations of London Itinerant Society began with the opening of a Sunday School in Dulwich.¹

From the start many of the leaders of evangelical missionary activity saw no competition between the claims of the heathen abroad and the heathen at home. To them the world was one and the missionary task in both locations was urgent. Neither could assume a priority. This is amply demonstrated by both the writing and the activity of men such as Thomas Coke and Edward Williams.²

For lesser men, unable to cope with such a breadth of vision, there remained, however, a continuing sense of competition between the two locations. For that reason when H. F. Burder addressed the Home Missionary Society in 1824, he chose to put forward a careful apology for The United Claims of Home and Foreign Missions. The substance of his address contained three propositions: 1. that although the claims of Home and abroad are distinct yet they arise from the same principles of obligation for Christians to be stewards of that which God has given them; 2. that no one dare postpone his obligation to one area until the obligation to the other is discharged; and 3. that it is by attention to the claims of the one class that the interests of the other class is promoted.³

1 Minutes, 20 December 1797, MS, (Congregational Library).

2 Vickers, op cit., p. 138f and p. 304. Owen, op. cit., pp. 56-68.

3 H. F. Burder, The United Claims of Home and Foreign Missions (London, 1824), pp. 6-14.

Opinions about the relationship between home and overseas missions were never uniform. Yet a development of attitude can be discerned. Initially home missions were provoked into thought by the growth of foreign missions. This was closely followed by their being provoked into being in imitation of home missions. In the next stage a more unified view of the task is evident and the competitive element is largely lacking. But the dichotomy between home and overseas was to develop again except that; in this phase, which persisted for most of the rest of the century, it was believed that the success of foreign missions was dependent on the success of home missions. The relationship had turned full circle. The nationalism which once cried, 'Britain first', now cried, 'Britain first, so that the rest of the world might benefit.'

The tone with which this last view was expressed varied. In John Blackburn's voice it was a spiritual version of a secular colonialism. God, he claimed, 'has given these vast pagan dependencies to the British nation, as a mighty field, for the exercise of that system of social culture which the progress of ages has nurtured among us ...'¹ But the conversion of the world could only be ensured by the conversion of the population of Britain first. In other voices the tone of the argument was millennialist.² In yet other voices it was more pragmatic in tone. For, as Charles Prest acknowledged, 'the Foreign Missions will be benefited in proportion to our Connexional Advancement at home, as the vigour of the branches must depend on the healthy condition and growth of the parent stem.'³

1. J. Blackburn, The Salvation of Britain Introductory to the Conversion of the World (London, 1835), p. 11 and p. 26f.

2. Haweis, op. cit., p. 329f.

3. C. Prest, Fourteen Letters on the Home Work of Wesleyan Methodism, (London, 1856), p. 14.

The parent body, then, of overseas missions was to become dependent on its offspring. But it had produced a feeble child who, after the initial stages of rapid growth, never quite seemed to live up to promise, always seemed somewhat restless and unfulfilled and was in reality a pale reflection of her parent, living in her parent's shadow.

1.5. The Societas Evangelica

There are two reasons why the Societas Evangelica has special significance in the history of the Home Missionary movement. Firstly, it is the earliest of all the evangelistic societies preceding the formation of most of them, as it does the missionary impulse in general, by some twenty years. Secondly, its character, problems and mode of operation is representative of societies which were to follow.

Little is known about the Societas Evangelica until its revival in 1796 but Joshua Wilson gives 1776 as the date of its formation.¹ The chief element in its formation, the overseas missionary movement not having yet been born, was the Evangelical Revival. Several of the founders of the society were connected with George Whitefield or with the chapels of Lady Huntingdon. Its first gratuitous secretary was Mr. Benjamin Mills of Moorfields, who was a regular member of the Rev. William Romaine's congregation at St. Anne's, Blackfriars. He remained secretary until his death in 1791.

The Societas Evangelica was largely, but not exclusively, an Independent cause. Henry Burder, Rowland Hill, George Welch and probably Thomas Wilson senior were connected with its foundation and both Hill and the Wilson family remained associated with it throughout its history. In addition to these the first committee included members of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion and one member of the

1 J. Wilson, Memoir of the Life and Character of Thomas Wilson (London, 1849), p. 40.

Church of England.

The purpose of the Society was 'to extend the Gospel in Great Britain by itinerant preaching',¹ and they were to interpret the word itinerant in a strict way. It was never the Society's policy to found churches and in that respect it distinguished itself from the Village Itinerant Society to which its later history was to be detrimentally indebted.

Joshua Wilson probably overestimated the importance of the Societas Evangelica when he said that he regarded its formation as 'an important era in the religious history of our country'. Nonetheless he was right in pointing to two features of its life which had a lasting impact on Nonconformity. Firstly, 'it introduced the principle of association for the spread of the gospel in the dark and neglected parts of the land - a principle in perfect accordance with the spirit and genius of the Christian religion and of which orthodox Nonconformists had too long neglected to avail themselves'.² Its formation antedates the revival of association life and provided Nonconformists in the counties with an example to follow when their own missionary fervour ignited.

The Societas Evangelica's second significant contribution is made explicit by Dale and by Waddington.³ The society wished to support itinerants but, in order to maintain the confidence of the churches, needed to find itinerants who were worthy of support. This introduced the need for itinerants to receive at least some elementary training.

1 Cited in R. W. Dale, History of English Congregationalism (London, 1907), p. 593.

2 op. cit., p. 42.

3 Dale, History, pp. 593-598 and J. Waddington, Congregational History (London, 1878), iv, 37. This point is implicit rather than explicit in Wilson.

Strenuous efforts were made to overcome the criticism of ignorance which was so frequently levelled against the early Methodist and Independent itinerants, with the result that a house at Mile End was rented by the Societas Evangelica in 1782 as a training centre. The centre was moved to Hoxton Square in 1791 and became known as Hoxton Academy. It again moved premises in 1825 and so became Highbury College. The college was not by any means unique, but this particular college exercised an enormous influence on the evangelisation of Britain through its former students and the work which they eventually undertook through the Home Missionary Society.

The activities of the Societas Evangelica prior to 1796 are therefore not completely unknown. Thomas Wilson senior, who had been its Treasurer, died in 1794 and his work was taken over by his son, who had probably been a member of its committee for some time. We know, from a letter he wrote on 24 May 1794, that money was being dispensed for the support of two ministers in Warwickshire and in many other places also. But the same letter expresses some frustration at the inadequacy of what was being done and the longing that the work should be more extensive.¹

Dissatisfaction with the declining state of the society seemed to have been generally felt for on 29 December 1795 the committee warmly adopted a proposition to appoint a sub-committee 'for the express purpose of taking up the matter in a serious view and to adopt the best means of improving and reviving the same'. Its desire for revival was not unrelated to the general climate of interest in overseas missions.² The minutes show that the Rev. Matthew Wilks, a Calvinistic Methodist, had a large hand in the proposed revisions. These revisions were

1. Wilson op. cit., p. 144.

2. ibid., p. 148.

accepted by the Annual Meeting of the Society, when it met on 5 February 1796, thus releasing new vision and energy into its work. Apart from setting up a committee of twenty one people to govern its work and ruling that 'no business may be decided upon past 8.00 p.m.', a number of significant features of its work are seen in the resolutions adopted at that meeting.

Its ecumenical emphasis is seen by its resolve 'to unite in any measure that may be calculated to promote the laudable objects of this society'. Its future history shows that in practice it was not a very ecumenical body. It also resolved, and failed to achieve, 'to wholly employ two men for the society itself'. One man, Mr. Norris, was appointed to work for them in the North Riding of Yorkshire from September 1796 until May 1802. As he then accepted a call to be pastor of a church at Alston, he and the society parted, although he continued to devote two months every year to itinerancy with the Society's help. But they neither replaced him nor achieved a second full-time itinerant.

Two other resolutions of the 1796 meeting were more successfully applied and are responsible for largely determining their future pattern of operations. Their sixth resolution was an offer 'to co-operate with and assist any county associations in their work'. They also resolved 'that as it is the wish of this society to be as extensively useful as possible, the expenses attending the preaching of the Gospel at the same place shall not be defrayed by this society longer than three years together unless by the consent of the Annual Meeting'.

This desire for extensiveness meant that only rarely did they avoid its corollary of superficiality.

Mr. Norris, in 1797, visited fifteen towns, thirty villages, preached four hundred and three sermons and travelled three thousand five hundred and seventy three miles, and was said to have laboured

'with exemplary diligence and success'.¹ Towards the end of its life the society occasionally granted money 'for opening and fitting up meetings to preach the gospel therein'.² But it usually shunned making such grants and its great emphasis on circulating meant that few permanent churches were founded as a result of the society's work. In the normal course of events, in fact, it was the extent of a man's travels which determined whether or not he received a grant. Mr. Hinton's request for support was declined because the Committee 'did not consider his labours sufficiently extended to justify their voting him anything'.³ They also refused a grant to Stockton⁴ for the building of a new chapel and similarly declined a request from Cumberland who wanted help in the support of a minister who would serve them at weekends and itinerate midweek.

The society defended its stress on itinerancy by frequent reference to its own stated aims which were to support itinerants and it is true that had they forsaken this limited objective they would not have had any other guidelines to advise them in the allocation of their scarce resources. The emphasis on itinerancy is also intelligible in view of the movement's origin in the Evangelical Revival. It can be seen too as a reaction against the old orthodox view of the gradual development of the church as implied in the parable of the leaven.⁶ Furthermore it was a method which was perfectly consistent with the theological view of these early evangelists. The unconverted man they held was 'ignorant' of the truth and once he was made aware of it, it would be seen by him

1 E. M. vi (1798), 71.

2 Minutes of the Societas Evangelica, ii, .28 March 1806. MS; (Dr. Williams's Library). It records grants for this purpose to Chase in Suffolk, Lydd in Kent and Rochester.

3 ibid, 18 March 1796.

4 ibid, 27 April 1798.

5. ibid., 24 April 1801.

6 See p. 21 footnote 1.

as self-evidently true and immediately claim his allegiance.

Nevertheless this policy of extensiveness may not have been wise. The results of the Societas Evangelica stood in marked contrast to those of the Village Itinerancy Society which, when taking stock at the death of John Eyre, had seven chapels under its regular superintendence.¹ The Village Itinerancy Society saw this unwillingness to work in one location as a defect on the part of others and continued to work through settled ministers. Its policy seems to have been vindicated by its results, for in 1815 they could claim to have introduced forty three ministers to work, 'half of whom are in places newly raised up'.²

The Societas Evangelica's desire for co-operating with others engaged in the same work seems largely to have meant that they were willing to support a county association in the early days of their existence,³ but they were not willing to continue that support for a prolonged time nor to be used by the associations to assist them in the paying off of their debts.⁴ Co-operation also meant non-interference; consequently if there was another agency who could more appropriately support an itinerant, the Societas Evangelica declined to do so. Hence, 'the secretary (was) directed to inform Mr. C. that a society of a similar nature being now formed in Lancashire this society think it unnecessary to continue their assistance any longer to the ministers applying',⁵ and the Rev. Mr. Harness had his request referred to the Baptist Society for Itinerant Preaching.⁶

1 Minutes of the V. I. S. MS, (Dr. Williams's Library) 14 April 1803.

2 Minutes of V. I. S., Annual Report for 1815. Not all was well with the Village Itinerancy Society. By 1821 its chief support was among elderly ministers; it had failed to attract the support of the new generation. E. M., xxix (1821), 340.

3 Minutes of S. E., 29 November 1796.

4 ibid., 22 February 1799.

5 ibid., 28 October 1796.

6 ibid., 28 August 1807.

This referral to a Baptist society raises the question of how ecumenical the Societas Evangelica really was. Certainly they began with genuine ecumenical intentions and they professed not to adopt any particular denominational allegiance. In practice, however, they were basically an organisation of paedobaptist Independents. Perhaps, as R. H. Martin has shown in reference to overseas missionary societies, the ecumenical reality was more difficult than the ecumenical dream.¹

A particular example of the difficulty arose at Stockton in a church served by Mr. Norris. The controversy was over baptism and the committee cautioned Mr. Norris not to have anything to do with issues which cause disagreement. But in the event it was the Baptists who left the cause and left it so enfeebled that the committee was forced to close it down a few months later.²

As a society they generally eschewed controversy. On one occasion, in which Mr. Norris seems to have been in trouble with the law, the committee immediately advised him not to preach out of doors or in 'any place where he had reason to expect the interference of the civil power'.³ But such timidity is not the stuff of which genuine evangelistic activity is made and it was uncharacteristic of the evangelistic societies which were to be successors of the Societas Evangelica. It may be that this society, which existed during the transition from old to new Dissent, still suffered from the legacy of old respectable dissent in this regard.

The last minutes of the society which are still available are those for 5 February 1828; and there is every reason to believe that

1 Martin, op. cit., pp. 59f.

2 Minutes of S. E., 29 September, 1800, 31 October 1800 and 28 February 1801.

3 ibid., 29 August 1800.

the society quietly faded out of existence after that time. It had been on the decline for a number of years. In this initial phase of home missionary activity a number of home missionary societies were formed which did not remain active for long. The Congregational Society for the Spreading of the Gospel in England, which was founded in the great flush of missionary enthusiasm in 1797 had withered out of existence by 1809. To all intents and purposes the Congregational Society ceased to be active from 1803 onwards. Most of 1803 was taken up with administrative difficulties and attempts to raise new subscriptions. After a lapse of six months, four out of its fourteen strong committee met and recorded that,

The members present desire to leave upon record that the reason why the meetings have been discontinued has been the peculiar circumstances of the time - giving such new and additional occupation to every member of the Committee - and it not appearing by any demand from the country since circulating the address that the meetings need a closer attendance.¹

They were obviously all busy men and understandably so when the committee included the Reverends Dr. J. Stafford and J. Clayton and Messrs. T. Stiff and J. Wilson; men whose names were well known in connection with other missionary activity at the time. It seemed too that there were other agencies which could accomplish what this society had intended to do and which probably had attracted a younger generation of supporters.² At times, even at such an early date as the turn of the century, the number of societies must have been an embarrassment.³

1 Minutes of the Congregational Society for the Spreading of the Gospel in England, 22 February 1804, MS.

2 Annual Report of V. I. S., (1815).

3 ibid., 1 May 1798. The Congregational Society for the Spreading of the Gospel in England paid Mr. Cracknell £4. 5s. 0d. but declined to pay him such a large sum again as they had observed his name on the printed list of ministers whose expenses were met by the Societas Evangelica.

By comparison with the Congregational Society for the Spreading of the Gospel in England, the Societas Evangelica existed for a long time, but the story of its demise is similar. Attendance at its committees drastically declined from 1805 onwards and often grants were made on the authority of the Secretary and Treasurer alone. The loss of the Rev. Matthew Wilks¹ to the superintendency of the Village Itinerancy Society in 1803 may have been partially responsible for the loss of vision in the work of the Societas Evangelica. For fifteen years the society functioned with only Mr. Shrubsole, its new secretary, Mr. Wilson and the Rev. R. Hill attending to its affairs with any regularity. Of Mr. Shrubsole we know little, but both Mr. Wilson¹ and Mr. Hill² were enormously busy with other affairs. For the same fifteen years little new income was generated by the Societas Evangelica and it made grants on a number of occasions out of its accumulated capital. Even when it adopted a very strict application of its rules in determining who should receive grants, its income was still insufficient.

It was a victim of the thriving state of revived Dissent and its mushrooming evangelistic activity. Long before the Societas Evangelica was buried, the Home Missionary Society, which was to be its natural successor, had been born. Just as the Societas Evangelica had functioned during the transition from old to revived Dissent, so the Home Missionary Society marked the transition from revived Dissent to emerging Nonconformity. It had two essential features which matched

1 Thomas Wilson jnr. remained faithful to the Societas Evangelica to the last but his involvement with other institutions, especially Hoxton Academy, became much more demanding. (Waddington, op. cit., iv, 37.) He retired from business at the age of 34 and served LMS as Treasurer from 1832; the Gratis Sunday School Society as Secretary from 1799; and on the committees of the RTS: the BFBS; the Hibernian Society; the Irish Evangelical Society; the University of London; the Colonial Missionary Society and the Metropolis Chapel Fund.

2 As well as an extensive itinerant ministry, Mr. Hill was a director of LMS, of RTS and of the Home Missionary Society. He was a strong advocate of Sunday Schools and had thirteen of them attached to his own Surrey Chapel.

the spirit of the new age but which were lacking in the Societas Evangelica. It was broad in mode of operation and it was denominational. Initially its chief activity remained the support of rural itinerancy but it was a more flexible organisation which assumed different shapes as the occasion demanded. The Home Missionary Society could therefore survive in a way which was denied to the obsolete Societas Evangelica.

Chapter 2

THE WESLEYAN METHODIST CHURCH2.1 Methodism as a Home Missionary Movement

When the pseudonymous author of an article in the Methodist Magazine for 1824 wrote,

We have hitherto taken the lead in Home missionary work, though we have not adopted the name. From the first ours was a Missionary system and our ministers were, and in most circuits still are, Home missionaries. May the glory never depart from us.¹

he was succinctly expressing the relationship between Methodism and Home missions. Throughout the century others were to repeat the claim, in one form or another, that the work of Home missions was 'the special glory of Methodism from the beginning'.²

By 1824 other denominations were engaged in immense activity in the cause of home missions. Their efforts were not only expressed in their general church life but in the formation of particular societies devoted exclusively to the cause of evangelising the home population. The author of the article in the Methodist Magazine claimed that this served merely as an incentive for Methodists to maintain a lead they had always had. Moreover he argued that the time had never been more conducive to such an enterprise as far as Methodism was concerned for, in contrast to the events of recent years, they were enjoying a state of peace and prosperity and they were given to prayer.

The article acknowledged that Methodists had not made frequent use of the term 'Home Missionary' but argued that it was unnecessary

1 Methodist Magazine (1824), 163.

2 Charles Garrett in an introductory letter to E. Smith, An Evangelist's Notebook (London, 1880) (no page reference). See also M.M. (1857), 836; (1858), 890-901, 990-997; (1876), 562 and (1891), 891.

for them to do so since their whole tradition was a missionary tradition. They were in essence a conversionist sect.¹ It was only later when the normal process of institutionalization took place, with its consequent widening of goals,² that the work of home missions became crystallized as a separate and distinguishable aspect of Methodist life. Such embryonic segmentation had already been evident when Thomas Coke persuaded the Conference of 1806 to appoint eight missionaries to the English Villages, though the conversionist character of Methodism quickly reasserted itself. It was not until the work of Charles Prest from 1856 onwards that Home Missions became a separate department within Methodism.

It has been more usual to interpret Methodism as a revivalist movement than a home missionary movement. It was, in fact, as a revivalist movement that some of the nineteenth century Methodists saw themselves; believing that 'revivalist' more aptly characterised the Methodist preacher than 'missionary'.³ The importance of revivalism in Methodism should not be underestimated. It was due to the inability of Methodism to contain and control revivalist tendencies that some of the early divisions within Methodism occurred, giving rise to the Primitive Methodists and Bible Christians. And later in the century the activities of revivalists were an important aspect of Methodist culture, even if the long-term effect of their activities has, until

1 On the debate regarding the usefulness of the Church-Sect typology and its application to Methodism, see R. Moore, Pitman, Preachers and Politics (Cambridge, 1974), pp. 120-123. For a definition of terminology see Patterns of Sectarianism, ed. B. Wilson (London, 1967), pp. 22-49.

2 T. F. O'Dea, 'Five Dilemmas in the Institutionalization of Religion' in Sociology and the Study of Religion (New York, 1970), ch. 13. See also R. Moore, ibid., p. 123.

3 M.M., (1847), 155.

recently, been overestimated.¹

There are, however, a number of problems with a revivalist perspective. Firstly, the concept of revivalism is confusing, as Carwardine has pointed out, since it may include both periods of unusually intense religious interest in a single church or a multiplication of local revivals over a broad geographical area.² Moreover, it might involve the agency of a revivalist or be the spontaneous experience of a particular group. And it includes such diverse approaches as that of Lorenzo Dow and D.L. Moody. Revivalism, when used in reference to Methodism, refers to all these phenomena and more.

Sometimes the word revival is used as a synonym for home missions and when this is so it does not necessarily carry with it any of the overtones of religious fervency or potency which so often caused apprehension. Yet at other times the word is used to distinguish it from the regular operations of home missions. So, for example, up to 1832 the Methodist Magazine conceived of the work of the church in home missionary terms. Between 1832 and 1856 the Magazine ceased to use home missionary terminology completely but is full of reports concerning the outbreaking of local revivals. After 1856 there is a return to home missionary terminology. The period between 1832 and 1856 is not simply distinguished from the other periods in terms of language but in terms of atmosphere and events as well.

In addition to the lack of precision involved in the concept of revival, there is the second difficulty that Methodism itself was, throughout the century, ambivalent about revivalism. This ambivalence

1 For earlier eulogistic estimates see J. Edwin Orr, The Second Evangelical Awakening in Britain (London, 1949) and The Light of the Nations (Exeter, 1965). For more recent and more modest assessments see R. Carwardine, Transatlantic Revivalism (Westport, 1978) and J. Kent, Holding the Fort (London, 1978).

2 ibid., p. xi.

is symptomatic of a more fundamental crisis of identity which Methodism experienced after the death of John Wesley.¹

The ambivalence is to some extent personified by Jabez Bunting. In his early days Bunting was himself a revivalist preacher and took part in revival services. A letter written by him to Disney Alexander in 1802 speaks of his 'considerable expectation of a gracious revival'² and he himself confessed his revivalist background years later, in 1845, when speaking at the Conference; although his motive for such a confession may well have been more diplomatic than genuine.³ In this he presents a very different picture from the Bunting who was later to dominate Conference with his high view of the pastoral office. Ward accounts for the change by saying that Bunting grew to hate potential schisms and lack of discipline, both inherent in the work of revivalists. In particular, Ward refers to Bunting's attitude to William Bramwell who temporarily withdrew from Wesleyanism to join the Christian Revivalists and then, much to the disgust of Bunting, was readmitted to the ministry.⁴ These opinions, fully developed, were vented against the revivalist activities of James Caughey in later years.⁵

1 N.P. Goldhawk comments that Methodism in the early Victorian age 'can be understood as a working out of the tension produced by the development and inter-relation of the three elements in its characteristic piety' which he defines as an urge towards holiness, an evangelistic and missionary urge and a distinctive church order and discipline. A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain, ed. R. Davies, A.R. George and G. Rupp (London, 1978), ii, 114f.

2 Cited in The Early Correspondence of Jabez Bunting 1820-29, ed. W.R. Ward (London, 1972), p. 11.

3 B. Gregory, Sidelights on the Conflicts of Methodism 1827-1852 (London, 1899), p. 394.

4 ibid., pp. 72f. See also T.P. Bunting, The Life of Jabez Bunting (London, 1859 & 1887) i, 34, 219f and ii, 170.

5 Gregory, op. cit., pp. 344f and 394. R. Currie, Methodism Divided (London, 1968), p. 32 and W.R. Ward Religion and Society in England 1790-1850 (London, 1972), pp. 80-88. Ward shows that it was Primitive Methodism which gave connexional shape to Revivalism.

Bunting's hesitation on revivalism has, however, sometimes obscured a commitment which he did not vary over time; a commitment to home missions. Joseph Fowler 'placed more confidence in a sustained and continuous ministerial efficiency and the regularly repeated strokes of the battering ram, than in the extraordinary appliances and agencies', and for once Bunting would have agreed with his frequent inquisitor.¹ Although in many respects Bunting was an ecclesiastical empire-builder, he is surprisingly free from such greed when it comes to evangelisation. His real commitment to gospel preaching as opposed to mere chapel building was revealed in 1838 when he commented, at Conference, on the fact that 800 chapels had been built within the previous five years, causing serious financial strain. He argued, 'fewer chapels and more horses would save more souls' and 'Let it be known that a big chapel builder is suspected of not being a good pastor. He is like a great church disbuilder'.²

In addition to Bunting's own missionary concern, he made a strategic contribution to the course of Wesleyan Home missions in sponsoring Charles Prest, who was to become, between 1857-75, the influential secretary of Methodist Home Missions.

Edward Smith claimed that 'revivals and Methodism are as closely united as salt and water in the ocean'.³ Similarly Thomas Waugh stated that 'Methodism was born in a distinct revival and her history is largely a history of revivals'.⁴ But this concentration on

1 Gregory, op. cit., p. 8.

2 ibid., pp. 344-7.

3 op. cit., p. 9.

4 Cited in R.B. Walker, 'The Growth of Wesleyan Methodism in Victorian England and Wales', Journal of Ecclesiastical History, xxi (1973), 267.

revivalism would not only have made nineteenth century Wesleyans uneasy but also has proved too restricting a perspective for contemporary historians. The emphasis has led to a distorted picture of Methodist life and growth.

R.B. Walker has rightly criticized this fascination with revivalism and has argued that Victorian Methodism needs to be understood in the wider framework of steady work being undertaken by the churches.¹

In spite of Walker's plea for a wider perspective, he himself still partially sees growth in a revivalist framework and argues that rapid growth never lasts for longer than two years. He cites as proof the years 1832-34; 1838-40; 1848-50; 1858-60; 1875-77; 1881-83 and 1904-06,² when the rates of rapid growth varied between 5.1% per annum and 13.9%. However, the membership statistics recorded by Currie, Gilbert and Horsley, when taken over the whole century rather than just the Victorian years, would indicate that growth of over 5% per annum did not conform to the pattern of two year cycles. Such growth took place in the following years: 1804; 1806-8; 1811-12; 1814; 1816; 1822; 1833; 1840 and 1859-60.³ Some of these peak years of growth coincide with years in which the emphasis of the Methodist Church lay not on revivalism but on home missions. An explanation of Methodist development, then, in terms of revivalism is unsatisfactory for several reasons and an examination of the home missionary history of Methodism is justified.

1 He has further demonstrated the difficulty in establishing any simple causative relationship between economic and social factors and the advent of a revival. ibid., p. 270.

2 ibid., p. 268. His figures are based on the numbers on trial.

3 R. Currie, A.D. Gilbert and L. Horsley, Churches and Church-goers (Oxford, 1977), pp. 140-143.

2.2 The Early Experiments in Home Missions

The first Methodist attempt to organise home missions on any strategic basis and as a differentiated activity from revivalism was due to the initiative of Dr. Thomas Coke. Coke was already the champion and pioneer of overseas missions¹ but he had an equal concern for missions at home.² It seems to have been the desperate spiritual plight of England that was Coke's motivating force as is shown by his report for 1808 in which he wrote,

When our friends and brethren reflect on the vast extent to which the Gospel has been published throughout this kingdom within the last twenty years many of them may be led to wonder why these missions should be thought necessary. But their astonishment will cease when they are informed that out of 11,000 parishes which England and Wales contain perhaps half of them seldom or never hear the Gospel. In numerous small towns, villages and hamlets a very considerable part of the inhabitants attend no place of worship whatever, nor once think of entering a religious edifice, except when marriages, baptisms or funerals occur. It is among people of this description that our missions have been chiefly established.

The Conference of 1805 was persuaded to appoint a number of home missionaries, but it was not until the Conference of 1806 that the venture was properly recognised. At the end of the list of stations in the UK a list of eight names was added of those who would serve as home missionaries, together with the towns or vicinities in which they would serve.⁴ Each location was rural and was chosen so that the gospel could be taken to those places which did not fall within the reach of regular circuits.⁵ The Minutes added that the missionaries were to be

1 Thomas Coke, An account of the Rise, Progress and Present State of the Methodist Missions (London, 1804).

2 J. Vickers, Thomas Coke, Apostle of Methodism (London, 1969), pp. 138f and 304.

3 Samuel Drew, The Life of Thomas Coke (London, 1817), p. 323.

4 Minutes of the Methodist Conference (1806), 334f.

5 J. Crowther, The Life of the Rev. Thomas Coke, LL.D. (Leeds, 1815), p. 474.

under the direction of the neighbouring Superintendent.

Little is known of the early missionaries except that which is recorded in their obituaries by the Methodist Conference. William Tranter was stationed at Rutland. He had been converted at nineteen, entered the ministry in 1803 and died at the grand age of one hundred and one. He was said to have been 'eminently successful in winning souls'.¹

Richard Smetham was stationed at Thetford. He was a native of Lancashire and a man of Christian simplicity and sincerity. 'His ministry was plain but respectable, such as the poor could understand, whilst it edified those who had been favoured with superior advantages. Christ was his theme.'² This simplicity seemed characteristic of the early evangelists. John Wright, who was sent to the Derbyshire Peak District, 'possessed great simplicity of manners'.³ And Edward Wilson, who worked at Ulverston, was also a man 'distinguished by plainness of speech'.⁴

Of three others of these original home missionaries, there is little to say. They are John Martin, allocated to Devizes; John Palmer stationed at Taunton and William Brown of Meols. In all likelihood, however, they shared the experiences of their fellow missionary Charles Haime who was stationed at Cullompton in Devon. 'He had to endure many privations and much hardship, and was sometimes in no small danger from the violence of ignorant and wicked men; but he had

1 Mins. of Meth. Conf. (1879), 28.

2 Mins. of Meth. Conf. (1847), 454.

3 Mins. of Meth. Conf. (1839), 417.

4. Mins. of Meth. Conf. (1842), 307.

counted the cost and, having put his hand to the plough, he never looked back. He was an honoured instrument of introducing the Gospel into many places where Christ had not previously been preached.¹

The number of home missionaries grew rapidly and by 1808 there were thirty five on the list. It would seem that during the time this plan was in operation there were never more than forty missionaries at any one time.² The extent of their contribution to Methodist growth is uncertain except that it is claimed that they were responsible for the addition of several new circuits and the extension of others.³

The system was not, however, to last for many years. The scheme was essentially the brainchild of Thomas Coke and he never fully succeeded in convincing the Conference of the worthwhileness of the idea. Perhaps his somewhat tempestuous personality was partly responsible for this.⁴ Moreover, the scheme grew so rapidly as to become a serious financial liability to the Conference after 1813. Crowther speaks scathingly of Coke's achievement as not having added forty circuits to the Conference but forty millstones. Spiritually, Crowther added, the circuits had not been prosperous and their planning had demonstrated a lack of 'economy and prudence'.⁵ It was an unpropitious time in which to try to extend Methodist work in any way which would be costly to Methodist finances. The war years had taken their toll and finance for expansion was simply not available.

1 Mins. of Meth. Conf. (1856), 197f.

2 J. Crowther, op. cit., cited in J. Vickers, op cit., p. 306.

3 S. Drew, op. cit., p. 323f.

4 J. Vickers, op. cit., p. 41f.

5 op cit., p. 16.

The Conference of 1815 therefore decided to discontinue the use of the term home missionary and to treat the stations and preachers who had been involved in home missions in the normal ministerial way.¹ At the same time one significant decision was taken which was to initiate a long-lasting tradition of Methodism. In order to meet the financial requirements of the new arrangements, it was agreed that there should be an annual collection each July 'for the support and the spread of the Gospel at home'. This was to prevent the need for extraordinary offerings to cover special needs. This arrangement, although it was to be practised for decades, was never to be the final answer for Methodist extension. As was to be the case in other denominations, home missions were perpetually to suffer from a lack of adequate funds.

2.3 The Liverpool Conference of 1820

It was to be five years before any further serious attention was devoted to home missions and then it was to be the result of a crisis in membership. Membership figures for 1820 showed a decrease from those of 1819 of 5,096, which is a decline of 2.39%.² The true picture is that growth rates were healthy from 1804 until 1816 (the lowest growth rate being that of 4.34% in 1809 and the highest being that of 9.87% in 1804). In 1817, however, the growth rate had slumped from 5.48% in 1816 to a mere 1.05%. For the following two years growth was negligible. No one however appears to have been alert to the warning signs and the decline came as a shock. Consequently, when the Conference met in 1820, it met in a mood of dire determination to 'revive the work of God'.

1 Mins. of Meth. Conf. (1815), 127f.

2 Currie, Gilbert & Horsley, op. cit., p. 40.

The Conference of 1820 was held in Liverpool and it was the first occasion on which Jabez Bunting became its President. Thursday morning and afternoon were given to discussing the decline and resolving what steps were to be taken to overcome it.¹ Some tried to justify the decline or at least put it in a positive light. So W. Griffiths argued that those who had left the connexion had not had 'experimental religion' and had never really belonged to it in the first place. To him the important issue was how to preserve those who were left. Mr. Ingham stated that the decline was only apparent and that finance would be a better test to apply than membership. Mr. Waddy tried to suggest that things were not as bad as they looked. And one Mr. Emory, a visitor from the United States, encouraged the Conference with the thought that a 'pruning time is often followed by a fruitful time'.

Most however were disposed to accept the situation as serious. A number of speakers united to condemn the passing of the old zealous ways of preaching and to lament Methodism's growing respectability. Mr. Gaulter was the first to suggest this and he was supported by Mr. Wrigley, who said that he had attended to Methodist discipline for fifty five years 'and have often been laughed at by young preachers for so doing'. With similar frankness Mr. Myles diagnosed 'The cause of our decline is the multiplying of places of worship among us'. He discerned a worldly spirit in Methodism with people demanding popular rather than useful preachers. Bluntly he pointed his finger at rich people, quoting Wesley's dictum that, 'If you multiply chapels you make rich men necessary to you as they become Trustees'. Mr. Nelson

1 The details of the debate which follow in the following three pages are, unless otherwise stated, taken from an anonymous hand-written manuscript recording the proceedings of the 1820 Conference, Notes of the Liverpool Conference of 1820. No page references are given. The manuscript is deposited in the Methodist Church Archives, John Ryland Library, Manchester.

after agreeing about the danger of increasing wealth, also spoke of Methodism as deviating from its doctrines; especially the doctrine of holiness. Mr. Sutcliffe lamented the preachers no longer aimed at converts and preached Christ. Mr. Smith put it down to a loss in the spirit of obedience.

Other speakers were more specific in their diagnosis. Mr. Watson pointed to the decline in the class meeting and stated that 'the decrease of numbers has been greater where the Address¹ has not been read'. Mr. Hadfield said that itinerating preachers should stay overnight on their engagements because that was when much useful work was done. Mr. Thirnshaw was also disposed to blame the state of the class meeting.² Accusing fingers were also pointed in the direction of financial difficulties and Mr. Stevens of Manchester argued that the financial situation was an indirect reflection of political discontent. Another possible external cause of the decline were the gains made by the Ranters or even other dissenting bodies. Mr. Stevens admitted that many had been lost to these other bodies 'for want of looking after'. But, for the most part, the Conference simply betrayed its uneasy conscience about the Ranters, acknowledging that they needed to revive primitive Methodism among themselves but refusing really to penetrate the causes of the success which Ranters and others were enjoying.

The Conference, however, belonged to Bunting. He began his final remarks by discussing the inconsistent way in which statistics were returned to Conference and by remarking that the last time the Wesleyans

† i.e. the Annual Address of the Methodist Conference.

2 H.D. Rack, 'The Decline of the Class Meeting and the Problem of Church Membership in Nineteenth Century Wesleyanism', The Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society, xxxix (1973), 12-21.

had suffered a numerical reverse had been twenty years previously, but it was less severe than that currently endured. He too pointed to political unrest¹ following the Cato Street conspiracy as a serious problem and confessed 'we have failed in enforcing the people's duty of obedience to the higher powers and we are now suffering from our own neglect'. In Bunting's eyes the lack of political respect and lack of church attendance were both symptoms of the same fundamental lack of discipline and respect for authority in the population at large.

There was also a second note sounded by Bunting in this speech which he was often to repeat. He never lost his early revivalist activism in spite of the vigour with which the political side of his character attempted to repress it. Consequently he urged the Conference, 'It is necessary to talk less and do more'. He pleaded with them to pray more for the gifts of the Holy Spirit. His address concluded with a quotation of Edmund Burke that "'the French Revolutionists were not men of talent but of energy - a great part of our strength has been spent in whipping the people to the collections instead of leading them to Christ"'.

In answer to the question, 'What measures can we adopt for the increase of spiritual religion among our Societies and congregations and for the extension of the work of God in our native country?' Conference agreed on thirty one decisions. The Conference led the Methodist people to devote themselves freshly to God and their work and to re-read frequently John Wesley's Rules of a Helper (Clause 5). Clause 6 called for the re-introduction of open air preaching and a preaching that

1 The circular subsequently sent to the Societies also blamed commercial embarrassment for the decline. Mins. of the Meth. Conf. (1820), 160.

sought to save the lost. Clause 7 encouraged the opening of new places, calling every Methodist preacher 'in point of enterprise, zeal and diligence a home missionary, and to enlarge and extend as well as keep the circuit to which he was appointed'.

The decisions ranged over practical means of helping overworked men, or where there were no preachers to the importance of prayer and a catholic spirit towards other denominations. Watch nights, private and public bands, quarterly fasting and the public visitation of classes were all to be reintroduced. Backsliders were to be given particular attention and the young and new members were to be adequately catechised.

Towards the end of the resolutions the danger of diversifying one's energies in a way typical of a developing conversionist sect was explicitly recognised. Clause 27 read, 'We affectionately exhort those of our own people who are laudably active in various benevolent institutions, while they persevere in every good word and work, to guard against the danger of expending all their leisure and influence on more local and subordinate charities, so as to neglect God's own direct and immediate institutions, such as the public preaching of the Gospel, or to deprive themselves of the opportunity of regularly attending their classes and of private prayer and reading of the Holy Scriptures'. The spiritual nature of their work needed re-emphasising in the light of social and temporal distractions.¹

The 1820 Minutes were a landmark for Wesleyan Methodism. They were subsequently held to be the quintessence of Methodism as a conversionist sect and were frequently referred back to by subsequent generations. T. Percival Bunting believed, 'Methodism will stand or fall as they

1 Mins. of Meth. Conf. (1820), 146-52.

continue in practical force or go into practical neglect'.¹ But what effect did they have?

Numerical evidence suggests that for a few years the rejuvenated spirit of Methodism reaped a good reward. In 1821 the increase in membership was 4.63%; in 1822 it was 5.66%, but the year after that it fell to below 4.00% and sank even lower in subsequent years.² The conference which met in the following three years were times of self-congratulation, but even as in the Conference of 1823 they were rejoicing in their 'considerable prosperity'³ they were oblivious to the warning signs of diminishing success. By 1826 the decline was observed and was attributed to the 'unexampled distress'⁴ which had taken place in trade and the assumption that it was temporary interruption to progress seemed to be confirmed by an improvement in the trade position and membership position of the church which took place in the following year.⁵

Evidence that the value of the 1820 Minutes was only temporary is also found in the reports of activities carried in the Methodist Magazine. Pages were devoted to circuit news recording the addition of members such as the one hundred added in a quarter at Sunderland or the thirty to fifty a week at Liverpool. Maidstone reported a crowded church on Sunday evenings with two hundred and twenty seven additions. Derby, in a self-deprecating way, spoke of their work as 'gradual, insinuating and gentle, like the rain but certainly effectual' before

1 Cited in Henry T. Smart, The Life of Thomas Cook: Evangelist, (London, 1913), p. 59.

2 Currie, Gilbert & Horsley, op. cit., record the following figures: 1823, 3.79%; 1824, 3.44%; 1825, 0.75%; 1826, 1.05%.

3 Mins. of Meth. Conf., (1823), 430.

4 Mins. of Meth. Conf., (1826), 174.

5 Mins. of Meth. Conf., (1827), 297.

recording one hundred and ninety three additions since the Conference.¹

Similar reports were carried throughout the year 1821 and there was a general acknowledgement that there had been a renewed emphasis on prayer since the Conference. Only Bradford seems to have voiced any questions about the effectiveness of their work by asking whether the four hundred new members they had received would be fruit which would remain.² Generally, however, there was a note of confidence which was sounded most loudly when the paper recorded the revival of a Methodist society 'in an obscure place called Harriseahead'³ which had almost dwindled away to nothing but now consisted of seventy members. The discerning would be aware of this as Primitive Methodist territory.

Reports of growth continued for a few years but gradually the story of work done was replaced by more plaintive cries about the need to do more.⁴ The pleas were a prelude to the whole subject of home missions becoming less important to the Methodists until, for a number of years, the subject is omitted from their discussions altogether. These years of omission are years of relatively little numerical growth.

2.4 The Revival Phase of the Thirties and Forties

It was the cholera epidemic of 1832 which seems to have reversed the situation of decline. Conversation was still not about home missions. Instead it was about revival. For approximately twenty years Methodism was to speak the vocabulary of revival and to believe that it was

1 M.M., (1821), 380-382.

2 ibid., 539.

3 ibid., 460.

4 ibid., (1823), 382; (1824), 162f and (1825), 162-7.

happening despite some very hard facts in certain years to the contrary and despite the divisions it was to endure.¹

Even before the cholera epidemic occurred there were reports of revivals in Runcorn, Gateshead, Penzance and Bacup.² The Cholera added a new dimension of seriousness to the business and 'caused the people to flock to our numerous chapels in crowds, both to hear preaching and to attend the meetings of prayer which were held in many of them every night.'³ The same report from Dudley admitted that the most numerous attendances occurred at the height of the epidemic and had declined thereafter. Even so eight hundred and sixty members were admitted to the society as a result and all without the noises which had 'disgraced' previous revivals. The following year several hundred more were still being admitted on trial as a result of this revival.⁴

Over the next years reports of revivals were widespread. In 1835 revivals took place at Yeadon, Shepton Mallet, Wellington, Hungerford and Grantham.⁵ But the nature of the revivals had changed. They were no longer the wild and undisciplined events of previous generations or of Ranterism. Now attending a revival could almost be acceptable as a social engagement. So the reporter from Grantham explained that the revival grew out of extra prayer meetings and,

1 Methodists actually recorded a decline in the years 1835, 1837, 1842, 1847, 1848, 1851-1855. The last years were the most serious years of decline due to the expulsion of those who agitated for reform for which see R. Currie, Methodism Divided, pp. 65-76.

2 M.M., (1832), 113f, 275, 361 and 365 respectively.

3 ibid., p. 890, report from Dudley.

4 ibid., (1833), 53.

5 ibid., (1835), 375, 291, 377, 563 and 376 respectively.

as soon as it became apparent that the prayer was heard, a few respectable zealous individuals engaged, whenever they saw persons affected under the word, to invite them to a select social meeting, for spiritual advice and united supplication, which was held on Friday evenings at private houses.¹

In line with this caution Finney's lectures were only 'cautiously recommended' and readers were warned that they would need to read with discrimination. But to right the balance Finney's reviewer further stated that 'the objectionable bears but a small proportion to the excellent'.² Camborne's Wesleyans boasted that no extraordinary means had been employed to promote their revival³ but, despite this, they had seen one hundred converts in eleven weeks. The revival was also claimed to have a quietist effect by a correspondent from St. Ives who reported that when Chartist delegates visited the town in 1839 they found the town deeply under religious influence and indifferent to their political concerns.⁴ Almost a decade later nearby Truro, reporting on its revival which had taken place mainly among the eighteen to thirty age group and had resulted in five hundred and fifty being given notes on trial at one quarterly meeting, also emphasised that revivals were not socially disruptive. The revival was conducted with due order and with the co-operation of the church officers and no attempt had been made to get it up. They wrote,

Another fact worthy of notice is that the meetings have been uniformly closed at 10 o'clock at night. Believing as we do that the protraction of revival services to a late hour is, generally speaking, productive of serious evils, interferes with the domestic duties and arrangements of well-regulated families and not infrequently brings discredit on the work of God ...⁵

1 ibid., p. 376.

2 ibid., (1838), 285.

3 ibid., (1839), 326.

4 ibid., (1840), 22.

5 ibid., (1847), 611.

The period of the Methodist centenary was, then, a period of revival spirit, even if the revivals they experienced were reformed reproductions of earlier revivals. It was no less than could have been expected of a movement of 'pure, primitive and apostolic religion' and which was 'eminently and emphatically the work of God, wonderful in extent, depth, rapidity and purity', as William Tranter, one of the 1806 connexional evangelists, put it.¹ Methodism had perceived herself at this time as a revival movement but her faulty perception was to result in her living through a period of almost twenty years of false consciousness. Membership figures show that they were not really experiencing anything approaching a revival. Yet they constantly resorted to revival as the cure for all their ills. William Jessop summarised their feelings after the decline of 1842 when he wrote, 'All feel when the church is enfeebled and declining that a revival is the only remedy'. And he argued that revival was indeed the remedy, but revival, that is, not defined in the narrow sense of holding some special services but in the sense of a return to first principles. Consequently he urged the Methodist people to live and pray for revivals and to preach about them frequently.²

Contrary to their expectations revival was neither the answer to their problems nor was revival a return to first principles. The character of revivals had altered since the early Primitive Methodist revivals; they had become more governable and respectable. Further, first principles would have involved their evangelising of people outside the church, whereas revival at this period meant dealing with

1 William Tranter, A Sermon on the Occasion of the First Centenary of Wesleyanism (London, 1840), p. 9.

2 M.M., (1842), 994-998.

the second generation of Methodists already within their ranks but who lacked vital spiritual experience.¹ This is partly the reason why, despite large numbers of conversions being recorded at Quarterly Meetings, the overall effect on Methodist Membership of these converts was slight.

A further reason why the record of conversions is high whilst the effect on church growth is minimal is that many professing conversion in a revival meeting did not remain in church membership for long. As Mr. Woodcock was to explain in another context to the 1877 Conference² the root of the problem of discontinuity between converts and permanent church members seemed to lie in the homely proverb, 'Easy come, easy go'. Revivals easily made converts and just as easily resulted in the unmaking of church members. The answer then did not appear to the discerning to lie in the promoting of revival.

Among those who discerned the true position was Samuel Trueman, the Superintendent of the Towcester circuit (1836-37). He summoned up the courage to write to Jabez Bunting on the matter in 1837. He wrote,

While in the foreign work we have been all light, life, fire and zeal, while others have been illumined by our light, warmed by the ardour of our love, and stimulated to imitate our zeal, we have allowed others to go before us in the missionary work at home. We commence the system of village preaching, we have continued it on a large scale, but for several years in work strictly missionary we have attempted little and done less.

Dismissing fears that it would detract from overseas missions, he argued rather that it would contribute to them. Wesleyanism ought to have one hundred home missionaries in action. The crucial question was, 'Could

1 e.g. A revival at Penzance reported that the converts were principally the young male members of old established Methodist families. M.M., (1850), p. 36.

2 1877 was a year when 9,357 had joined the church and 24,000 had 'ceased to meet'. See M.M., (1877), 710. The same explanation has recently been documented in detail by Currie, Gilbert and Horsley, op.cit., pp. 80-82.

is unknown, by his sponsorship of Charles Prest.¹ The life of Charles Prest still awaits a serious biographer but it was he who was to be the inspiration of the renewed Wesleyan energy for home missions from the mid-1850s.

It is significant that from that time talk of home missions rapidly replaced talk of revival. The last reports of local revivals are to be found in the Methodist Magazine of 1856, and they clearly were not as successful as earlier ones had been.² Revivalism was a spent force.

2.5 The Work of Charles Prest

The first steps towards re-invigorating Wesleyan home missionary work took the form of a public meeting at the City Road Chapel, London, in 1854. Charles Prest was the leading spirit behind the new movement and he was to remain the prime mover of Methodist home missions for the next twenty years. His preaching shows that evangelism had long been a passion in his life. In 1831 he had been urging the church,

1 ibid., p. 306f. A letter from Samuel Dunn, dated Halifax, 14 September 1844, complains to Bunting, among other things, that; 'there is now a preacher who was admitted into full connexion in 1833 who is now (1) Secretary to the Committee of Privileges; (2) Member of the acting sub-Committee of Do.; (3) Member of the Missionary Committee; (4) On a Missionary Deputation; (5) Treasurer of the Schools; (6) Member of the Book Committee; (7) Member of the Committee of Distribution of the Chapel and Education Fund; (8) Do. of the Institution Committee; (9) Do. of the Education Committee'. The letter is endorsed 'Mr. Dunn about Mr. P(rest). He accuses Bunting of not maintaining Wesley's impartiality. A letter from C. Prest to J. Bunting, 4 October 1848, shows that Prest's attitude to Bunting is almost one of subservience. Letters of C. Prest to J. Bunting, MS, Methodist Archives.

2 These were reports of revivals at Keighley where they had held special services, after diminishing returns had provoked the feeling that 'something must be done' and Midsomer Norton who experienced only fifteen or twenty converts after a year of seeking. Obviously revivals themselves displayed symptoms of diminishing returns. M.M., (1856), 75ff and 164.

To save poor souls out of the fire
 To snatch them from the verge of Hell
 And turn them to a pardoning God
 And quench the brands in Jesus blood.¹

Reactions to the meeting at City Road Chapel were mixed and some felt that the existing machinery for home missions was adequate. Joseph Milner subsequently wrote negatively about the suggestion of a new system and argued that all that was needed was for 'the system which the providence of God has placed in our hands to be well worked and made to bear with increased energy while we humbly depend on the Holy Spirit's influence for the salvation of men'.²

Prest, however, argued not for the commencement of a new work but for certain modifications to the present system and for 'infusing vigour and providing for the judicious and much needed extension of our primitive employment'.³ It was, as the Annual Address to the societies expressed it in 1857, 'surely to be lamented, that, during the last thirty years, though Methodism has been progressive in all other respects, it has been stationary, if not retrograde, in regard to the separate provisions for home missionary enterprise'.⁴

The Conference of 1855 appointed a special committee to investigate a more adequate system of home missions. Meanwhile Prest continued to be a vigorous exponent of the cause.⁵ Although he did not refer to the huge losses suffered since the secessions of 1850 and which continued to cause an absolute numerical decline until 1855, they were without

1 Sermons and Plans of Charles Prest, i, Ms, Methodist Church Archives.

2 M.M., (1854), 424.

3 C. Prest, Fourteen Letters on the Home Work of Wesleyan Methodism; its sustentation and extension (London, 1856), p. 34f. These were letters collated after publication in The Watchman (1855 & 56).

4 M.M., (1857), 836.

5 As above and in The Home Work of Wesleyan Methodism; its sustentation and extension (London, 1856).

doubt a powerful motivating factor in the new movement. Among Prest's main arguments for the new advance were the following:-

1. That the Contingent Fund (1815) was originally a missionary fund designed to give temporary assistance to new causes but that it had come to be used as a means of permanent assistance.¹
2. That, although initially after the fund had become the responsibility of the July collection its resources rose rapidly, since 1847 the fund had declined and was presently £2,000 in debt.²
3. That the country was in desperate spiritual need as was demonstrated by the 1851 Census.³
4. That other denominations were in an enviable position by comparison with Wesleyanism.⁴
5. That vigorous home missions would result in benefits accruing to overseas missions and not be detrimental to the cause overseas.⁵

'We are not yet,' Prest wrote, 'in a condition to associate exclusively the terms Foreign and Missionary together: would that it were so. Neither has the missionary vocation of Methodism to this country ceased.'⁶

1 M.M., (1855), 305-307.

2 Ibid., and Prest, Fourteen Letters, p. 44. A partial reason for the decline was the need to support many more married ministers than previously. Prest, The Home Work, p. 15.

3 Prest, Fourteen Letters, p. 8. As an example of the need Prest later mentions the Southampton and Winchester circuit where three ministers visited and preached in nineteen places which had a total population of 73,914, p. 57.

4 Jealousy often appeared to be a powerful motivator. The letter of Trueman to Bunting cited earlier speaks of the work of the Dissenters with reference to home missions with admiration. Prest cites the situation in Cornwall where the Church of England had one minister for each place of worship, the Roman Catholics one for each place, the Nonconformists one for every four places and the Methodists one for every nine places. From this he concluded, 'The first requirement is not additional places of worship but an increase of Pastoral efficiency, which can only be secured by an additional number of Ministers. Fourteen Letters, p. 27. Tait's Charge of the Bishop of London (1859) was also quoted with warm approval as a means of motivating evangelism. M.M. (1859), 449-54.

5 Prest, Fourteen Letters, p. 144.

6 ibid., p. 45.

The select committee reported on 13 November 1855 and proposed five resolutions. They were,

1. That the Contingent Fund now be called the Home Missionary and Contingent Fund.
2. That a report was to be made by each circuit which required assistance.
3. That the Ministry and Home Missionary Funds should not be separated.
4. That correspondence be opened with the Chairman of the Districts to prepare the way.
5. That Charles Prest be appointed Secretary to the new fund.¹

The Conference accepted these proposals and further resolved that

'a public meeting be held in every circuit, in connection with the sermon annually preached on the Lord's Day, or at some other time, if deemed more suitable in any circuit (but if possible before the May district meeting), in order to afford information respecting the necessities of large towns and rural population of the country; to explain the nature of our Home Missionary operations, with the encouragements attending their prosecution; and to obtain an increase of pecuniary means for sustaining more efficiently and extending the work of God at home. The District Committees in September are requested to make arrangements for holding as many public meetings as possible and to appoint suitable deputations of Ministers and laymen to attend them.'²

The practical application of this resolution was to be worked out in the regulations which were adopted at the Manchester Conference in 1859 for the employment of Home Missionaries.³ The goal was to appoint men wholly and exclusively to the work of being a missionary and not to use the missionary work as a temporary diversion from other circuit duties. Their duties were specified in detail. They were to visit from house to

1 Minutes of the Select Committee appointed by Conference 'to consider and mature a Plan for carrying on the Home Work with Greater Efficiency'. (Methodist Archives).

2 Prest, Fourteen Letters, p. 89.

3 Regulations for Employment of Additional Ministers as Home Missionaries, (Manchester, 1859), p. 2.

house, avoiding meal times; to read scripture and pray; to distribute tracts; to encourage children to be brought up religiously; to reprove sin; to avoid controversy; to relieve the sick and dying; to preach out of doors and to obtain a room for a short service in the evening.¹ Missionaries were encouraged not to work in a shallow way over a large area but to work intensively in a small area. 'The effects of repeated visits will be to secure greater mutual sympathy, to make his efforts more impressive, to enable him to mark the effect upon the minds and lives of the people and more certainly to secure the spiritual harvest.'²

As to practical procedures, the missionary was requested to keep a detailed record of his work and to write an annual report. Before a missionary appointment was made it was required that half the financial support needed should be raised. Finance, clearly, remained a recurring problem and consequently circuits were encouraged, until 1862 when the policy was reversed, to employ single persons at £80 per annum.³

These regulations remained the guiding force within Wesleyan Home Missions until well into the twentieth century. William Arthur might argue that, 'We are only beginning to feel our way in our revived Home Missionary Movement',⁴ but in reality the Wesleyans were not to progress much beyond the point reached in 1857 in their understanding of how the missionary task should be prosecuted at home. New steps taken during the rest of the century were a crystallization in one form or another of the 1857 position.

1 ibid., p. 3f.

2 ibid., p. 4.

3 ibid., p. 5f.

4 William Arthur, Wesleyan Home Missions, Occasional Paper, No. 2, March, 1859, p. 12.

Methodism which for so long had vacillated between revivalism and a more steady home missions approach had now cast the die against revivalism. It still toyed with revivalism occasionally but a number of features of Methodism after 1860 lead to this conclusion.

Firstly, the effect of the 'second evangelical awakening' in Methodism was minimal. Orr argues that the Methodists gained fifty four thousand and ninety two members as a result of the 1859 revival, that Methodists did not oppose it and that in many cases the Revival began in a locality in a Methodist church.¹ But the weight of national evidence, as opposed to selective local evidence, is that Methodism was largely unaffected by the Revival.² Kent has indeed questioned whether it is even possible to speak of a 'second Evangelical Awakening in Britain' and he is surely right in saying that there could be no second awakening because the churches of the nineteenth century did not share the sleepy condition of the churches prior to Wesley.³ The concerns and decisions of Wesleyanism just prior to the 1859 revival confirm this.

Secondly, most revivalist activity to take place after this time in Britain was essentially of an undenominational kind and Methodism shows no particular liking for it.⁴ The segregation of revivalism from the denominations was such that even the radical Methodists were prepared to expel William Booth for his revivalist activity.⁵

1 J. Edwin Orr, The Second Evangelical Awakening in Britain, pp. 194-196.

2 Growth rates did rise sharply for the years 1859 and 1860. The figures for those and surrounding years are: 1856, 1.14%; 1857, 2.37%; 1858, 2.59%; 1859, 5.68%; 1860, 5.98%; 1861, 3.05%; 1862, 1.71%; 1863, 1.37%; and 1864, 0.01%. Consequently there was no significant long-term growth induced clearly by the Revival alone and unattributable to other Wesleyan evangelical efforts.

3 Kent, op. cit., p. 123.

4 Carwardine, op. cit., p. 198 and Orr, op. cit., p. 197, who cites Prest as being cynical about the Booths and Palmers. Attitudes over the subsequent visit of Moody were mixed.

5 This position is adopted contra Orr, ibid., p. 197 and Kent, op. cit., p. 120, where he argues that Booth was not strictly a Revivalist but a chapel planter. Be that as it may, Booth was perceived as a revivalist and rejected as such.

Thirdly, the energies of the Wesleyans were to be devoted from now on, not to revivalism but to other forms of home missionary activity.

Prest continued in the cause of Home Missions until his death in 1875. The period between 1857 and his death shows firstly the rapid growth of home missions until the mid-1860s and then their failure to grow further until the committee received a fresh injection of energy through the activities of Thomas Champness. By 1864 the Contingent Fund was supporting seventy six home missionaries (some of whom, however, were serving in the Zetland Islands). This indicated a remarkable growth since the six who were first appointed in 1858.¹ Prest claimed that thirty eight chapels had been opened, free of debt and that six thousand four hundred and sixty three members had been added to the churches as a result of their work in that time.

By 1868, however, the enthusiasm for the fresh approach was already beginning to decline and Prest was complaining of a lack of sufficient finance.²

It is true that the numbers of the missionaries had increased somewhat as there were now seventy one stationed in Great Britain alone (excluding the Zetland Islands).³ But two years later serious strains began to show and Prest reported that the Contingent Fund would remain in hopeless difficulties until the aggressive idea was reintroduced. He warned them, using a lesson from history, that, 'The old idea revived put new life into the connexion and confirmed the great truth that, unless the Christian Church be aggressive, it must become stationary and ultimately die out.'⁴ That year the Wesleyan Methodists declined by one thousand one hundred and ninety members.

1 M.M., (1865) 657.

2 ibid., (1868) 658.

3 ibid., 953.

4 ibid., (1871) 565f.

Further evidence of the loss of interest in Home missionary work is seen in the fact that in the next few years far less space is devoted to reporting it in the Methodist Magazine and the annual reports of the Home Missionary Department merely receive a cursory note in the Literary Notices section. In his report for 1865 Prest vigorously rejected the suggestion that the work of home missions was unpopular. His protest perhaps betrayed his uneasy conscience, although he could point to the full turnout at the Annual Meeting to substantiate his view.¹ His boast that one thousand one hundred and seventeen people had joined the societies in the previous two years as a result of their work was further support for his claim. But in reality, as Prest himself knew, the work was failing to develop and failing to keep pace with the needs of the nation. In this, Prest's last report, he reminded the conference once again of the crying needs of two sections of the nation, the big cities and the rural areas.

It is quite customary for an organisation to develop most rapidly in the earliest years of its existence and the Wesleyan Home Missionary Society to some extent reflected this. One wonders, however, how much Prest's own character was a limitation to its growth. The Conference obituary spoke of 'duty' as being 'the ruling idea of his life' and of his being 'unbending himself in carrying out his idea of duty (with the result that), he would have all his hearers animated by the same spirit but while positive and strict in his requirement, his disposition was genial, and few men possessed a nature more affectionate or more completely formed for friendship'. Is there a hint here that his style of leadership may not have provided the church with sufficient inspiration for this work to continue to grow?

1 ibid., (1875) 657.

2.6 The Later Decades

From the 1860s to the end of the century Methodism shows evidence of concern in three areas in regard to home missions. First, there was increasing concern for the cities. Secondly, there was concern about more traditional mission centred evangelism which often dealt with rural areas. Thirdly, there was the Forward Movement.

Charles Prest increasingly spoke of the needs of the cities towards the end of his life and the Fund he administered was used to encourage work within them. Alexander McAuley drew on the Fund when a new Wesleyan Home Mission Circuit was formed in the East End of London in 1861, based on Bow.¹

The desparate spiritual need of the people of Whitechapel, Bethnal Green, Mile End, Bow, Stratford and West Ham was noted. The sheer size of the population impressed itself upon McAuley.² But the concern was not limited to these issues; their social circumstances also moved Methodists to become missionaries to the cities.³ Their strategy was largely that of the city missions, although it differed in a number of particulars. The Methodists were deliberately attempting to form churches as a result of their work, in contrast to the aim of the city missions which, because they were engaged in an inter-church enterprise stopped short of this goal. The novelty, therefore, was not so much a novelty in respect of method as a novelty due to the application of this method to a major denomination. Ministers were not appointed to a

1 A. McAuley, Formation of a Wesleyan Home-Mission Circuit (London, 1864), p. 3. They also drew on the recently formed Metropolitan Wesleyan Chapel Building Fund.

2 ibid., it had increased by 69,453 in the previous ten years.

3 A. McAuley, Wesleyan Home-Missions in the East End of London (London, 1866), p. 9. Bethnal Green had a larger number of lunatics and deaths by starvation proportionately than any other parish in London.

circuit as would have been usual in Methodism but, to a station and this provided for greater continuity with the people.

The work at Bow began on 22 December 1861 with only seventeen people present but a year later, when a school chapel was opened, five hundred and three people attended the service and soon after it was decided to build a new chapel which would seat one thousand people.¹ Committed members were of course much smaller in number than these and probably consisted of the one hundred and fifty communicants McAuley mentions.² By 1866 this had risen to two hundred communicants with a further one hundred at Plaistow.³

The work at Bow was an early example of an approach to the masses in the city which was to become more prominent in the 80s and 90s and which was to draw fresh inspiration from the Forward Movement. One of the guiding spirits behind the new venture was Charles Garrett who, although no glib triumphalist, was no defeatist when it came to the mission of the church to the city masses. When D. L. Moody visited Liverpool in 1874, he asked Garrett to speak, without any notice, on the subject of 'How to reach the masses - Corner Men and Labourers'. In his unprepared address Garrett said, 'The answer to the question is a simple one ... I pointed out that the Saviour's words were "Go to every creature" and that in building churches and chapels we had been saying to the people "Come" instead of acting on Christ's injunction to "Go".'⁴ Garrett put down the cause of immorality and of many of the social problems to drink. He, therefore, proposed that the churches should

1 A. McAuley, Formation, op. cit., p. 4.

2 ibid., p. 7.

3 A. McAuley, East End, op. cit., p. 4.

4 Cited in J. W. Broadbent, The People's Life of Charles Garrett, (Leeds, n. d.), p. 9.

set up a company to provide dock workers with a means of obtaining alternative refreshment to alcohol. Moody, who was chairing the meeting up to this point, vacated the chair whilst Garrett was still speaking and began to secure contributions for the founding of such a company. Within minutes the £1,000 capital was raised, with the result that the Cocoa Tavern Company commenced.

Garrett was the first Wesleyan minister to be emancipated from the three year rule which had been subject to much criticism by those with a concern for city evangelism.¹ He had been stationed at the Pitt Street Mission in 1872 when it had a membership of less than two hundred. Within years it had given rise to eight chapels and a string of homes for men, women, youths, girls and children who were in some needy condition or other. He had also organised a shoe-black brigade, clothing societies and other social agencies.² Within forty years the Pitt Street Mission grew 'to a dozen or so mission centres with a membership of nine hundred and a total number of adherents four or five times that figure.'³

Both Inglis⁴ and Sellers⁵ agree that this mission was not primarily a social agency but a converting agency which used social relief as a bait for potential converts. The same thorough-going evangelicalism

1 ibid., p. 8. On the opposition to the three year Rule see K. S. Inglis, Churches and the Working Classes in Victorian England (London, 1963), pp.89-91, and J. Colwell, Progress and Promise (London, 1887), p. 187. 'Our itinerant system with all its advantages is almost the worst for such a purpose (i.e. the purpose of evangelising great cities). We need, in certain exceptional cases, steady, consecutive, long-continued work.'

2 J. W. Broadbent, op. cit., pp. 8 & 11.

3 Ian Sellers, 'Liverpool Nonconformity, 1786-1914' (Keele University Ph. D. thesis 1968), p. 180.

4 op. cit., p. 293.

5 op. cit., pp. 178-182.

was evident in another city mission which Garrett claims to have been influential in forming; the Manchester and Salford Lay Mission.¹ The central message of the Manchester and Salford Lay Mission was '...Christ - His sovereign power to save, His unceasing concern for lost souls - His love for all, hope for all, help for all'.² And it was combined with an approach to men which was basically individualist.³ Workers at the mission, who were almost all lay people, set out to discover individuals in need, believing that in emphasising the reconstruction of society as others had done, it was possible to lose sight of the individual personality. When the needy person had been discovered he was greeted as a lost brother; he was fed, clothed and fixed up with a job.⁴ The managers of the mission were confident that such an approach was successful in reclaiming men from the scrap heap and the downward slope.⁵

The missionaries firmly believed that the root cause of man's problems was sin but they admitted that his environment was also a hindrance to his spiritual progress. They saw it therefore as their brief to deal with the sin and as the responsibility of the statesman to improve the

1 J. Colwell, op.cit., p. 7. This mission is to be distinguished from the Manchester and Salford Town Mission referred to by H. D. Rack, 'Domestic Visitation: A Chapter in Early Nineteenth Century Evangelism', Journal of Ecclesiastical History xxiv (1973), 367-370.

2 F..E..Hamer, After Twenty Five Years (Manchester, 1910), p. 26.

3 Despite broadening social horizons, Methodism maintained its individualistic orientation. 'It is through the individual we must work upon society. Social reconstruction is only possible through personal renewal.' Mins. of Meth. Conf. (1894) 379. Cf. Mins. of Meth. Conf. (1869) 601 & (1890) 346.

4 Hamer, op.cit., pp. 34-36.

5 ibid., Ch 3 gives many examples of 'miraculously' changed lives. It includes the conversion of a manufacturer's agent to demonstrate that the influence of the mission was not solely among the down and out.

environment. Nevertheless,

Whilst the Manchester Mission has steadily sought to reach the man rather than his environment - believing that the reform of the living person is the ultimate and supreme need, and that all other reforms will count for little without it - it has been forced to recognise that there are many other things in the present social order that do not make for righteousness.¹

Consequently, in addition to the Central Hall which was opened in 1886 a range of other institutions were opened to aid the social health of the city, as follows:-

- 1891 First Men's Home and Refuge
- 1892 Medical and Maternity work commenced
- 1893 Hammond House for Wayward Girls
- 1893 Gipsy Gospel Wagon started
- 1894 First Women's Shelter opened
- 1895 Sunday Night Schools commenced
- 1897 Victoria Hall opened
- 1899 A new Women's Home and Refuge opened
- 1900 A new Men's Home and Labour Yard opened

Furthermore, the programme of the mission involved mixed clubs; a fresh air fund; libraries and places for recreation and study; midday sermons; lectures; evening gatherings as an alternative to the pub and the music hall and 'midnight street sweeps'. Three hundred and fifty men were accommodated in the Labour Home of whom nine tenths were unskilled workers. The Labour Yard eventually provided employment through a wood chopping and scrap metal business. In the Sunday School five thousand young people had enrolled, though, no doubt, the attendance would be below that. Of a specifically religious nature, the mission was responsible every week for thirty-three prayer meetings, twenty-one services in the Lodging Houses, fourteen Bible classes, one hundred and twenty fellowship meetings, twenty cottage meetings and forty-two open air services in the summer.

Such energetic activity demanded an army of volunteer helpers some two thousand five hundred in size and it was claimed that by 1900 most of these were converts of the mission itself.² It also called for

1 ibid., p. 59.

2 ibid., p. 97.

mammoth financial backing¹ which appears to have been largely raised through bazaars.

J. Colwell may have been optimistic when he declared that home mission work 'contains the radical cure for the cities' evils ...² but he was expressing an optimism generally felt among the Wesleyans at the time.³ Consequently they swung their energies into the task of evangelising the great cities and with the added impetus of the Forward Movement they adopted the Central Hall policy up and down the land. By 1909 there were forty-one Central Halls in England.⁴

A recent assessment of their work concludes,

...the missions were, in every traditional sense of the word, successful. Large congregations were created and sustained, men and women were converted, membership grew and social needs were met... So far as membership is concerned, one fact will illustrate the growth in Mission membership compared to the growth in Methodism generally. In 1900 five Missions - London, Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester and Leeds - shared an increase of 1,752 members, which represented a third of the total increase for the whole of the Connexion.⁵

In the end the sheer size of the problem and the recurring emergence of evil in its diverse forms defeated them. But the Wesleyans were not to know that, nor need it have affected the social and spiritual relief they were able to provide if they had known it.

At the same time as attention was given to the needs of the cities others were carrying on with a more traditional type of evangelism based on short missions in rural areas. Such missions had received added impetus from the visits of D. L. Moody and before long it was admitted

1 The mission cost £3,028 in 1893.

2 op.cit., p. 190.

3 Mins. of Meth. Conf., (1887), 333 & (1894), 373.

4 K. S. Inglis, op.cit., p. 93. His source is A New History of Methodism, eds. W. J. Townsend, H. B. Workman and G. Eayrs, (London, 1909), i, 460f.

5 George Sails, At the Centre, The Story of Methodism's Central Missions, (London, 1970), p. 36.

that 'Revivalism had become an art in our time; its laws are well defined. Even in our church work we must have respect to the psychological laws which are of Christ's ordering'.¹ It was now widely believed that missions could be organised to be successful and that the success of a mission was directly proportional to the amount of preparation. Even if caution had been expressed earlier about Finney's Lectures of Revival in the end it seemed as if most had come to accept his basic thesis. Evidently, it was believed that there was a clear correlation between the amount of energy expended in aggressive evangelism and the number of converts gained.²

Much of the work conducted during this period in the villages owes its inspiration to Thomas Champness. Joseph Mee, his biographer, calls him 'the modern apostle of rural England'.³ Champness had become a minister of the Wesleyan Connexion in 1857, having already been active as a lay and open air preacher whilst working as a bricklayer. At once he offered for service in Sierra Leone where he worked until 1863 when he returned to England following the death of his first wife and his own ill health. After serving in a number of circuits, he was stationed at Louth where he held regular Saturday evening services in the Market Square. These 'brought crowds of working people together every week, many walking in for miles in order to be present'.⁴ One novel aspect of his preaching in the open air was his use of pictures to illustrate his sermons.⁵ He was a master of communication to common people.

1 M.M., (1885), 66. .

2 So when in 1888 the Connexion reported an increase of four thousand members it was said, 'We confess that anything less than a substantial increase this year would have surprised us, for the past year has been marked by earnest evangelism'. M.M., (1888), 384.

3 Joseph Mee, Thomas Champness as I Knew Him (London, 1906), p. 6.

4 ibid., p. 40.

5 ibid., p. 47.

Champness keenly identified with D. L. Moody on his visit to Newcastle, not least because he felt Moody would save the church from 'prettyism'; that is 'pretty little sentences with all their points polished off, rounded till they went gliding from the memory as fast as they fell'.¹

The most significant work in which Thomas Champness engaged did not commence until 1882 when he was stationed, to act as a district secretary, in Bolton, where a revival was in progress. Here he founded an evangelistic newspaper, The Joyful News, which first appeared on 22 February 1883.² In addition he took two young men to serve as apprentices for the ministry. By 1885 this work had developed into a separate Mission and in 1889 Conference freed him from circuit work to direct the Joyful News Mission full time.³ Initially the mission produced cheap tracts and popular hymns. But Champness was also the first to acquire a van to use as a roving bookstand. As early as 1887 Conference was to applaud 'the success of the Rev. Thomas Champness in the gathering and training of lay evangelists, and in the blessing which has rested on their labours',⁴ and it opened a special new account, The Village Fund, to support him. It further agreed to treat normal circuit arrangements with some flexibility and encouraged the use of lay agency for the evangelisation of the villages.

By 1901 the use of Gospel Cars had become a regular and more prominent feature of the Methodist home missionary work. The

1 ibid., p. 45.

2 ibid., p. 53.

3 Charles Tyrrell, 'Methodist Vans', Proceedings of the Wesleyan Historical Society, xxxix (1974), 171.

4 The Wesleyan Home Mission Fund, Rules and Regulations, 1878; amended 1901, p. 12.

development of Champness's idea had fallen to another ardent evangelist, the Rev. Thomas Cook. Cook was a dramatic evangelist who, according to H. P. Hughes, dwelt too much on the dark side of the gospel.¹ His call to the ministry had come both through a dream and the preaching of W. M. Pushon and from the earliest days of his conversion he had become a 'soul winner'. He held his first mission when only twenty years old and during it two men aged seventy nine and eighty were converted.² In spite of his success he sought increased power for his ministry through a second blessing experience. Following this experience he was rejected by the Methodist authorities as a candidate for the ministry and so served as a lay evangelist until ordained as a Connexional evangelist in 1882.

His missions continued to produce a remarkable number of converts.³ In them he often made wise use of music and also of emotion with the result that 'he often saw in his service displays of spiritual excitement and animal spirit that reminded him of the phenomena that attended Wesley's preaching and indeed the Day of Pentecost also...'.⁴ His aim in preaching was to get people to decide openly and instantaneously for Christ. The essential message he preached was that of the new birth. He fully supported Spurgeon's position as expressed in his declaration, 'I want to get Lot out of Sodom; when I have succeeded you can black his boots if you like' and he denounced most churches as engaged in mere boot blacking.⁵

1 Henry T. Smart, The Life of Thomas Cook (London, 1913), p. 258.

2 ibid., p. 31.

3 ibid., p. 50. At Richmond Terrance, Bradford, there were six hundred and eight converts, of which three hundred and sixty two were Wesleyan Methodists. The next year even the policeman who had come to control the crowd was converted.

4 ibid., p. 245.

5 ibid., p. 271.

Cook organised 'Out and Out Bands' which developed the idea of Gospel Cars and soon afterwards he was operating thirty cars and thirty five full-time evangelists.¹ The work of these cars was accepted as a regular part of Wesleyan Home Mission policy² in the revised Rules for 1901.³ These rules gives a clear insight into how these evangelists operated.

A car would spend three months in one circuit, preferably in a situation where half a dozen villages were close to each other. No stipend was paid to the evangelists who lived from freewill offerings, which were divided between the two men who operated each car, with two thirds going to the senior man. The Home Missions Committee would meet the expenses and meals, other than breakfast, were to be taken with local church members. Evangelists slept in the car and no exceptions to this rule were allowed. Their mornings were spent in study or tending the car; their afternoons in visiting and their evenings in preaching. Behaviour was strictly regulated and they were requested to especially be 'very guarded in their conduct and conversation with young women'. Frivolous trifling was to be punished by instant dismissal. And all visitors should have left the car by ten o'clock at night.

The mission committee required a report at the end of each mission and in other ways too they sought to control the activities of the evangelists. All their literature had to be ordered through the Wesleyan Methodist Bookroom and the expenses were strictly limited.

1 ibid., p. 167f.

2 Tyrrell, op. cit., p. 172f. points out a similar development among the Primitive Methodists who launched a van in 1893 with the aim of stopping their chapels from being closed and increasing evangelistic work among the villages.

3 Rules and Regulations, op. cit., p. 20f.

Emphasis was placed upon the correct way to prepare, conduct and follow-up a mission. Preparation included both spiritual issues, such as the need for much prayer, and practical issues such as the need to find the right site near the chapel for the car and the need to visit every house in the village to invite people to the mission. During the mission itself, which was usually for a minimum of ten days, all normal meetings of the church had to be suspended and the total direction of the church's programme was transferred to the hands of the senior evangelist. As far as the aftermath was concerned, it was said that, 'experience shows that the result of labours during the mission depend largely upon prompt and patient pastoral oversight after the mission!':¹

The embryonic idea of Thomas Champness continued to develop through Thomas Cook until in 1903 the Joyful News Mission was fully transferred to the Home Missions Committee. It was in this way that the Joyful News Mission led to the founding of a permanent college for the training of evangelists, which became known as Cliff College.

The history of Wesleyan Home Missions in the last decade or so of the nineteenth century is, thirdly, inextricably bound up with, although not totally identified with the story of the Forward Movement. K. S. Inglis has written that the Forward Movement 'was a vague concept, made no less vague by Hughes' own attempt to clarify it, but not a meaningless one'.² The difficulty lies in the fact that it was not so much a concept or even a movement as a spirit or a temper which reanimated the churches.³ The title arose at a dinner party at the home of Mr. Alexander McArthur, when his wife was defending Hugh Price

1 ibid., p. 21.

2 K. S. Inglis, op. cit., p. 70.

3 A. Walters, Hugh Price Hughes - Pioneer and Reformer (London, 1907), p. 65.

Hughes, who was the chief representative of the new movement, against his critics.¹ The phrase appealed to Hughes who felt that it expressed the work in which he had been engaged at the West London Mission since 1887. The Forward Movement was at work for a decade before reaching its fullest public exposure in the Conferences of 1898 and 1899.² During 1899 Hughes who was then President of the Methodist Conference held conventions all over Britain to spread the spirit of the Forward Movement.

The growth of this more confident spirit in the churches was a reflection of the new imperialism manifest, for example, in the policies of Lord Rosebery and Sir William Harcourt following the failures of Gladstone's policies in the 1880s.³ The Forward Movement, then, in Methodism, although a reaction against Methodism as it was, was born in a wider social context.

The Forward Movement particularly resented Methodism's growing respectability or its 'conventional aristocratic Christianity' as Hughes put it.⁴ It saw the need to rescue Wesleyanism from stagnation and death.⁵ It was unhappy at the strategy of evangelism which believed in slow progress being made through small units of missionary enterprise,⁶ and applauded Spurgeon's lament that at the present rate of progress 'it will take us just an eternity and a half to reach the Millenium'.⁷ It was jealous of the

1 H. K., Hugh Price Hughes, Leader of the Forward Movement (London, 1903), p. 19.

2 Methodist Times (1898), 486, reports that Dr. Moulton was the first President of Conference to use the phrase Forward Movement from the chair. That year H. P. Hughes was also elected to the chair.

3 R. Shannon, The Crisis of Imperialism 1865-1915. (St. Albans, 1966), pp. 226-268 & J. Kent, 'Hugh Price Hughes and the Nonconformist Conscience', Essays in Modern English Church History, eds. G. V. Bennett & J. D. Walsh (London, 1966), pp. 181-205.

4 Letter to Rev. W. Unsworth, 4 Mar. 1884. Letters of H. P. Hughes, MS, Methodist Church Archives.

5 M.T., (1888), 91 .

6 M.T., (1885), 179 & 198 .

7 Cited in ibid., p. 305 .

increasingly aggressive evangelism being conducted outside Methodism¹ and of the success of the Church of England.²

In spite of the difficulty in defining the Forward Movement, a number of essential features are apparent. Firstly, it had at the heart of its concern a desire to reach the unchurched masses, particularly those in the cities. Secondly, it approached the task with confidence. Thirdly, it allowed the aim rather than tradition to dictate the evangelistic method which was to be used. Fourthly, it believed in a new style both of messenger and message to match the spirit of the age.

The leading article in the Methodist Times for 19 October 1893 complained that there were still too many people 'wasting their time and their strength upon handfuls of Gospel-hardened formalists, while the great unreached majority outside all the churches were ready to respond to their appeals'.³ If only the principles of the Forward Movement were adopted, the church would be able to claim 'unbroken success'⁴ in reaching the masses outside.

The essential method of the Forward Movement was to build suitable mission centres which would engage in social and spiritual activities and which would be free from the restrictions imposed by the ecclesiastical niceties of such regulations as the three year rule. It was important that whatever was done was done on a grand scale.⁵ As a result of the Forward Movement missions were founded in East London, Manchester, Central London, West London, South London, South West London, Poplar and Bow and Deptford. In the provinces they were established in Birmingham, Edinburgh, Leeds, Liverpool and Nottingham.⁶ In these mission centres worship again

1 ibid. 2 ibid., (1890), 707.

3 ibid., (1893), 706. 4 ibid., (1893), 674.

5 A. Walters, op. cit., p. 65f.

6 D. P. Hughes, The Life of Hugh Price Hughes (London, 1907), p. 203.

became exciting. At St. James' Hall, Piccadilly, where Hughes led the Sunday evening services of the West London Mission, the doors were opened one and a quarter hours before the start of the service.¹ On one occasion 1,000 people had to be turned away for lack of seating.² The singing was led by an orchestra and Hughes never held a service without people responding to his evangelistic appeal.³

The new style of missioner was a learned man who did not despise education. It was a proud boast for this generation of Methodists that its most successful evangelists were not illiterate men. On the contrary, they were men who were able to meet the arguments, such as Darwinism, which were supposed to lead to a loss of faith and turn them instead to good advantage in leading people to faith.⁴ The new evangelists were ill understood by the more traditional evangelists such as Champness or Cook. The reason for the misunderstanding was as much due to differences in spiritual lifestyle and social standing as it was due to differences over theology. The leaders of the Forward Movement rightly suspected that they had more common principles than the traditionalists were prepared to accept.⁵

The message preached by representatives of the Forward Movement was broader in sympathy than that of traditional evangelicalism. Hughes believed he was giving a full presentation of essential teaching regarding Christianity but doing so in such a way as to 'unite as large a section of Christendom as possible, to wit, that portion of it which falls between

1 A. Walters, op.cit., p. 73.

2 M. T., (1888), 104.

3 For fuller details of both the style and attendance at worship see G. Sails, op. cit., pp. 11-24.

4 M. T., (1889), 649.

5 See, e.g., ibid., (1886), 653 & (1891), 1373.

the extreme of Rome on the one hand, and that of Unitarianism on the other'.¹

The message was also broad in the sense that it displayed 'a deep interest in the material, the social and the economic welfare of the people'² and was concerned not merely with the symptoms of the problems but the causes of them. But for all its breadth Hughes still held firmly to the central belief that the message of the Christian faith was essentially that a man could know union with God and could receive the spiritual blessings which are to be found in Christ.³ To Hughes, when all the social improvement had been achieved and man's physical condition had been alleviated, man still needed someone to minister to his inward condition.⁴

What was different in Hughes' preaching was that he would not preach an individualistic salvation. He preached a Christ who was truly human as well as really divine; a Christ who had as much to do with business, pleasure and politics as with private devotions and prayer meetings. Every aspect of human nature must be dealt with if the teaching of Jesus Christ was really to be carried out.⁵ Nor did he, in contrast to earlier evangelists, demand 'that deep sense of sin.... that overwhelming repentance for a past' in defiance of the facts of a convert's previous

1 D. P. Hughes., op. cit., p. 213.

2 Mins. of Meth. Conf. (1890), 346 and M.M., (1890), 106.

3 H. P. Hughes, Essential Christianity (London, 1894), pp. 7 & 13.

4 ibid., p. 6. He wrote that when all the social improvements were complete, Macbeth's question to his wife's physician still remained,

Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow
Raze out the written troubles of the brain
And with some sweet oblivious antidote
Cleanse the stuff'd bosom of that perilous stuff
Which weighs upon the heart?

5 H. P. Hughes, Social Christianity (London, 1890), pp. 21 and 32.

life.¹ If their past life had not been all that bad, he would not insist on it becoming so before they could be converted. He would however insist that they should abandon certain ways of life if they prevented the enquirer submitting himself fully to God.

Neither the revivalist tradition nor the narrower evangelical tradition of evangelism had died out in Methodism by the end of the century. But it was Hughes' brand of evangelism which commended itself most widely within the denomination, as it was doing in other denominations at the same time. Its broader sympathies did not always lie easily with its evangelical pietism.² The former characteristic was favourable to the wider culture, whilst the latter was hostile to it and encouraged withdrawal from it or the erection of barriers against it. Many Methodists never faced the tensions involved in these inconsistencies but those who did, resolved them either by opening the door to secularism or by returning to a more exclusive evangelicalism.³ Some, like S. E. Keeble, pursued the political aspects of the tension more thoroughly and produced a form of Christian Socialism without, they believed, rejecting their commitment to an evangelical faith.⁴ A few men, like Hughes, managed for a time at the turn of the century to master the tensions and exploit them creatively. In so doing they ushered the history of home missions into a new phase - that of the Simultaneous Mission conducted jointly by the Free Churches in 1901.

1 D. P. Hughes, op. cit., p. 224.

2 See J. Kent, 'Hugh Price Hughes,' op. cit., p. 184f.

3 R. Currie, op. cit., Ch 4 documents the growth of secularization within Methodism. The history of Cliff College is evidence of the continuation of a stream of undisturbed traditional evangelicalism within the same denomination.

4 M. Edwards, S. E. Keeble, Pioneer & Prophet (London, 1949).

In a recent work on the revolutionary nature of Methodism, Bernard Semmel has argued that the dichotomy between home and foreign missions was deliberately exploited by Methodist leaders and that they encouraged the 'stock of energy' to be spent overseas in order to lessen the threat to domestic stability inherent in enthusiasm.¹ He concludes that it was that which led to a decline in Wesleyanism as opposed to other Methodist sects which put more energy into home missions and therefore exhibited considerable growth throughout the century.

His supporting evidence is circumstantial. He points out, for example, that, although the Conference of 1838 spoke of the pressing need for home missions, they used their limited funds for overseas missions. Semmel's argument has something to commend it. Throughout the century the Methodist leadership paid lip service to the idea of home missions but never consistently provided it with the resources that were required, or at least not until it was firmly under the control of those who were on the side of church order in the time of Charles Prest. For all that, Semmel's strictures on the Wesleyan leadership need qualifying.

It is difficult to substantiate that there was a deliberate conspiracy on the part of the leadership. Moreover, whether they were right to do so or not, until the mid-century the Methodists believed that every circuit minister was a home missionary and therefore saw no necessity for a separate home missionary organisation as such. Furthermore, the leadership of Methodism had a genuine desire to reverse the periodic declines that took place and knew that only by an aggressive policy of home evangelisation could that be done. Finally, by way of qualification to Semmel's claim, it must be recognised that the Wesleyan Methodists put home missions regularly high on their agendas and

1 B. Semmel, The Methodist Revolution (London, 1974), pp. 169 & 181.

were prepared to adopt new methods, if albeit slowly, to meet the challenge of the changing needs of society as the century progressed.

The distinctive feature of Methodism, among Nonconformists, was the diversity of approaches to home missions and the vividness of the colours in which that diversity was painted. Throughout the century there was a revivalist stream, evident, for example, in William Bramwell, James Caughey and Thomas Cook. There was also an evangelical stream which shunned the excesses of revivalism but nonetheless preached for individualistic conversion. Thomas Champness may be seen as representative here. Another stream, that of Bunting and Prest, were equally concerned about home mission but from an ecclesiastical perspective. Finally, there was Charles Garrett and Hugh Price Hughes, also evangelical but holding to the view that social and political concerns were as relevant to the task of home missions as spiritual concerns were. The streams were not exclusive; they overflowed into each other. Nonetheless they are distinguishable and it is because of their distinctiveness and because they flowed at different paces at different times in the century that Wesleyan Methodism, for all its changes, remained vitally interested in Home Missions.

2.7 Additional Note: The Methodist Sects

For much of the nineteenth century Methodism was plagued with division. Robert Currie has helpfully categorized the bodies which broke away from Wesleyanism into two groups.¹ The 'offshoots' usually had their origin in lay dissatisfaction with Wesleyanism's evangelistic efforts. They were attempts to allow revivalism a constructive

1 R. Currie, op.cit., p. 54f.

expression in contrast to Wesleyanism's attempt to discipline it out of existence. Although usually highly localized such movements grew rapidly in their early days. In the course of time, however, institutionalisation had its effect and the pervasive concern with evangelism which characterized the movements in their early days was replaced with a compartmentalised and specialised approach to home missions.

'Secessions' arose out of disaffection with the constitution of Wesleyanism, at least as it was being shaped by Dr. Bunting. These movements, usually led by ministers, bore more relationship to an organised political campaign than to a spontaneous revival movement. They were evangelistic in so far as Wesleyanism was evangelistic in character. But evangelism was a subordinate concern to the ecclesiastical constitution. In several cases the development of any organisation to deal with home missions was a very late creation.

J. Kirsop, in his Historic Sketches of Free Methodism argued that the effect of the divisions in relation to home mission was constructive. Not only did they clear the atmosphere and allow a freer air to be breathed, but,

Christian activities were also multiplied greatly. In many villages, it may be, the erection of additional chapels was not called for by the wants of the population; but on the whole the division of the forces of Methodism was a great gain to the cause of Christian evangelism.¹

The effect of division was constructive, in so far as it was constructive at all, for two reasons. Firstly the new movements produced church growth where the soil would have remained fallow if the parent body alone had been responsible. Numerous, locally-led groups which are sensitive to the regional culture can often be more effective than a

1 J. Kirsop, Historic Sketches of Free Methodism (London, 1885).

centralized organisation in such matters. Secondly, the loss of members to Wesleyanism, though the schisms¹, served as a stimulus to its own attempts at home mission. The last major disruption to occur through the controversy over the Fly Sheets cost Wesleyanism 80,000 members over a three-year period² and it was not long before the whole of Wesleyanism's home missionary work was reorganised.

In addition to offshoots and secessions note must be taken of Bunting's attempt to harness the lay-led interdenominational Sunday Schools for denominational ends in the early part of the century. The course of these disputes have already been extensively documented and it is apparent that no single pattern or outcome emerged³. It is equally apparent that at no stage in the conflict did the chapels ever really benefit from the Sunday Schools as a recruiting agency. The conflict arose, ostensibly because it was feared that the scholars would graduate from the school unregenerate except for a close liason between church and school. Where the churches failed to harness the Sunday Schools they failed also to harvest their fruit. And yet it is equally evident that where they did succeed in coming to an agreement the Sunday Schools equally failed to contribute much of significance to long-term church growth.⁴

In one respect the history of home missions among the Primitive Methodists, one of Wesleyanism's offshoots, shows a similar pattern of development to that of its parent body. The Primitive Methodists began as a revivalist sect whose very essence in its initial stages was evangelism. As the decades progressed, however, it became a church with much wider concerns⁵

1 In 1827, 1000 members were lost and in 1835 8,000 members seceded, Gregory, op. cit., p. 71 and R. Davies, A.R. George and G. Rupp (eds.), op. cit., p. 317.

2 Kirsop, op. cit., p. 43.

3 Ward, Religion and Society, op. cit., and T.W. Laqueur, Religion and Respectability, Sunday Schools and Working Class Culture 1780-1850 (New Haven and London, 1976), pp. 65-83.

4 Gilbert, Growth and Decline, op. cit., pp. 324f and 451-454.

5 H. B. Kendall, The Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church (London, 1905), ii, 357.

and evangelism became a segmented aspect of its work. Another aspect of that same process was a broadening of the methods deemed appropriate for evangelism.

The Primitives, however, differ from the Wesleyans in the extent to which this process happened. The Primitives never moved away from home missions to anything like the degree of the Wesleyans. Throughout the century they remained more committed to being a growth movement even if the degree of commitment fluctuated at times.

The Primitive Methodist church was formed by the coming together of a number of revival movements which were not contained within the structure of Wesleyanism. Hugh Bourne was the catalyst of a number of revivals, chiefly initiated through his conversation preaching.¹ In 1801 he began to engage, nervously, in public preaching and he became convinced of the need to preach in the open air. His journal records, 'I was in that respect quite primitive'.² His preaching aroused some apprehension but since it led to the founding of Chapels at Harriseahead and Norton, which fell within the guidelines of regular Methodist discipline, he faced little opposition from the authorities.

It was the holding of Camp meetings which was the signal for the growth of opposition which led to the expulsion of Hugh Bourne from Wesleyanism. Camp meetings resulted from a visit of Lorenzo Dow to England from America where they were commonly held. The Wesleyan Conference pronounced them 'highly improper in England and likely to be productive of considerable mischief'.³ Their concern was that the government would take action against disorder.⁴ They were certainly

1 ibid., i, 31.

2 Cited in J. T. Wilkinson, Hugh Bourne (1772-1852), (London, 1952), p. 34.

3 Cited in Kendall, op.cit., i, 77.

4 R. Davies, A. R. George & G. Rupp (eds.), op. cit., p. 106.

lengthy and noisy. The original intention was to hold them for prayer but the opposition of the Conference turned them into a symbol of the freedom to evangelise and to experiment in the method used.¹

Lorenzo Dow also provided the cohesion needed if the disparate groups concerned with aggressive evangelism were to be welded into one.² This process came to a climax in 1810 when William Clowes was expelled from Wesleyanism in a vain attempt by them 'to purge the church of the virus of Revivalism before the whole body should be affected with the distemper'.³ The effect again was to turn Clowes into a convinced home missionary who continued to preach at kitchen meetings but was now forced to form his converts into his own societies. The next year the Camp Meeting Methodists and the Clowesites came together to form one society which they christened Primitive Methodism on 13 February 1812.

Their orientation throughout the early years was revivalist. Their open airs involved much 'singing and jumping'.⁴ Dreams, visions, exorcisms, healing, speaking with tongues and uncontrollable weeping, together with other extravagant behaviour became common.⁵ Even when the excessive manifestations of supernatural power declined, which, according to Kendall, was with the demise of Mrs. Dunnell, the Ranters remained

1 ibid., p. 304. See also W. E. Farndale, The Secret of Mow Cop, (London, 1950), p. 32.

2 R. Carwardine, op. cit., p. 106.

3 H. B. Kendall, op. cit., i, 100.

4 Michael Sheard, The Origins and Development of Primitive Methodism in the Manchester Area, 1820-1830 (Wesley Historical Society, Lancs. and Cheshire Branch, 1976), p. 5.

5 H. B. Kendall, op. cit., i, 142-154 and J. Kent, Holding the Fort, p. 44.

much less inhibited than their Wesleyan counterparts.

The achievement of Primitive Methodism was in Ward's view to give connexional shape to revivalism.¹ Many other revivalist movements existed in the 1800s² but the Primitive Methodists were in the long run the most successful at channelling that revivalist spirit and turning it into church growth.

Until 1843 the work of home missions was the responsibility of each individual circuit. The initial growth took place within the Tunstall circuit and Bourne describes it as happening 'in a regular way without much variation throughout the year',³ of 1813. At Hulland he founded a tract society and also started to train Sunday School teachers. The tract mission was staffed by a salaried lady evangelist, Mary Hawksley.⁴ Their growth was considered to be great enough however, to persuade them to come to an agreement that the churches should aim at consolidation rather than more conversions. Although it was never formalised, it became known as the 'Tunstall non-missioning law'. The policy, had it continued, would have been thoroughly detrimental to the new society. John Benton, however, had given himself completely to God in 1810 for the purposes of evangelism and so he transgressed the policy and with the use of Dow's hymn books set off to evangelise Belper. His creation of the Derbyshire Circuit, which was then submitted to Bourne's authority, brought the non-missioning law to an end.

Once the primacy of evangelism had been reasserted, the movement spread through Nottingham and from there into Leicestershire and Yorkshire. From Derby the advance continued to Loughborough. The chief evangelists were Robert Winfield and again a lady, Sarah Kirkland.

1 W. R. Ward, Religion and Society; pp. 80-88.

2 e.g. The Band Room Methodists of Manchester, the Independent Methodists of Macclesfield, the Magic Methodists of Delamere Forest, the Tent Methodists of Bristol and the Revivalists of Leeds.

3 Cited in Kendall, op.cit., i, 163.

4 ibid, i, 178

Not untypically, when they went to Broad Marsh in 1815 they saw sixteen converted on the first day. The preaching was no longer quite so enthusiastic as in the original camp meetings but it was effective nonetheless.¹

The revival in the Midlands in 1817-18 was to be followed by further aggressive evangelism based on the existing circuits of Tunstall, Nottingham and Hull. By 1824 these circuits were supporting seventy-two independent stations.² This geographical advance continued throughout the '20s, although numerical advance did not continue. Primitive Methodism was now in danger of becoming weak because its expansion was too rapid.

What accounted for its success until it faced the set back of the 1820s? To begin with it was a religion culturally suited to the people it aimed to attract. Its preachers were simple men and women who spoke the language of their hearers, were able to excite curiosity by their behaviour and even evoke sympathy when persecuted. Secondly, they were preachers with the conviction that nothing else mattered but the securing of converts.³ Thirdly, they were working in soil which was well prepared. Many Methodists had been longing for a more aggressive approach to home missions as Clowes discovered when he evangelised Hull in 1819.⁴ The social climate of the day was restless in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars and in the face of the threat of industrialism, as is evidenced by the Luddite activity, which occurred in the same years as Primitive Methodist expansion. Until the working classes turned more permanently to a political solution, they were for a time open to hear about a religious answer to their predicament. Finally, their success must in part be due to their organisation. The circuit system which enabled unhindered expansion from a number of local centres simultaneously is

1 For this paragraph see H. B. Kendall, op. cit., i, 194-210.

2 W. Townsend, H. Workman and G. Eayrs (eds.), op. cit., p. 579.

3 Sheard, op. cit., p. 13, records that at Mosley Common the local wise woman was co-operative, thus giving them ready access to the rest of the community.

4 H. B. Kendall, op. cit., p. 361.

particularly well adapted to securing growth.¹

From the mid 1830s the growth rate of Primitive Methodism again slowed down considerably. The period of initial enthusiasm was over. Bourne and Clowes were engaged in controversies over particularism² and, in any case, with increasing infirmity the original leaders were no longer as effectively active as they had been. By 1842 Bourne had laid down the editorship of the Magazine and shortly afterwards became a supernumerary.

If Primitive Methodism was to maintain its position as a growth movement and improve the rate of growth new initiatives were needed. These came from the Hull Circuit, who in 1843 proposed moving the Book Room to London and the re-organisation of the Missionary Committee. A central missionary committee had been established in 1825 but it had remained a small operation³ and had never really been a viable alternative for the organisation of home missions to circuit organisation. The transition from circuit to central organisation was slow, proceeding at an unforced pace.⁴ Even so, the last missions, at Bromyard and Falmouth, were transferred to the control of the General Missionary Council by 1862.

The new arrangements had no marked effect on numerical expansion. Its effects were to make the character of home missions among the Primitives more like the character of home missions among its parent body. The minutes of the Home Missionary Society show that the committee became

1 L. P. Gerlach and V. H. Hine, People, Power, Change: Movements of Social Transformation (Indianapolis, 1970), pp. 33-197.

2 J. T. Wilkinson, op. cit., p. 144f.

3 H. B. Kendall, op. cit., ii, 401.

4 ibid., Bourne was apparently opposed to it because it would have cramped individual and circuit effort.

increasingly regulatory in its approach to its work. Strategy was determined by whether it was a wise use of money or not.¹ Much time was taken up with whether the preachers conformed in their behaviour to what was expected of them.² And complaints occurred that its circulars were ignored and the reports it received were vague.³ Again, as in the wider church, the method of evangelism became increasingly diverse in the last decades of the century, mingling with the original concern for the conversion of individuals . a growing concern for social transformation.

In yet one more respect the story of Primitive Methodist Home Missions parallels that of the Wesleyan Methodist Church. In Wesleyanism Thomas Champness arose at the end of the century to recall Methodism to a belief in lay evangelists and to refocus its attention on rural areas. These same two concerns are evident in the work of the Rev. G. Warner, who was set apart by the Primitive Methodist Conference as a Special Evangelist in 1874 and laboured in that role until 1886. In response to convictions which came to him at a Holiness Convention in Grimsby, he opened a home for the training of young evangelists. By 1889 Conference was prepared to encourage the augmentation of his work. And it declared its recognition of 'a new order of workers after the manner of the New Testament evangelists'.⁴ Unlike the training home founded by Champness, Warner's did not survive and it was reluctantly closed in 1904. But in the intervening years it had trained one hundred and

1 Minute Books of the Home Missionary Society 1859-62 & 1873-77, MS, (Methodist Church Archives, Manchester), 19 December '59, 16 Mar '60. Circuits were expected to forward increasingly greater proportions of their general and special missionary collections to the central body, from 1/8th in 1842 to all of it by 1876. H. B. Kendall, ibid., ii, 408.

2 ibid., 20 July '60, 19 Jn '61, 10 Dec '62, 31 Oct '73, 24 Apl '74.

3 ibid., 19 Dec '59.

4 Cited in H. B. Workman, op. cit., ii, 541. The information on the work of G. Warner is to be found on pp. 540-2.

sixty men to work as 'home labourers'.

Like all other denominations the Primitive Methodists could never rely on their heritage as a guarantee that the work of home missions would always be undertaken by them. Every decade needed to look at the task afresh and there needed to be a periodic call to take the denomination back to its original concerns and to its original methods of lay evangelism.

In spite of Warner's work, by the end of the century Primitive Methodism had become more specifically an urban phenomenon. The original economic and social factors which had given its growth some impetus had disappeared and there was a growing homogeneity with Wesleyanism, which prepared the way for the reunion of 1932.¹

The Bible Christians were also a revivalist offshoot of Methodism which the parent body failed to contain. William O'Bryan had been converted at eleven, at which time he experienced an overwhelming and deeply humbling sense of God's mercy. From the beginning of his Christian experience he became a personal evangelist. He offered himself as an itinerant but, encouraged by the Superintendent who thought him 'impulsive and self-sufficient', the District meeting rejected him.² The rejection did not dampen his evangelistic ardour and, despite attempts at reconciliation, O'Bryan was forced to form his own circuit as a result of his unofficial evangelism of the Shebbear district. In spite of the official opposition, there is evidence that in the initial period some Methodist laymen regarded Bible Christian

1 J. D. Gay, The Geography of Religion in England (London, 1971), pp. 150-2. For details of such developments in a local situation see I. Sellars, op. cit., pp. 188-194.

2 T. Shaw, The Bible Christians 1815-1907 (London, 1964), p. 5f.

preachers 'as special agents for the work of evangelism'.¹

The growth of the Bible Christians owes much to the evangelistic zeal of O'Bryan, James Thorne and the other leaders. When, for example, William Reed, originally a boy preacher, preached over a two year period at Shebbear, four hundred members were added.² Much unashamed use was made of female preachers. By 1819, fourteen out of the thirty travelling preachers were female.³ They grew from twelve circuits with two or three chapels in that year to seventy seven circuits with five hundred and sixty chapels and one hundred and twenty seven itinerants in 1872.⁴ As with the Primitive Methodists, the preachers' cultural identity with their hearers was partially a reason for their success. The Bible Christians never possessed their own training college for ministers and they recognised that 'it was the simple homely and sometimes eccentric expositors who were the most appreciated'.⁵

An analysis of the growth of Bible Christian congregations in Kent, the North and elsewhere where they spread shows how important the mobility of West Country Bible Christians was. Congregations throughout England were largely comprised of Devon and Cornwall emigrants.⁶

O'Bryan patterned himself on John Wesley, not only with respect to evangelism but also with respect to his autocratic style of leadership. Not all were happy that he should exercise such supreme authority and a split in the leadership occurred in 1829. Having been defeated in Conference, O'Bryan separated from the Bible Christians and leadership

1 ibid., p. 77.

2 W. Townsend, H. B. Workman, and G. Eayrs (eds.), op. cit., i, 521.

3 ibid., i, 509.

4 T. Shaw, op. cit., p. 49.

5 ibid., p. 70f.

6 ibid., p. 59f.

passed into the hands of James Thorne. The change in leadership marked no diminution in evangelistic zeal. James Thorne was 'a model home missionary'. His enthusiasm in the cause of Missions was the master passion of his life. The sacred fire not only never burned low, but it flamed continually.¹ Indeed, his biographer sets out to demonstrate that he was a field, revival and pastoral evangelist as great as the greatest men noted for those gifts and if he was not a parish, prison or philanthropic evangelist, it was because he lacked the opportunity rather than the desire.² His preaching provoked great feeling and emotion, although he was concerned to keep good order.³ It was revivalist in character even though he felt the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit were not for his time.⁴ To Thorne the secret of perpetuating a revival was that in every conversion there should be the seeds of more conversions. This had the effect of extending the original revival and of allowing revival to follow upon revival 'with almost unbroken regularity'.⁵

Zealous evangelistic leadership was not sufficient, however, to prevent home missions becoming institutionalized among the Bible Christians as among other branches of Methodism. As early as 1821 they had formed a Missionary Society to evangelise 'the dark and destitute parts of the United Kingdom' as well as to evangelise overseas. But serious attention was not paid to overseas missions until 1884. Home missions became a segmented aspect of their work therefore quite early.

1 F. W. Bourne, The Centenary Life of James Thorne of Shebbear, (London, 1895), p. 71.

2 ibid., p. 35f.

3 ibid., p. 38, cites his Journal for 3 Nov. 1816.

4 ibid., p. 128, cites his Conference Address of 1867.

5 ibid., p. 43.

For the Bible Christians, however, the chief threat to home missions lay not in segmentation but through the difficulty of maintaining revival fervour at anything like boiling point. Shaw has shown that in the middle period, 1835-85, periods of revival and increase were followed by decreases and the maintenance of growth became more and more difficult.¹ During these middle years, Shaw argues, the Bible Christians became less and less a sect and gradually transformed into a church so that, by the time they were united with other Methodist bodies in 1907, they had lost their distinctive emphasis on evangelism.

Shaw's analysis of these years draws attention to three particular Conferences of the Bible Christians which epitomize the movement towards denominationalism.² In 1842 when they were rejoicing in the successful fruit of revival, they asked each other what had caused the success. Their answer emphasised prayer, protracted meetings and the need to invite men and women 'under religious impressions during the meetings' to come and meet with others who would pray for them. At the same time they added the cautionary, almost sceptical note, that not all who joined the Society after such revival meetings were truly converted. By 1856 revival meetings were no longer so common and the Conference of that year spoke of commencing them as if they were new. The third Conference, mentioned by Shaw, was that of 1880 when a proposal was discussed to engage special evangelists for revival work. The proposal was rejected. But it made little difference because by this time evangelism had become so institutionalized that, whether given permission or not, zealous evangelists were going to find ways of expressing their zeal outside of the institutional structures.

1 T. Shaw, op. cit., p. 79.

2 ibid., pp. 79-85.

In this second offshoot of Methodism the original raison d'etre of evangelism had been lost in the multitude of other concerns.

Another tiny offshoot of Methodism had its origins in an aggressive concern for evangelism. The Tent Methodists were officially constituted in 1822 with the intention 'that the Gospel shall be preached whenever and wherever Divine providence may open their way'.¹ George Pocock had begun preaching in Bristol in 1814 using a tent as the place where his meetings were held because of the difficulty of obtaining a room. On 27 December 1819 a public meeting was held at which it was anticipated that, owing to the generosity of some of his wealthier supporters, he would be set aside for such work in a fulltime capacity. However, several of the Methodist itinerant preachers present objected that the meeting did not strictly conform to Methodist procedures and so withdrew from the meeting.² The increasing opposition of the Wesleyans obliged Pocock's supporters to form their own society.³

Rule 12 of the Tent Methodists read, 'All persons admitted into this Society shall be expected to evidence an earnest and sincere desire for the salvation of souls'. Judged by this desire to win converts the Tent Methodists seem to have been a success. John Pyer's biographer records that Mr. Pocock conducted a mission at Dursley soon after 1819 which resulted in 450 members being added to Methodist societies.⁴ At Manchester in 1821 500 or 600 claimed to have gained spiritual help from their ministry.⁵

1 Rules of the Tent Methodists or Agrarian Society for Extending Christianity at Home (Bristol, 1820), p.3.

2 ibid., p. 2 .

3 K. P. Russell, Memoirs of the Rev. John Pyer (London, 1865), pp. 76-78.

4 ibid., p. 58.

5 ibid., p. 109.

The Tent Methodists, however, never resolved their tensions with other churches. Although initially welcomed by ministers and churches in a district and even countenanced by the Congregational Home Missionary Society,¹ their converts were not always welcome. After the successful mission to Manchester a new church was formed at Canal Street, Great Ancoats. John Pyer became its pastor for some years but he eventually became convinced of Congregational principles² and left in 1829 to work for the Christian Instruction Society and thereafter to become pastor of a number of Congregational churches. It was typical of the fate of an evangelistic society like the Tent Methodists who lacked any ecclesiastical discipline and understanding that the fruit of their labours should either be enjoyed by others or not be established at all.

The Independent Methodists were organisationally the most distinctive of all the actions of Methodism. The first annual conference of Independent Methodists, held in 1806, brought together five small groups of churches who had severed from older Methodist bodies. The chief cause of their separation lay in the Wesleyan attempt to impose a more rigid discipline on its societies. In Manchester and Warrington it was the attempt of the Wesleyans to control the Band Meetings and the desire of the churches to enjoy self-government and a more New Testament pattern of ministry which caused the rift. The Stockport group broke away from the Methodist New Connexion, having found that even that connexion did not provide sufficient freedom for the expression of their revivalist zeal.³

The disparate groups were welded together by Peter Philips whose mark was firmly stamped on the new movement. He had welcomed Lorenzo Dow on his

1 ibid., p. 119.

2 ibid., pp. 132-157. Russell records that the church at Canal Street was recognised by most as a Congregational Church during Pyer's ministry.

3 J. Vickers, History of Independent Methodism (London, 1920), pp. 11-14.

visits to England and was a close friend of Hugh Bourne. Thus the new movement had a revivalist character to it. Equally, however, it was characterized by Quaker simplicity of speech and life-style. Indeed, originally, 'Quakers Methodists' was the name onlookers chose to call it. In government, each local church was autonomous and its annual assembly took the form of a deliberative forum rather than a legislative assembly. It was further distinctive in not recognizing any distinction between the ministry and the laity and in having no paid ministry.

According to Vickers, the historian of the movement, the Independent Methodists did recognise the distinct office of the evangelist and the need for the evangelists to be maintained whilst engaging in work on behalf of the churches. Evangelists were those who felt a special call for such work from God and were expected to be able to provide evidence of such by having borne fruit in the churches. When acting as evangelists they temporarily ceased membership of any one particular church and became the responsibility of them all. On completion of an evangelistic tour, and initially such tours only lasted a few weeks, they were expected to return to ordinary church membership and maintenance would cease forthwith. The support of these evangelists took place through a joint fund. Their task was to be the bond between the churches, strengthening their unity, and to found new churches. In the view of the Independent Methodists these men were so special that although Colleges could equip and train pastors only God could equip and designate evangelists.

The administration of the evangelists was first organised on a

1 R. Davies, A. R. George and G. Rupp (eds.), op. cit., pp. 323-326.

2 Vickers, History, op. cit., pp. 106-108.

denominational scale when a Home Missionary Society was formed in 1825. It was hoped by this means to encourage their more widespread use. But in order that the office should not be abused and a regular ministry unwittingly develop it was ruled that no church within ten miles of another church could use their services.¹

The first suggestion of the appointment of permanent evangelists was put forward by Alexander Denovan in the 1840s. Although the idea was generally accepted no action was taken on the matter until 1876 and even then it was not found to be wholly commendable. The Liverpool District, fearing that the voluntary principle was threatened, declared that they would withdraw. In the event, however, they did not secede.² Joseph Birchall had the honour of being appointed the first connexional evangelist in 1876.³

One of the most outstanding connexional evangelists among the Independent Methodists was Richard Burrows Woods,⁴ a blacksmith by trade, who having served as a minister became their evangelist in 1891. In this capacity he registered 7780 decisions for Christ; formed new churches at Hindley, West Leigh, Ashton-on-Mersey, Blackley, Mill Lane, Blackpool and New Easington; and brought four new churches into the connexion. What happened to all his converts must remain a mystery for they certainly did not join the Independent Methodists. In 1894 the total membership of the connexion was only 6773, less than the converts Woods claims to have recorded. Many may have joined other denominations and many more would not have stood the tests of post-conversion experience.

1 ibid., p. 291.

2 ibid., p. 292.

3 ibid., pp. 294-296.

4 ibid., p. 304f.

The earliest secession from Wesleyan Methodism was that of the Methodist New Connexion which centred around Alexander Kilham. For six years Kilham led the opposition in the Methodist Conference to the tightening control of the Methodist aristocracy. He represented the growing feeling that there should be an increasing democracy in the church. Many felt oppressed, objected to the lack of lay participation in the government of the church and believed that the trustees of Methodism were 'assembling from all parts of the kingdom, for the purpose of lording it over our consciences'.¹ Kilham was expelled for his agitation in 1796 and the following year William Thom, Stephen Eversfield and Alexander Cummin withdrew as well to form 'A New Itinerancy'.

George Eayrs has put forward the view that Kilham's work as an ecclesiastical reformer has obscured his work as an evangelist.² Kilham certainly began his preaching career as an uncompromising evangelist. In the early days his labours caused him much persecution. But he declared that, 'I was never more comfortable and happy than when I was suffering in the cause of Christ, and I thought myself willing, at some seasons, to die rather than run from His cause'.³ Inevitably in his conflict with Wesleyanism over constitutional issues, his energies were redirected as his Life demonstrates. Yet he remained an incorrigible evangelist to the end.

The growth of the New Connexion was very slow; gaining only 243 members in the first five years of their existence.⁴ In addition to the normal opposition experienced by new movements, the growth of the New

1 A. Kilham, Life of the Rev. Alexander Kilham (Nottingham, 1799), p. 86.

2 W. Townsend, H. B. Workman and G. Eayrs (eds.), op. cit., i, 497. He seeks to correct the balance in G. Eayrs, A Son of Isaachar (London, 1897).

3 A. Kilham, op. cit., p. 27.

4 T. Allin, The Jubilee of the Methodist New Connexion (2nd edn. London, 1851), p. 152.

Connexion was irreparably set back by the premature death of Alexander Kilham in 1798. It was a disheartening experience for them. The leadership of the young movement passed to William Thom,¹ whose character was that of a constructive statesman rather than a burning evangelist and it was his character, rather than Kilham's that impressed itself on the young church. Kilham had remained an energetic evangelist to the last and wrote, for example, from Sheffield, that the church had increased so much that the building had become too small, old members had been quickened; about fifty new members had been added and many backsliders had been restored.² Had he remained alive the subsequent history of the New Connexion may well have been different than it was.

Under Thom a Home Mission was established in 1818 with £424/17/9½ being contributed by the circuits for its support in the first year. But the energies of this fund were chiefly directed towards Scotland and Ireland, and, after 1824 in fact, the fund was reorganised and devoted entirely to Ireland.³ The only other early organised step in the cause of home missions was the establishment of a fund in 1840 for the reduction of chapel building debts.

Not until the Jubilee celebrations did home missions again occupy the thinking of the New Connexion as a whole. The Jubilee Fund set aside £2,000 for evangelism, and, according to Allin, the movement's historian there seemed at that time to be a new awareness of the need to evangelise and of Methodism's special calling to take the gospel to the poor.⁴ He confess^{ed} that until then the New Connexion had been too eager to enter

1 ibid., p. 159f.

2 ibid., p. 154.

3 This work was officially designated as the Methodist New Connexion in Ireland in 1828.

4 Allin, op. cit., p. 218f.

a town in order to rally people around a hostile standard rather than to rally them around the gospel. Proselytism had taken over from true evangelism.¹

The New Connexion reflected Thom's style of leadership. It was consistent with this that they should be cautious about revivalism as a number of events demonstrate. Some of their members in Stockport left in 1805 to join the Independent Methodists because they felt that the New Connexions restrained the revivalist spirit too much.² Joseph Barker, later to be expelled from the movement for doctrinal unsoundness, nonetheless epitomised their attitude to revivalists. He had left Wesleyanism and rejoiced in the liberty of the New Connexion. He was a committed evangelist and while at Sheffield he rejoiced that many additions were made to the already large societies there every week.³ But he was scornful about revivalists and believed that the manner of their proceeding was truly dreadful. Furthermore he discounted their results and believed that only one out of every one hundred and fifty of their converts became church members of churches.⁴ His own preaching demonstrated a concern for a more rational approach to Christianity. His own concern was to bring people 'to a knowledge of the truth and to bring them to act in accordance with its requirements'.⁵ Later in the century this same caution with regard to revivalism was evident in the separation of William Booth from the New Connexion.

Allin comments that where any evangelistic extension did take place it took place because individuals or individual circuits had taken the initiative; there was no general plan. Furthermore, he claims, that

1 ibid., p. 219 and R. Currie, op. cit., pp. 59-61.

2 Vickers, History, op. cit., p. 13.

3 J. Barker, The Life of Joseph Barker (London, 1880), pp. 102-107.

4 ibid., pp. 186-192.

5 ibid., p. 171.

such advance was generally at the call of those who had recently left other bodies to join them.¹ Joseph Barker may be seen as an example of this.

The evangelistic tradition was not entirely lost in the Methodist New Connexion. It continued especially in laymen like John Whittaker Williams, John Shaw and Abraham Lockwood.² But the major energies of the New Connexion were diverted toward consolidating the organisation of the church rather than into extending it. Not until after the Centenary was an Extension Fund established and made a permanent feature of the New Connexion. On the whole growth continued to be by transfer and amalgamation rather than through conversion. After a number of abortive discussions with other Methodist bodies to explore the possibility of union with them they completed successful negotiations with the Bible Christians and the United Methodist Free Church to form the United Methodist Church in 1907.

The United Methodist Free Church had been formed in 1857 through the union of three bodies which had seceded from Wesleyanism in 1827, 1835 and 1849 respectively. In each case the underlying cause was that the centralized authority of Methodism, as interpreted by Dr. Bunting, had been challenged. The three denominations which resulted were the Protestant Methodists, the Wesleyan Methodist Association and the Methodist Reformers. None of the movements, neither singly nor combined, were conspicuous for their contribution to the cause of home missions.

1 Allin, op cit., p. 219f.

2 W. J. Townsend, H. B. Workman and G. Eayrs (eds) op. cit., p. 541.

The secession at Leeds was, on the surface, a revolt against the proposal to erect an organ in Brunswick Chapel. The majority of leaders and members of the society did not want it but contrary to their wishes and contrary to its own rules the Wesleyan Conference decided that the organ should be installed. In the ensuing dispute Bunting played a leading, if legally dubious, role. It resulted in 1,000 seceding and refusing to submit to the power of the preachers. Why such a storm should have occurred over such a trifle is difficult to explain except that it would seem that Bunting miscalculated the situation. Gregory asserts that Bunting had been wanting to teach the Yorkshire Methodists a lesson for some time because they had been too much inclined to follow the undisciplined revivalism of William Bramwell. In this dispute Bunting saw his opportunity.¹ It is true that Joseph Sigston, one of Bramwell's supporters, did secede. But the Protestant Methodists do not seem to have been unduly characterized by revivalism.

The Wesleyan Methodist Association was formed in 1835 after the expulsion of Dr. Samuel Warren from the Wesleyan Conference over the proposal to make Dr. Bunting the President of the new Theological Institution. Warren himself did not remain connected with the new association for long and the new movement grew only slowly and then chiefly through the transfer of members from other bodies rather than through conversions. Kirsop argues that they did not wholly lose their missionary zeal in their early days but it was an agitated period when constitutional questions were uppermost and the time was not conducive to evangelism.²

1 Bramwell had remained loyal at the time of the Kilhamite dispute. See Memoir of the Life and Ministry of the Rev. William Bramwell (London, 1848) pp.51-54; T. Harris, The Christian Minister in Earnest (London, 1846) p.51 and Gregory, op. cit., p.72f.

2 Kirsop, op. cit., pp.51-53.

The Wesleyan Methodist Association was responsible for one organisational feature which was later to prove of significance to the United Methodist Free Church. Wesleyan Methodist Association ministers belonged to a two-tier system. They were divided into Itinerant Ministers and Home Missionaries. Their work was essentially the same but the status, pay and security of the Home Missionaries was inferior to that of the Itinerants. Their names were not read out at their Conference so they were subject neither to its examination nor to its security and they could be removed at will. Originally the Home Missionary system had been designed as a means of fulfilling the evangelistic task but it had fallen into abuse because it was much cheaper to employ a missionary rather than an itinerant. Consequently the number of Home Missionaries rose in 1857 from 19 to 76 in 1861 whilst the number of itinerants remained the same. In 1869 the United Church abolished the unjust distinction and all ministers henceforth belonged to the same order.¹

The third secession occurred in 1849 and was the most serious of all costing Wesleyan Methodism great losses, variously estimated between 80,000 and 100,000; a third of the Methodist membership. James Everett, along with others, was expelled from the Wesleyan Conference because he stood accused of being the author of the Fly Sheets from the Private Correspondent which contained attacks on Dr. Bunting. The abrasive manner of his dismissal together with the general concern over the constitutional issues at stake meant that Everett, Dunn and Griffith enjoyed much popular support. In response to the many queries they had received as to what they would do next, they wrote to the Wesleyan Times saying,

1 ibid., pp. 61-63.

At present we intend not to join any particular section of the Christian Church. We shall embrace all opportunities to preach the glorious gospel of Christ. We shall hold a series of meetings in the principal towns of the empire. In these meetings we shall make a statement of our case

They urged the people to remain within Wesleyanism and to work towards the repeal of what they considered the anti-Christian and anti-Wesleyan law of 1835.¹

Within a year the three ministers had addressed 140 meetings which had been attended by 170,000 people² and they had gained a widespread following. The continual rebuttal of all attempts to suggest reform by the Wesleyan Conference inevitably meant that those seeking it should organise themselves separately.

One statement, however, of the reformers may be questioned. They declared that their intention was to take every opportunity 'to preach the glorious gospel of Christ'. Writing in his diary in 1855 Everett similarly claimed to have travelled, that year, 8482 miles 'endeavouring, though imperfectly, to benefit my fellow men by preaching the gospel'.³ But it is evident that it was not gospel preaching in which he or his colleagues were engaged. Everywhere their meetings were reform meetings dealing with the question of the exercise of authority within the church.⁴

In 1858, a year after the amalgamation of the three reform movements and the first year for which accurate statistics are available, the new United Methodist Free Church had one hundred and thirty nine itinerants; seven hundred and five chapels; four hundred and eight preaching rooms and forty-three thousand and seventy-one members.

1 R. Chew, James Everett, A Biography (London, 1875) p. 419.

2 R. Davies, A. R. George & G. Rupp (eds.) op. cit., p. 321.

3 Chew, op. cit., p. 463.

4 ibid., pp. 423-438.

The first decade saw a quite creditable growth so in 1867 they had two hundred and twenty nine itinerants; one thousand one hundred and seventy three chapels; three hundred and ninety eight preaching rooms and sixty-seven thousand four hundred and eighty eight members.¹ The reason for the growth is chiefly to be found in the continuing alliances which were taking place. Even so, the evangelistic heart of Methodism continued to beat and they were not without conversions. Eayrs, in fact, believes that 'their aggressive evangelistic efforts' were 'singularly owned by God ...'² These efforts were chiefly through local initiative or existing home missionary machinery taken over from the Wesleyan Methodist Association. Although a foreign Missionary Committee was appointed in 1860 no new home missionary initiative was considered.

The second decade of the United Free Methodist Church saw a decline in the number of itinerants and only an increase in membership of five thousand five hundred and nine. The early growth had perhaps sprung up too rapidly and all the resources of the churches were now overstretched.³ During this period, in addition to the abolition of the distinction between Itinerant Ministers and Home Missionaries, attention was given to Chapel Relief and Chapel Loan Funds.

In spite of their lack of any organised approach to home missions the United Methodist Free Church was happy that evangelistic zeal should be expressed. James Caughey was welcomed by them and they gladly supported their own evangelists like John Gutteridge whose 'open-air temperance orations and gospel appeals swayed multitudes'.⁴

1 Kirsop, op. cit., p.53.

2 W. J. Townsend, H.B. Workman and G. Eayrs (eds.) op. cit., p. 537. Cf., Kirsop, op. cit., p. 54.

3 Kirsop, op. cit., p. 60.

4 W. J. Townsend, H. B. Workman and G. Eayrs (eds.) op. cit., p. 545.

Their enthusiasm was further demonstrated when in 1875 it was proposed to launch a Home Mission Chapel Extension Fund with the aim of erecting chapels where Free Methodism did not exist. The proposal was to raise £10,000 in five years by reallocating £1,000 each year from the General Mission Fund, which had been almost exclusively used for overseas work, and raising the rest by subscription from the people. The total sum was, however, raised within one year.¹ Sadly their hopes of future growth were not to be fulfilled for between 1877 and 1884, although the Free Methodists gained thirteen thousand, one hundred and thirty five Sunday School scholars, their adult membership only grew by nine hundred and forty seven; only three churches were added and forty eight preaching rooms were actually lost to them.² They were more successful in growth overseas.

Two other initiatives took place in the closing years of the century. In 1883 the churches decided once again to employ ministers and laymen as home missionaries. At the same time gospel cars were introduced into the villages. Secondly, a home for the training of deaconesses was founded in memory of William Bowron, a prosperous businessman and ardent philanthropic evangelist who died in 1890.³

The celebration of the centenary of Methodist Home Missions saw the publication of an address by Dr. W. E. Sangster, who was then the General Secretary of the Home Mission Division. It aptly summarises the Methodist view of their history. He begins with the question as to why a separate Home Mission Division needed to be constituted since

1 Kirsop, op. cit., p. 68.

2 ibid., p. 69 and R. Currie, L. Horsley and A. D. Gilbert, op. cit., p. 142.

3 W. J. Townsend, H. B. Workman and G. Eayrs (eds.), op. cit., p. 546.

Methodism was brought into being as a home mission. His answer was that in the mid-nineteenth century church politics had diverted the church from evangelism just at the same time as paganism was increasing. 'A church enfeebled by internal feuds was no match for rampant wickedness on the march again and Methodism in all her dismembered branches had circuits where the word languished and was likely soon to flicker out.'¹ But the extinction did not occur. New vitality was discovered. The story of Wesleyanism was later added to by the 'noble chapters' written by the other branches of Methodism. In all it meant that although there was a constant threat to the evangelistic thrust of Methodism, it remained a denomination committed to being a home missionary movement throughout the century.

1 W. E. Sangster, How Home Mission Began (2nd edn., London, 1980), p. 3f.

Chapter 3

THE BAPTIST CHURCHES.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century the Baptist churches were stirred into life as a result of the Evangelical Revival after a period of fifty sterile years.¹ The end of this inward-looking and censorious era was demonstrated in a number of ways. Association life was revived with its attendant concern for itinerancy and other developments of more national significance led to the redrawing of the map of the diverse groups which were distinguished from other dissenting churches by their common belief in the baptism of Believers.²

The New Connexion of General Baptists were formed in Leicestershire in 1770. Like the Old General Baptists they were Arminian in doctrine but in contrast to them they were evangelical in zeal and orthodox in theology. The New Connexion undertook a great deal of evangelistic work which led to the formation of a number of new churches.³ The New Connexion was also augmented by a number of churches from the Old General Baptists who did not wish to share in the general drift into Unitarianism suffered by the rest of their connexion.⁴

The division of the Arminians between evangelicals and unitarians

1 W. T. Whitley, A History of British Baptists (2nd edn., London, 1932), pp. 211-217.

2 W. R. Ward, 'The Baptists and the Transformation of the Church, 1780-1830', Baptist Quarterly xxv (1973), 167-184.

3 For which see G. Jackson, 'The Evangelical Work of the Baptists in Leicestershire 1740-1820' (London University M.A. thesis 1955), passim and W. T. Whitley, Baptists of North-West England 1649-1913 (London, 1913), pp. 157-161.

4 A. C. Underwood, A History of English Baptists (London, 1947), pp. 149-159 and I. Sellers, 'The Old General Baptists 1811-1915', B.Q., xxix (1971), 30-41, 74-88.

was paralleled by a division among the Particular Baptists. Some Particular Baptist churches remained solidly hyper-Calvinist in outlook whilst others, especially in Northamptonshire, experienced a renewal of their corporate life which expressed itself in the adoption of a more moderate Calvinistic theology and a concern for foreign missions.

The chief advocate of the cause of foreign missions, William Carey, argued that the heathen at home had access to the means of grace, should they wish to avail themselves of it, and questioned whether 'all are justified in staying here, while so many are perishing without the means of grace in other lands.'¹ But he was not indifferent to the needs at home and pointed out that home churches would see an extension of their influence at home too if only they would be more hearty and active in making use of the resources at their disposal. Carey's pleading led to the formation of the Baptist Missionary Society in 1792 and that society, in turn, led to the formation of the Baptist Society in London for the Encouragement and Support of Itinerant and Village Preaching in 1797. Apart from the immense volume of individually sponsored evangelism which was taking place at the time² this latter society was 'the main instrument of Baptist expansion in Britain, until the re-organisation of the Baptist Union enabled that body to accept this responsibility'.³

3.1 The Early Years of the Baptist Home Missionary Society, 1797-1835

Prior to the formation of the Baptist Society for home evangelisation, the Revs. P. J. Saffery and W. Steadman undertook an eight week preaching

1 W. Carey, An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christian to use means for the Conversion of the Heathen (Leicester, 1792), pp. 13 & 73.

2 E.g., A. Brockett, Nonconformity in Exeter, 1650-1875 (Manchester, 1962), p. 161f. and W. Gadsby, A Memoir of the late Mr. William Gadsby (2nd edn., Manchester and London, 1847).

3 D. M. Himbury, British Baptists - A Short History (London, 1962), p. 83.

tour of Cornwall at the request of the B.M.S..¹ Starting at Landrake in July 1797, they visited each town on the south coast before turning north at Lands End and visiting each town on the north coast. The tour was completed on 31 August; having preached three times each Sunday and seven or eight times weekday evenings. The Methodists sometimes loaned their meeting houses and whenever one was offered they made use of it. If such a meeting place was unobtainable, a private house or the open air was used. In one respect, their tour was surprising, namely, that they encountered very little opposition. They found the inhabitants to be 'civil, friendly, intelligent and much inclined to hear the word'.² There were no disturbances at the open air services, even though they were attended by several groups of between five hundred and one thousand hearers. Saffrey and Steadman believed that the explanation for their reception was that,

The inhabitants, as to the main bulk of them, being either miners or fishermen, are more in a state of independence, and less subject to the influence of superiors, who may be hostile to itinerant preaching than those counties which depend wholly upon agriculture. To which I might add, that the labours and successes of the Methodists have largely contributed to civilize the inhabitants in general, and to bring them into habits of hearing the word.

This first tour of Cornwall resulted in three or four persons being converted.⁴ But its greater achievement was to inspire others to adopt

1 J. Rippon, The Baptist Annual Register, ii (1794-7), 459.

2 ibid., p. 459.

3 ibid., p. 460f. It was considered that there was room for both Methodists and Baptists to operate within the County.

4 ibid., p. 460. On Steadman's second tour he discovered four or five who, unknown to him, had been converted on his first tour. Rippon, ibid., iii (1798-1802), 58f. This tour was not supported financially by the B.M.S.. because of the expense they encountered in printing the Bengali New Testament. J. Bigwood, British & Irish Home Missions (London, 1874), p. 8.

the cause of itinerance. Later that year the Baptist Society in London for the Encouragement and Support of Itinerant Preaching was formed. Its formation was accompanied by an address to 'Friends of Evangelical Truth in General; and to Calvinistic Baptist Churches in particular', written by the Rev. Abraham Booth. Booth,¹ who had formerly been a General Baptist, played a leading role in the early days of the Society. The address argued that, although individual Christians were always under an obligation to support ministers in their preaching of the gospel, yet there were times which might 'more loudly call for exertions of this kind.'²

The present season, according to Booth, was one such occasion as the disturbing international events and the spread of infidelity made plain. The unsettlement gave rise, as Ward has documented, to a great deal of missionary activity; much of it of a catholic and evangelical nature and concerned with England itself.³ But in contrast to some of the activity noted by Ward, the tenor of this Baptist appeal was politically quietist.

In these labours, let them keep the great object constantly in view; which is, not merely to propagate a set of theological sentiments though ever so true; much less to disseminate political opinions, or to canvass the affairs of state; but in the fear of God, with much prayer, circumspection and self-denial to warn sinners of the wrath to come.⁴

Membership of the society was open to those subscribing one guinea per annum. Seven London ministers together with one subscriber from each of their churches were requested to form a committee.⁵ The purpose of the Committee was to send out, after proper examination, as many Calvinistic

1 E. A. Payne, 'Abraham Booth 1734-1806', B.Q., xxvi (1975), 28-42.

2 Rippon, op. cit., ii (1794-7), 466.

3 W. R. Ward, Religion and Society in England 1790-1850 (London, 1972), ch. 2.

4 Rippon, op. cit., p. 468.

5 ibid., p. 469.

Baptist ministers for the work of itinerancy as possible. They could also support village preaching by settled ministers as they judged appropriate.¹ The final rule permitted its agents to unite with Paedobaptist ministers of evangelical principles if they were engaged in the same general purpose of preaching the gospel.²

The records of the Baptist Society are silent until 1813. Little can be discovered about its work, although it is clear that it was not inactive. It would have spent these years aiding ministers like Joseph Lee Sprague, who was ordained to the pastorate of Bovey Tracey Baptist Church, Devon, in 1796. In addition to his building up that church he preached six times a week in the surrounding villages and devoted four weeks every summer itinerating in North Devon and Somerset.³

Rippon remarked that these early itinerants met 'scarcely any opposition, nor is much opposition to be feared in any part of his Majesty's dominions. Almost the whole country is open for village preaching.'⁴ But there is ample evidence to suggest that Rippon was being over optimistic. The early preachers knew much hardship and persecution. Charles Farmery was fined £20 for preaching in a house which had not been registered under the Toleration Act at Wetheringsett in 1800 and Daniel Wilson records preaching at Orford in 1812 and catching nothing except missiles and abuse.⁵ But they were both in Suffolk. Rippon's mistake was to generalise the experience of the itinerants in Cornwall, which they themselves understood to be a special case and capable of particular

1 ibid., p. 470. Rule XI.

2 Cf. Ward, Religion and Society, op. cit., ch 2.

3 Rippon, op. cit., iii (1798-1802), 8.

4 ibid., p. 40.

5 A. J. Klaiber, The Story of the Suffolk Baptists (London, 1931), p. 63 and p. 69.

explanation.

In addition to the well-founded assumptions that individual itinerants were supported, converts won and persecution met, it can be stated that the early years of the society encouraged others to form similar societies.¹ In 1798 the Northern Evangelical Society was formed among the Baptists and Independents to spread the gospel through the four northern counties. Its formation is directly attributed to the Baptist Society formed the year before.²

The silence about the work of the society was broken by an article in the Baptist Magazine in 1813 which announced its existence as if it were imparting new information to many. 'This society has for many years been doing much good in a very silent and unostentatious manner.'³ It claimed that the pecuniary assistance given to ministers had been the cause of enlightening many in the dark parts of Britain. The following year the magazine stated that the society was 'too little known'⁴ and gave a detailed account of its work in North Devon. Also that year its first public meeting was held and it was stated that thirty ministers had been granted occasional aid.⁵

The chief focus of interest in its work in the early years was the West Country. Work was established on the Scilly Isles under Mr. J. Jeffery in 1816 and, since a regular commitment was made to this work, it was soon decided to introduce a separate fund for his support. By 1817

1 D. W. Lovegrove, 'Particular Baptist Itinerant Preachers during the late Eighteenth and early Nineteenth centuries', B.Q., xxviii (1979), 127-141 provides evidence to support these assumptions.

2 D. Douglas, History of Baptist Churches in the North of England (London, 1846), p. 241.

3 The Baptist Magazine, v (1813), 279. 4 ibid., vi (1814), 251.

5 C. Brown, The Story of Baptist Home Missions (London, 1897), p. 29.

Mr. Jeffery was reporting the conversion of a number of inhabitants of Tresco, including one couple 'who for many years were proverbial for iniquity'.¹ Having successfully established the work on the Scilly Isles, the committee's attention was turned to the Channel Islands.

The name of the society was changed to the Baptist Itinerant and Home Missionary Society in 1817 but its aims remained unchanged. The name was further abbreviated in 1822 to the Baptist Home Missionary Society. Also in 1817 Dr. J. Rippon, with the Revs. Griffin, Upton, Chin, Edwards and Thompson, were appointed a sub-committee to form auxiliaries to aid its work.² From then until the mid 30s the work of the society continued to expand. For the first time in 1820 full-time agents were employed. Initially there were four but by 1831 their number had risen to forty.³ The Rev. John Edwards of Wild Street had succeeded Mr. W. Gale, the original secretary of the society, in 1815, but its expansion obviously meant extra administrative burdens for him so the Rev. E. A. Cox became a joint secretary in 1824 and remained as such until 1835. Cox was to encourage a policy of support for missionaries who would give their whole time to breaking up new ground and nursing infant causes. He was less enthusiastic about supporting stated ministers on their occasional journeys.⁴

Throughout this period the society was eager to advertise its success. It estimated that twenty churches had been formed as a result of its

1 B.M., ix (1817), 474.

2 ibid., p. 397f. No initials are given and the identification of some of the names is uncertain. Kent and Sussex formed an auxiliary in 1816. F. Bufford, Kent & Sussex Baptist Associations (Faversham, 1963), p. 75.

3 C. Brown, op. cit., p. 32.

4 ibid., p. 31.

labours between 1820 and 1827.¹ Five years later it spoke of two hundred persons being added to the churches they served.² In 1835 they were glad to report three hundred additions.³

The growth, however, was not without its problems. Money was constantly in short supply and in some years, during which there had been a commercial slump, the situation was critical. In 1826 the annual meeting met under circumstances of 'great discouragement'. For the previous six months the agents had been paid by borrowed money and the committee were faced with the possibility of having to cut back its operations. On this occasion even general collections had been suspended because of the economic climate of the country. The society was rescued by five generous donors presenting them with 20 guineas each, thus removing the debt.⁴ Even in ordinary times money was hard to come by and there were regular complaints that the society was not supported 'with a zeal and liberality more commensurate with the claims of our kindred'.⁵ They further complained at being unable to meet all the needs conveyed to them.⁶

Throughout its life the Baptist Home Missionary Society was to suffer from relative economic deprivation and it is truly remarkable that so much was accomplished by so little. The Baptist Magazine for 1822 put its finances in perspective by announcing that the income for the

1 B.M., xix (1827), 282.

2 ibid., xxv (1833), 328.

3 ibid., xxvii (1835), 284.

4 ibid., xviii (1826), 286, 383 & 576.

5 ibid., xvi (1824), 362.

6 ibid., xx (1828), 278 and xxiii (1831), 292.

previous year for a number of societies had been as follows:

The British & Foreign Bible Society	£103,802.	17.	11.	
The London Missionary Society	£29,437.	0.	0.	
The Baptist Missionary Society	£11,600.	0.	0.	1
The Baptist Home Missionary Society	£930.	0.	0.	

By 1835 the income of the Society had risen to £2,000,² but it was for ever destined to be the poor relation of the missionary societies.

In addition to the need to keep financial pace with the expansion of the society, there was the need to keep pace in supplying the right personnel. The committee had been criticized in 1827 for its desire to multiply the number of missionaries without necessarily having the right number of men of the necessary calibre available. The cry went up that they should aim for quality not quantity. If only, it was said, they were more selective in their choice they could support their agents more adequately. The committee readily agreed with their critics by requesting the churches not to encourage men of 'slender abilities' to think that they were to become home missionaries simply because they possessed piety and zeal. 'If the messengers who are sent to preach the gospel ... be not possessed of prudence and talent above mediocrity they will only injure the cause they were employed to promote'.³

Unlike other denominations no consideration seems to have been given to the possibility of increasing the facilities for the distinct training of itinerants, distinguished from ministers, although the involvement of people like William Steadman with ministerial education perhaps ensured that a separate institution was unnecessary.⁴

1 ibid., xiv (1822), 468.

2 C. Brown, op. cit., p. 32.

3 B. M., xix (1827), 322.

4 Steadman became Principal of the Northern Academy in 1805. His ideal for his students was 'Evangelism steadied by Education'. See A. C. Underwood, op. cit., and D. W. Lovegrove, op. cit., pp. 130-132.

3.2 The Revivalist Phase, 1835-1847.

The growing optimism of the leaders of the Baptist Home Missionary Society in the early thirties was further encouraged by the reports of revivals which reached England from the United States. As soon as the news arrived some urged caution. James Edmeston of Homerton wrote to the Evangelical Magazine pointing out that the long-term history of churches where revival had occurred was poor and claiming that more people had been added to the churches of London within one year than in all these revival churches. The additions in London had been, he claimed, without any 'unusual excitement'.¹

Interest in Revival, however, was not to be put down so easily. The much respected H. F. Burder, a Congregationalist, spoke for many Baptists when he replied to Mr. Edmeston saying that apathy was worse than fanaticism. 'The time may possibly come when we need refrigeration by some cooling process; but at present we need warmth.' He defended revival converts and, whilst admitting that they may express themselves with less refinement than English converts might, they were often marked by a peculiarly elevated character of spirituality.²

As curiosity about American revivalism grew British churches sent delegates to the United States to observe them first hand. Andrew Reed and James Matheson went for the Congregationalist and F. A. Cox and J. Hoby went in 1835 for the Baptists. On his return F. A. Cox published his observations in what was to be an influential paper shaping the policy of the Baptist Home Missionary Society and others in the next decade. He had discovered that the temper of American Churches was altogether different from that found in England.

1 Evangelical Magazine NS vii (1829), 190.

2 ibid., pp. 246-8.

If churches relapse into a low state, they are not satisfied long to continue so; but they begin to inquire into the cause of the declension and the means by which it may be remedied. They entertain confidence in the success of suitable means, and often at once sagacious in the discovery and prompt in the application of them to the conditions of particular congregations. Should plans be suggested which have for their object to awaken professors from a state of slumber, and arouse the unconverted from their sleep of death, objections are not urged against them because they are new; they do not restrain zeal, lest it should produce innovation; and are more afraid of incurring the guilt of lukewarmness than of being charged with the extravagance of enthusiasm.¹

Dr. Cox pointed to nine features of American religion which were worth imitation. Firstly, individual Christians accepted full responsibility to aim for the conversion, not merely the moral reformation, of others. Secondly, there were many private associations for prayer. Thirdly, enquiry meetings had been found useful. Fourthly, they expected the conversion of their youth and 'those who had professed the earliest had persevered the longest'. Fifthly, Mrs. Payson had commenced maternal associations in 1820 where mothers met to pray for their children 'and employ affectionate entreaties to bring the lambs of the flock to be enfolded in the arms of the great Shepherd'.

The last four suggestions concerned the methods adopted by the churches themselves. The sixth point spoke of aiming to establish new churches in needy areas. The seventh spoke of churches dividing when they reached a certain size so that two smaller congregations could be established and grow. Eighthly, Cox wrote of ministers undertaking

1 F. A. Cox, Suggestions Designed to Promote the Revival & Extension of Religion founded on Observations made during a journey in the U.S.A. in the Spring and Summer of 1835 (London, 1836), p. 5.

journeys for the sole and express purpose of promoting religion. For the Baptist Home Missionary Society to encourage this, as it did, it meant a reversal of Cox's previous policy. The final and perhaps most significant point for the Baptist Home Missionary Society was his advocacy of the use of protracted meetings. Although, he admitted, they had been conducted injudiciously, he urged that the churches overcome their prejudice and adopted this method of 'quickenning zeal'.¹

This emphasis on revivalism coincided with the appointment of the Rev. Charles Hill Roe² of Middleton Tindale as the travelling secretary of the Baptist Home Missionary Society. Roe was a 'wild Irishman' who, in Carwardine's view³, personified the revivalist wing of the Baptist Denomination. Roe's achievements were two-fold. Firstly, he improved the financial base of the Baptist Home Missionary Society and raised its annual income from £2,000 to £5,000 during his secretaryship.⁴ Secondly, he increased the number of auxiliaries supporting the Baptist Home Missionary Society.

His aim was to inject revivalist life into the Baptist Home Missionary Society. After an extensive tour of the United Kingdom, Roe concluded that England was a century behind Wales in relation to

1 These paragraphs are based on ibid., pp. 5-21.

2 Charles Hill Roe was the son of an Irish clergyman who was converted at 15 by a Baptist missionary. He was William Steadman's son-in-law and was trained by Steadman. After resigning as secretary of Baptist Home Missionary Society he became a pastor in Birmingham where he was responsible for Finney's visits to the Midlands. In 1851 Roe emigrated to the USA.

3 The rest of this section relies chiefly on R. Carwardine's interpretation of events. See 'The Evangelist System; Charles Roe, Thomas Pulsford and the Baptist Home Missionary Society', Baptist Quarterly, xxviii (1980), 209-225. Unfortunately the present author has been unable to trace in the UK two key works to which Carwardine refers, viz, E. Roe Shannon, A Minister's Life (Chicago, 1900) and Thomas Pulsford, Helps for Revival Churches (London, 1846). Other evidence, however, supports Carwardine's reconstruction.

4 C. Brown, op. cit., p. 32 and p. 69.

evangelism. In Wales he had met a more popular mode of preaching which was suited to the capacity of the hearers. And he also pleaded for the adoption of the Welsh 'evangelist system' which meant that ministers frequently visited from one church to another and made their visits 'directly and ostensibly revival occasions'.¹

Under Roe much of the regular work of the society continued, although places which after a prolonged period showed little sign of success or of supporting themselves may well have had their financial support withdrawn.² But his securing of new auxiliaries enabled him to express his revivalist tendencies. In 1839 Thomas Pulsford was sent to the recently formed Northern Auxiliary of the Baptist Home Missionary Society. Pulsford had long been in touch with the society, having started work as an evangelist in North Devon in 1818.³ Pulsford was a successful evangelist in the sense that he had no difficulty in attracting crowds in their hundreds. Carwardine has described him as the Caughey of the Baptist denomination.⁴ For two months in 1839 Pulsford worked at forming a church in Carlisle. During that time he baptised twelve and left a church of twenty three members. Douglas comments that 'his labours were indefatigable; and his success, in exciting attention and in arousing careless sinners and the torpid among professors was remarkable.'⁵

1 B. M., xxix (1837), 365f.

2 Minutes of the Baptist Home Missionary Society (1832-42), Baptist Church House, Ms. 8 October 1839 and 22 September 1841.

3 David Thompson, A. Book of Remembrance (London, 1885), pp. 78, 87 & 103f.

4 R. Carwardine, op. cit., p. 214.

5 op. cit., p. 285.

His day would often begin with a 5 a.m. prayer meeting and involve extensive travelling, ending with preaching late into the evening.

After Carlisle, Pulsford turned south and wherever he went he produced results. Carwardine refers to his success at Newark in 1841 which produced two hundred inquirers and ninety eight new members within a month of his leaving. As many as five hundred may have been converted under his ministry in his most successful year of 1842-3; although few of them were from right outside the chapels.¹

Until the early forties the revivalist policy of Roe was unquestioned. But then the results of the policy increasingly became subject to scrutiny. In January, 1841 the Baptist Home Missionary Society committee laid down more stringent methods of assessing candidates who wanted assistance from the society.² By 1842 severe financial strains began to show again and it became evident that, for all the increase there had been, the rise in income had not kept pace with the rise in demand.³ A number of the older auxiliaries had been alienated by the society's policy, with the consequent loss of their financial support, and now had to be won back 'by kindness and wisdom'.⁴ The financial crisis was not easily resolved.

Roe resigned as Secretary in 1841 and took up a pastorate in Birmingham. The committee pleaded with him to stay and tried to induce him to do so by offering to increase his salary by £100 per annum. They claimed that his success showed God's approval and argued that his

1 Carwardine, op. cit., p. 218.

2 Mins. of B. H. M. S., 19 January, 1841. A standing committee was appointed to examine each candidate as to his religious history, system of doctrine and the work in which he wished to be employed.

3 Mins. of B. H. M.S., 18 January, 1842.

4 ibid., including Cornwall, South Devon, Kent, Bucks, and Herts.

retirement from the work would discourage the many who had come into the work under his direction. The diversified nature of his tasks had meant, in their view, that he had overstretched himself.¹ But the committee pleaded unsuccessfully and by September 1841 a new secretary, the Rev. Stephen Joshua Davis, had been found.

In the following few years increasing doubts about the policy of revivalism arose on the basis of its lack of long-term success. The Carlisle church, founded by Pulsford, only remained open for a few years² and, judging by the defensive comments of some of his supporters, he was subject to considerable criticism.³

Until 1841 the Baptist Union annual reports had expressed increasing confidence and applauded revivals such as those in Yorkshire in 1838⁴ and at Cradley Heath and Cardigan in 1839.⁵ They had encouraged the development of prayer meetings and looked too for more benevolent aggression on the part of their members. In 1841 they could say that, generally speaking, the increase in members has been greater than any previous year.⁶ But by 1844 the statistics were being examined with greater realism and the Baptist Union stated 'with regret the fact now elicited, that the average increase of the year has been somewhat less than six members for each church, being the smallest annual increase since 1838'.⁷ The decline in the rate of growth continued. In 1846 it equalled four new members per church and it was estimated that a third of the Baptist churches were either stationary or in a retrograde

1 Mins. of B. H. M. S., 7 June, 1841.

2 W. T. Whitley, Baptists in North West England, op. cit., p. 119.

3 'Quarterly Register of the Baptist Home Missionary Society', The Baptist Record (1846), p. 72f and p. 286f.

4 Baptist Union Handbook (1838), p. 27.

5 ibid., (1839), p. 30.

6 ibid., (1841), p. 18.

7 ibid., (1844), p. 6.

situation.¹ The following year, the fiftieth anniversary of the Baptist Home Missionary Society, the decline was even greater and the union was again unhappy. New measures were called for and a number of associations began to engage in special measures to improve their condition.²

This state of affairs compelled the Baptist Home Missionary Society to reassess their strategy. They had become the subject of heavy criticism because of their recent policy of revivalism. Without wishing to impeach the wisdom of the Baptist Home Missionary Society committee, and while fully recognizing that special measures were called for at certain times, the Baptist Record accused the Baptist Home Missionary Society of losing direction.³ It was not, they wrote, the original intention of the Baptist Home Missionary Society to promote revivals in stagnant churches. The original policy of church extension rather than church revival needed to be recovered for the sake of the neglected villages which were destitute of the gospel. For every one revivalist commissioned by the Baptist Home Missionary Society there ought to be three evangelists and the office of revivalist and evangelist ought not to be merged or confused. Although the revivals sponsored by the Baptist Home Missionary Society had been wisely conducted and did not suffer from the indiscretions of those in the USA, The Baptist Record believed that they had been counter-productive. They had made the churches dependent on the revivalist, convincing them that he alone could stir them out of their apathy, whereas in fact the pastor was the proper revivalist.

1 ibid., 91846), p. 73.

2 ibid., (1848), p. 46.

3 B. R., (1845), pp. 77-80.

The committee of the Baptist Home Missionary Society accepted the criticisms. They admitted that they had undervalued the more ordinary means of conversion and that their agents had been less and less cultivating virgin soil with the gospel. In 1846, therefore, they introduced a new constitution. The second rule firmly stated that the aim of the society was the growth and formation of churches.¹ The constitution further reduced the qualifications for membership and so extended the franchise of the society. It also provided local auxiliaries with more autonomy.² With that itinerancy for the purposes of reviving churches was brought to an end and a new phase of Baptist evangelism began. According to the Annual Meeting of the Baptist Home Missionary Society in 1847, it was providence that had brought the revivalist system to a close.³

One further development of this period deserves mention. In 1841 a Baptist Tract Society was formed to meet the new demands of the reading age and to publicise systematically the sentiments of the Strict Baptists.⁴ It was much more sectarian in character than the Baptist Home Missionary Society and encouraged the distribution of its tracts on such occasions as confirmation services!⁵ In preference to gratuitous distribution, it encouraged the adoption of a loan system as 'not infrequently better adapted to secure the reading of its publications.' Under this method a district would be divided into groups of twenty to twenty five houses and the tracts left for two weeks before being collected and redistributed

1 B. R., (1846), p. 285.

2 ibid., p. 431 and C. Brown, op. cit., p. 35.

3 R. Carwardine, op. cit., p. 220f.

4 Annual Report of the Baptist Tract Society, (1849), p. 4.

5 ibid., (1842), p. 9.

in another district.¹

The first twelve tracts published were: The Gospel; Existing differences of Sentiment and Practice among Christians injurious and indefensible; A Brief Sketch of the history of Foreign Baptists; Baptism in the time of the Apostles; The Distinguishing Sentiments of the Particular Baptists; Strict Communion defended; Regeneration; True Worship distinguished from Will-Worship and the traditions of men; A Brief Sketch of the History of the Baptists in Britain; A Brief Sketch continued; The evil consequences of substituting Infant Baptism for Believers Baptism and The Duty of Baptists. By 1846 they issued eighty nine titles, eight of which were for children, twenty seven for believers and eighteen for the unconverted. All the rest were concerned with the issue of baptism and strict communion.² They were unapologetic about their sectarianism, claiming that others were not aware of where their errors were leading them. By 1872 the number of their publications had risen to four hundred and fifty-four and had been translated into Welsh, French, Spanish and German.³ Furthermore large print tracts were then issued for the aged.

The emphasis on the propagation of Baptist views continued throughout the century. One woman who had 'long known the joyful sound' became convinced of her need of baptism by immersion and this Christian of twenty years' standing consequently became a cause of great rejoicing among the supporters of the Baptist Tract Society.⁴ The tracts contained strongly

1 ibid., This was wiser than the advice later given to 'drop them in fields and let the winds of heaven carry them where the providence of God may direct!': Annual Report of Baptist Tract Society (1847), p. 5.

2 ibid., B. T. S., (1846), p. 23f.

3 ibid., B. T. S., (1872), p. 61f.

4 ibid., B. T. S., (1844), p. 8.

negative elements and sounded warnings against the theatre, the race course and the infidel. Supporters were warned against showing spurious charity to those who were in error.¹ But the loudest warning bells were rung for the benefit of Roman Catholics. From 1844 they had shown a particular concern for the popish error. In the year of the Papal Aggression, 1851, several anti-Catholic tracts were issued and the aggression led them to redouble their own efforts in spiritual warfare.²

Social differences were acknowledged when in 1867 a new series of tracts were issued on toned paper and in a smaller size for the benefit of the higher classes. The warnings to the higher classes, however, were quite unsparing and the first titles of the new series included Modern Ritualism and the Acts of the Apostles; Ritualism; Rome; Is Romanism Christianity and An Earnest word against Theatres.

Tract distribution was not only a principal means of evangelism in its own right throughout the century but an indispensable adjunct to other methods of evangelism such as open air evangelism or mission work. The contribution made by the Baptist Tract Society to that task were small as it was perpetually short of funds, essentially because of the existence of a larger well-established society, the Religious Tract Society, founded in 1799, in which Baptists had been involved since its inception³, even though it drew its chief support initially from the Independents. As an ecumenical society it would not satisfy those who sought to propagate particular denominational views, but it defined its work fairly narrowly and was able to produce anti-Catholic propaganda.

1 ibid., (1849), p. 11.

2 ibid., (1851), p. 1 and p. 15.

3 S. G. Green, The Story of the Religious Tract Society (London, 1899), p. 5.

It was the stricter Calvinists who were least satisfied among the evangelicals with its work, with the result that they founded their own societies, of which the Gospel Tract Society, founded by Robert Hawker in 1824 was one and the Baptist Tract Society was another.¹ The broader sympathies of the Religious Tract Society, however, was quite acceptable to many Baptists and its services rather than those of the narrower Baptist Tract Society were used.

3.3. The Demise of the Baptist Home Mission Society - 1848-64

During the middle years of the nineteenth century the fortunes of the Baptist Churches fluctuated, whilst the usefulness of the Baptist Home Mission Society declined to the point where it was only saved by a transfusion of vital nourishment by being attached to the drip feed of the Baptist Irish Society.

The period opened in the momentous and revolutionary year of 1848. In the extraordinary events which had occurred in Europe, Baptists claimed to be able to detect the hand of God.² They were less confident, on the other hand, at detecting his hand in the lives of their churches. The Annual Report announced that they had in the preceding year the smallest rate of increase for fourteen years. They deplored 'a general inefficiency of the gospel ministry among us, and a wide spreading languor of individual piety'.³ They resorted to the hope that in the absence of quantitative growth there had been growth of a qualitative kind but recognised that

1 For a recent examination of the tensions faced by the Religious Tract Society because of its ecumenical character see R. H. Martin, 'The Pan-Evangelical Impulse in Britain 1795-1830 with Special Reference to four London Societies' (Oxford University D. Phil thesis 1974), pp. 277-316.

2 B. U. Handbook, (1848), 60.

3 ibid., p. 66.

the evidence even for that was hard to come by. So it was proposed that 11 June 1848 should be set aside for the consideration of the state of religion in the Churches.¹ The following year those with more acute perception could see that the tide had turned,² and until 1851 there was the 'carrying forward in slight degree, the progressive augmentation'.³ But it was a temporary reprieve and the early years of the '50s returned the Baptist Church to a state of minimum growth.

The rate of growth began to improve again in 1856, three years prior to the 'Second Evangelical Awakening'. When the Assembly of the Baptist Union met in 1861 it was in a triumphant mood. It noted that remarkable revival of interest in religion which had taken place in the previous two years. In 1859 there had been a net gain to the 'churches' of ten members per church when the figure was averaged out for the whole country. In 1860 it rose to eleven per church.⁴ Sadly, for them, their prayers for even greater revival were to be answered negatively. During 1861 the growth diminished to an average of four and a half per church⁵ and there it stayed until declining drastically in 1865 to one and five eighths per church.⁶ The atmosphere of the post-revival years was captured in the resolution adopted at the 1863 Assembly,

1 ibid., p. 67f.

2 ibid., (1849), 63.

3 ibid., (1850), 63.

4 ibid., (1861), 94. The comparative figures for earlier years were 1850, three per church; 1851, $1\frac{1}{2}$; 1852, $1\frac{3}{4}$; 1853, $1\frac{1}{1.3}$; 1854, $1\frac{1}{2}$; 1855, 2; 1856, 3; 1857, 4 and 1858, 5.

5 ibid., (1863), 126.

6 ibid., (1865), 138.

That while the session would have rejoiced if the larger rate of increase vouchsafed in preceding years had been maintained they are bound gratefully to acknowledge the mercy of God in the increase which has been granted: and they cannot withhold the utterance of their fervent prayer and hope that the more abundant outpouring of the Spirit may hereafter be afforded - not in transient but in abiding manner.¹

The Union was generally in these years in a depressed state. In 1864 J. Howard Hinton resigned as active secretary of the Union, disappointed that so little had been achieved.² That same spirit pervaded the committee meetings of the Baptist Home Missionary Society which, despite the early promise of their new leadership, under the Rev. S. J. Davis, had now come to face a major crisis of identity.

Stephen Davis brought with him the gifts of a 'statesman, apostle and evangelist';³ gifts which were much needed to overcome the discontent which had been generated by the revivalist years. The new constitution also promised well. But the Baptist Home Missionary Society never managed to regain the initiative and the spontaneous development of new evangelistic concern made their catalytic role irrelevant.

From 1851 onwards the major emphasis in home missionary activity was on the need to reach the masses in the big towns. The census figures impressed upon the churches this novel field of evangelism. In 1831 only 25% of the population of England and Wales lived in towns with a populations of more than 20,000. In 1841 it had risen to 38.3%; in 1851 it was 44.0% and by 1881 it had reached 59.5%.⁴ All the denominations had noted this new need but the Baptists were the earliest

1 ibid., (1863), 124.

2 Payne, The Baptist Union - A Short History (London, 1959), pp. 85-96 and A. C. Underwood, op. cit., p. 211ff.

3 Brown, op. cit., 32.

4 Figures based on those given in J. F. C. Harrison, The Early Victorians 1832-51 (London, 1971), p. 4 and G. Best, Mid-Victorian Britain 1851-75 (London, 1971), p. 7.

to pour their energies into attempts to reach working men. A decade before the early Methodist attempts in the great cities, the Baptists had commenced the task. The Methodists suffered at this point from their rules and regulations but the independence of the Baptist Churches gave them an unhampered flexibility to adapt more quickly to new needs.

Contrary to Whitley's view, the immensity of the task of winning the working classes was fully recognised,¹ although Davis was not to be overawed by it. He believed,

Whatever be the fact in other denominations, it is not to be forgotten in relation to our own that in the majority of our Churches and congregations, the working classes, as it is the fashion to call them, outnumber the middle class. In general they are not more alienated from us than other sections of the community.²

Like most churches, the Baptists failed to get a thorough foothold in the great cities amongst the working classes once the Industrial Revolution was really advanced. But they were more effective at attracting a lower class than the Congregationalists.³

In order to reach the masses a new radicalism was called for. In its lead article on 'Evangelisation', The Freeman⁴ argued that the true idea of evangelism needed to be understood more clearly. It was that it was 'the business of the church to go to the people (rather) than that of the people to come to the churches'. Such work was the work of the whole church and not just the specialized agencies like the town or city missions. The following year the paper in developing the theme was pleading that all 'non-essential hindrances to the gospel' should be put aside in the attempt to reach working men, and, if necessary, song and public prayer should be abandoned.⁵

1 Cited with approval by K. S. Inglis, Churches and the Working Classes in Victorian England (London & Toronto, 1963), p.13.

2 Brown, op. cit., p. 37.

3 C. Booth, Life and Labour of the People in London (London, 1902), p. 123f. cf. E. R. Wickham, Church and People in an Industrial City (London, 1957), p. 137.

4 21 May 1856, 279.

5 The Freeman, 28 October 1857, 647.

In practice the methods adopted were somewhat less radical. Open air evangelism remained the staple diet in the summer but a new method of lecturing in theatres or halls not associated with religion was adopted all the year round. The masses, it seemed, still had to come to the preacher if they wanted to hear the gospel.

In May 1856 The Freeman carried reports of such lectures given by Mr. Walters in the Odd Fellows Hall at Halifax; Mr. Chown in the Temperance Hall, Bradford and Mr. Brown in a Theatre in Ipswich. Special mention was made of the Rev. Arthur Mursell of Manchester who was lecturing to 7,000 members of the working classes in the Free Trade Hall. He identified himself with his audience by wearing a black neck tie, although he did not apologise for being a parson. The subject of his lecture on the occasion reported was 'Fire' and at the end of his hour's oration he received applause.¹ Reports of similar undertakings quickly followed from Huddersfield and Norwich.

One of the best known practitioners of this method of evangelism was Hugh Stowell Brown of Liverpool. Brown attributes the idea to Mr. Nathaniel Caine who, even if he was not the actual originator of the concept, 'was the first to give substance and shape to it'.² Brown himself commenced the services on 1 May 1854 at the Concert Hall. His object was to speak of 'the Great Teacher and what he taught'.³ The most popular lecture was entitled 'Five shillings and costs'. Among other subjects he spoke on 'Napoleon's Book of Fate'; 'Poor Richard's Almanack'; 'Taking Care of Number One'; 'The Devil's Meal is all Bran'; 'The Lord's Prayer'; 'Stop Thief'; and 'Pluck'.⁴ Brown discontinued his lectures

1 ibid., 4 November 1856, 664.

2 H. S. Brown, Hugh Stowell Brown, His Autobiography, Common Place Book and extracts from his sermons and addresses (London, 1887), p. 87. Caine held Saturday Evening Concerts with J. Maitland 'to make the man a better mechanic and the mechanic a better man'. J. Lea, 'Baptists in Lancashire 1837-87' (Liverpool University Ph.D. Thesis 1970), p. 279.

3 ibid.

4 ibid., p. 87f.

in 1863 but in the meantime he had provoked a great deal of response, ranging from those who wished to beg from him and those who suspected he was not preaching the true gospel¹ to those who thanked him. One lady, in a backhanded compliment, revealed the secret of his success. She told him that it was because he was not a clerical man and added, 'You would not do half as much good if you used better language'.²

It was his busy life that forced Brown to give up the lectures. He still spoke to working men in the open air on a Sunday evening after the churches services, where he generally had a congregation of between three and four thousand. The abandoning of the special services did, however, spring from a deeper motive than mere overwork. Brown confesses,

Yet my opinions in regard to such services had undergone a considerable change. I do think it far better that the rich and the poor meet together in the House of the Lord, than that we should seem to encourage their separation by holding special services for the working men in halls, theatres and the like. What I am more desirous of effecting is this - to offer every encouragement and facility for the attendance of all classes at our places of worship, to adapt our services to working men in so far as they need such adaption and to lead them to feel that they really are welcome to God's House. Churches and chapels filled with people of all classes, and wherein distinctions of social rank should be forgotten would be far better than churches and chapels half-filled with the wealthier sort, and halls and theatres crowded with working people.³

Brown was not the only one to have such doubts. A short time after enthusiastically supporting such work, The Freeman emphasised that the approach was very much in the nature of an experiment. It too raised the question of whether it was right for evangelists to address particular classes. It pleaded for more dignity in the approach. But the death

1 Reviewing H. S. Brown's 12 Lectures to the Men of Liverpool, The Evangelical Magazine, xxxvi (1858), 549f, said they were 'admirably conceived and as admirably expressed. 'We could wish however that in lectures delivered on the Lord's day there was a fuller, clearer and more impressive exhibition of the gospel ...'

2 ibid., p. 88.

3 ibid., p. 90. Sellars, op. cit., p. 123, estimates that half Brown's congregation were artisans or skilled labourers.

blow to this method of home missions came from the fact that it did not achieve what many had hoped. The aim had been to bring folk within the church for worship but, on the whole, they failed to be attracted to regular church worship.¹ The attention of home missionaries consequently turned to making the churches and their services more attractive² and with that the method of reaching out through special lectures was gradually abandoned - only to be revived again in the guise of Pleasant Sunday Afternoons at the end of the century.

The work of the Baptist Home Missionary Society was largely unaffected by these attempts to reach the masses. Throughout the 1850s they remained in a difficult financial situation and it was only through generous gifts or bequests that the debts were met. They still had their stations - ninety seven in 1857 - and could report two hundred and thirty nine additions to them. They could also speak of churches having been founded in Madeley, Ely, Loughborough, Rickmansworth and Uxbridge.³ But, in spite of the talk in 1851, they made little real attempt to evangelise the big towns and cities until 1861. There had arisen a new generation of preachers, of which Spurgeon was the Prince, who had tackled that task without their assistance. The flowering of local ventures in evangelism had rendered many deaf to the claims of the Baptist Home Missionary Society.⁴

The Minute Books of the Society make sad reading from 1861. Expenditure had to be reduced by order of the Annual Meeting, which had

1 The Freeman, 10 February 1858.

2 For H. S. Brown's sceptical comments on 'the rage for making religious services attractive see H. S. Brown, op. cit., pp. 227-235. He doubted whether the attractions would attract many and predicted that they would pall upon the public taste just as much as the unattractive services they had superseded.

3 E. M., xxxv (1852), 368.

4 Mins. of B. H. M. S., 16 December 1862.

insisted that their work should be extended into the towns simultaneously. To comply with these wishes in September 1861 it was decided to reduce Mr. Davis's salary by £100 per annum and to start a new Baptist cause in the suburbs of London and the city of York.¹ Neither of these new causes was easily born. The site which was chosen in London for the founding of the new church was between Highbury Park and Highbury New Park. On 17 December 1862 they purchased an Iron Chapel for £200 at Putney and planned to move it to Highbury. When the move was effected in February 1862 it proved very much more expensive than had been estimated. Mr. Davis had been commissioned to start the new cause and in August 1863 he resigned in order to take up a pastorate in Aberdeen. The committee quickly decided that any further effort at Highbury was impractical and the Iron Chapel was made available for Mr. Balfern's use among the workmen of the district of Hammersmith.²

The work at York had a promising beginning. A lecture hall was hired for six months and in just over a year the people who had gathered desired to form themselves immediately into a church. Whilst the Baptist Home Missionary Society committee had no objection to their observing the Lord's Supper, they wanted to defer their constituting a church until a suitable minister had been found for them.³ The settlement of a pastor was, however, no guarantee of good order. Only one month after Mr. Denniston was settled at York, the congregation informed him that he was no longer suitable for them.⁴ The Baptist Home Missionary Society committee warned them that if they went ahead and formed a church under those conditions, it would be their own

1 ibid., 10 September 1861.

2 ibid., 15 September 1863.

3 ibid., 18 March 1862.

4 ibid., 18 November 1862 and 16 December 1862.

responsibility. It was, however, only a minority who opposed Mr. Denniston¹ and before long an agreement was reached with the Baptist Home Missionary Society remaining in control until shifting their responsibility for York to the Lancashire and Yorkshire Itinerant Society in September 1863.

The tight control exercised by the Baptist Home Missionary Society was the inevitable consequence of its financial difficulties. It refused to accept financial responsibility for a new work unless it could exercise a wider control with a view to ensuring the success of its investment. The reputation of the society was at a low ebb and it needed to be able to boast some real achievements to enhance its standing in the denomination.

But the relationship between the Baptist Home Missionary Society and the church at York was symptomatic of a tension that was to run deep in the history of the Baptist Churches for the rest of the century. On the one hand Baptist theology emphasised the independence of the local church and its right to form its own judgments. On the other hand there was a pragmatic reason, the need for the efficient distribution of scarce resources, to centralise control over the home missionary enterprise. The tension was bound to become more severe as denominational consciousness grew. The resolution of the tension was often to be found in compromise as the experience at York shows, but where this happened the tension only remained to express itself elsewhere.

Spurgeon addressed himself to the issue when speaking at the Annual Meeting of the Baptist Home Missionary Society in 1865. His own view is one which the balance of historical evidence would support. 'Much', he said,

1 ibid., 20 Jan. 1863.

is said about not allowing small Churches to be formed where they would not be self-supporting, but the attempt to suppress such modes of action would be more injurious than their permission, and if we attempt always to gather up our strength, and to centralize it too much, we might perform an act of spiritual suicide in our attempt to make ourselves strong and healthy.¹

Two years previously when the committee of the Baptist Home Missionary Society met to discuss its work in the towns it received a recommendation from a sub-committee which read,

That as the results of the earnest efforts made to extend the operations of the Society within the last two years are by no means encouraging, the committee be recommended to restrict their endeavours to such modes and measures of usefulness as their means and opportunities may permit.²

They reaffirmed their commitment to the country districts rather than the large towns. Recognising the growth of local and county interests, they felt that they could not longer support a full-time secretary and proposed that a part-time secretary should be found to replace Mr. Davis for a salary of £50 per annum.

Some last minutes attempts were made to regenerate the society before these recommendations were accepted. It was agreed to consult with the Baptist ministers in London about the best way of conducting the affairs of the society. But the attempt came to nothing. They simply cause further frustration and led to the resignation of the sub-committee responsible.³ It was only then that the Baptist Home Missionary Society began to look for a more permanent alliance with the Baptist Irish Society.

The Baptist Irish Society had been founded in 1813 and had always proved the more popularly supported of the two societies. It had already given financial aid to the Baptist Home Missionary Society in 1863 when it loaned them a total of £700. It was after the failure to gain real

1 G. H. Pike, The Life and Work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon (London, Paris & Melbourne, n.d.) iii, 160.

2 B.H.M.S.Mins., 15 Sept. 1863.

3 ibid., 10 Nov. 1863.

support from the London ministers that initial negotiations opened with the Baptist Irish Society to see if running the two societies with one secretary was practicable. Three months later this sub-committee reported that there were too many difficulties to enable them to proceed further and yet another sub-committee was established to see 'what alterations, if any, should be made to the policy of the society'.¹ But at the same meeting the treasurer resigned because of ill-health. The Baptist Home Missionary Society was at an all time low. The annual meeting of members, held in May that year, expressed the opinion that 'a union between the Baptist Home Missionary Society and the Baptist Irish Society is both practicable and desirable and the present an appropriate time for affecting such a union ...'. By the late summer the legal difficulties which had been raised concerning the loss of legacies had been overcome and at last arrangements had been completed to have both societies conducted under the same general management. The desirability of the union had doubtless been made more attractive because neither society had permanent secretaries towards the end of 1864.

The proposition uniting the two societies was successfully put to their annual meetings in 1865, thus creating the 'British & Irish Baptist Home Mission'. Its object was 'the diffusion of the Gospel of Christ in Great Britain and Ireland; by employing Ministers and Evangelists, establishing Christian churches; by forming Sunday Schools; by distributing the Scriptures and Religious tracts and by adapting and using such other methods as the committee shall deem advisable'.²

The Reverends Samuel Green and Charles Kirtland initially jointly discharged the secretarial functions. Samuel Green had briefly overseen

1 ibid., 16 February 1864.

2 ibid., 2 August 1864, Report of the Sub-Committee.

the work of Baptist Home Missionary Society on Mr. Davis's withdrawal. By 1865 Charles Kirtland accepted the full responsibility and acted energetically in that capacity for the next ten years.

E. A. Payne describes the amalgamation as 'a wise step in the co-ordination of denominational effort'¹, but it was not so much wise as imperative if the Baptist Home Missionary Society was to survive.

3.4 The British & Irish Home Mission and the Baptist Union

For the remainder of the century the British & Irish Baptist Home Mission was one small stream among several which contributed to the filling of the Baptist ocean of evangelism. Before examining some of these other streams, the route taken by the British & Irish Baptist Home Mission will be traced.

The second half of the '60s was, in some ways, the most peaceful years the Home Missionary Society were to know. They shared in the fruits of the revival decade and could report in 1868 that 'not a single church had been without its additions'.² They entered the '70s with a large sum of money on deposit and confident that their precise aims - supporting ministers but not building churches - was right.³ But it was not long before the quiet stream entered more turbulent waters. In late 1871 Kirtland became ill, due to overwork, and had to be given leave of absence. The following year they were again in a deficit situation and even contemplated sending a team to the USA in order to raise support for the work in Ireland. The deputation tour never took place and the debts

1 Payne, The Baptist Union, op. cit., p. 99.

2 C. Brown, op. cit., p. 45.

3 Minutes of British & Irish Baptist Home Mission, 19 April 1870 and 6 December 1870.

were met by a £400 loan from the bank and a generous donation from the Baptist Tract Society.¹ Two years later, without the £400 having been repaid to the bank, they borrowed a further £700.² Charles Kirtland then felt it necessary to resign, having faced bereavement and feeling unable to continue his extensive travelling around the country.³ Kirtland settled in a pastorate in Battersea and John Bigwood, who had been a member of the committee for twenty five years, briefly held the secretarial post (1874-76). The most significant achievement of his secretaryship seems to have been the emergence of closer ties with the Baptist Union.

The union of the Baptist Home Missionary Society and the Baptist Irish Society had obviously failed to solve any of the problems which had dogged the Baptist Home Missionary Society since its early days. But the failure of one union did not deter the new committee from looking for salvation through union with another body. The Baptist Union was itself in a fairly weak condition until 1864, when J. H. Millard became its secretary and transformed it into a more vigorous body.⁴ If the British & Irish Baptist Home Mission were to continue to make any contribution to Baptist life, the Baptist Union was now a force to be reckoned with.

At the autumn assembly of the Baptist Union, held in Cambridge, in 1870, the British & Irish Baptist Home Mission was allowed to present a case for their work in half an hour. The arrangement was accepted 'in

1 ibid., 28 May 1872 and 1 October 1872.

2 ibid., 6 January 1874.

3 ibid., 7 April 1874.

4 E. A. Payne, The Baptist Union, op. cit., pp. 95-102. Payne also attributes the growth in fame of the Baptists to the work of C. H. Spurgeon.

the absence of a more satisfactory arrangement'.¹ Evangelism was frequently on the agenda of the Baptist Union meetings and the need for a system to extend the work of the churches.²

It was not until the Baptist Union Assembly of 1874 that the British & Irish Baptist Home Mission was to receive any major attention. The Rev. R. Glover of Bristol had read a paper³ advocating that the Baptist Union should absorb all denominational societies forthwith. It received a sympathetic reception. At the same assembly J. Bigwood read a paper advocating the adoption of a more systematic plan for home missions. The Freeman understood his paper to be reacting against Glover's grand design⁴ and expressing concern lest the practical steps which could be taken, of making more use of lay agency, of grouping churches and of ministers devoting two or three evenings a week to evangelism, should be lost sight of.⁵

The people's sympathy, however, lay with Glover and in October 1876 the Assembly resolved to keep in view 'the concentration of the power of the churches in the evangelisation of the country under the direction of the Union'.⁶ Bigwood's resignation enabled the developing friendship to grow into a firm courtship. But the courtship was to be stormy. 'A friendly conference' took place between the two committees on 16 January 1877 and both agreed to a 'closer connection'. Within weeks a sub-committee

1. Mins of B. & I. B. H. M., 6 September 1870.

2. Baptist Union Handbook, (1867), 179. See also C. Short, The Best Means of Overtaking the Religious Destitution of our large towns (London, 1869) and H. M. Bompas, The Best Means of Evangelizing the Masses (London, 1871).

3. R. Glover, The Desirability of a closer connexion between the Baptist Union and the Leading Baptist Societies (London, 1874), pp. 1-14.

4. The Freeman, 6 April, 1877, 157.

5. J. Bigwood, op. cit., p. 12f.

6. The Freeman, 6 April, 1877, 157.

had been appointed to bring it about. But the negotiations were protracted and troubled. Kirtland wrote to The Freeman implying that the Union was guilty of undeclared imperialism.¹ S. H. Booth, secretary to the Union, immediately assured the committee that the purpose of the closer connection was 'for advice and counsel only'.²

By the Assembly of 1878 the form of the closer connection had been agreed. The Baptist Union referred questions concerning rural evangelism to the British & Irish Baptist Home Mission³, whilst each partner continued to exercise a good deal of independence in relation to evangelism. The Baptist Union urged the churches to give more and accept full responsibility for the new relationship. A target of at least £10,000 a year was set as the income required for the evangelistic work envisaged.⁴

A further step towards closer integration took place when a joint secretaryship for the two bodies was proposed. This change was effected on 4 June 1879 but within two months the Rev. S. H. Booth, on whose shoulders the new work fell, resigned 'feeling how unable I am to meet the demands of the new arrangements of the committees'.⁵ Booth's resignation immediately brought forth a torrent of voices protesting at the unsatisfactory nature of the existing arrangements. The Union, many claimed, should either absorb the work of the British & Irish Baptist Home Mission completely or exclude evangelistic work from its brief completely. It was unreasonable to have one secretary for two societies, both of which

1 9 November 1877, 569.

2 Mins. of B. & I. B. H. M., 11 December, 1877.

3 B. U., Handbook (1878), 27.

4 Mins of B. & I. B. H. M., 8 October, 1878.

5 ibid., 5 August 1879.

were dabbling in the same area of responsibility; rationalisation was necessary.¹

Not all agreed that the need for rationalisation was so obvious and a great deal of ill-feeling was generated. The discussions which followed demonstrate that some saw it as a further threat to their independence.² Only when this opposition to centralisation was sufficiently overcome was a sub-committee appointed to prepare the way for complete amalgamation. This explains why what many saw as an obvious way forward took three years to effect.

The amalgamation took place at the Autumn Assembly in 1882, held in Liverpool. Evangelistic work now became an official department of the work of the union and the British & Irish Baptist Home Mission ceased to exist as a separate body. To The Freeman, which had campaigned for the fusion, it was a matter of great satisfaction. It affirmed the belief that,

There will be more sympathy and co-operation between all churches of the denomination, and as a consequence there will be more strength and effectiveness, as well as more extended³ proclamation of the Gospel by Baptist ministers and churches.

But it had to admit with regret that there was still too much independency abroad and much of the task of home missions remained firmly in the hands of the local associations and of prominent individuals. The victory of the centralists, who firmly believed in the necessity of a centrally directed plan if the whole nation was to be reached with the gospel, was not to be as thorough as they had hoped.

1 The Freeman, 8 August 1879, 395; 12 September 1879, 455 and 3 October 1879, 492f.

2 ibid., 9 May 1879, 231-5.

3 ibid., 6 October 1882, 652-654.

In practice the new aims adopted were to offer help, initially not in any uniform way, where associations could not adequately finance such work. Small rural churches were urged to affiliate with larger churches. Wide channels of communication were opened up to reinforce what work was being done. And a few ground rules for its operation, such as that no small church expecting financial help from the committee should invite a minister before referring it to the committee, were laid.¹

The President's Address in 1883 heralded, he hoped, a new era. 'The Baptist Union is no longer a mere bond of brotherly and Christian intercourse ... The Union has passed out of the region of theory and sentiment and into the region of practical work. The Home Mission work has become the work of the union.'²

It was now, he said, the work and duty of the whole denomination, though the title of the Society was retained as a means of discharging their duty. That year mission pastors were appointed to Gainsborough, Ledbury, Northchurch and Buckley.³ And the idea proved a success. But financially the next decade did not show that the Baptists found it any easier to give to a central fund than they had previously done. There was still too much going on closer to hand to absorb their resources. The Irish work was separated from the rest in 1889 and the Baptist Union gave up responsibility for it after 31 December that year.⁴ Even that did not seem to ease the burden.

The centenary of the founding of the Baptist Home Missionary Society was an occasion for taking stock. E. G. Gange was the President of the Union for 1897 and his commitment to evangelism was already well known.¹ In reviewing the century he rejoiced that the number of Baptist churches had risen from four hundred and seventy eight to two thousand nine hundred

1 Mins. of B. & I.B.H.M., 17 January 1882.

2 B. U. Handbook, (1883) 10.

3 C. Brown, op. cit., p. 51.

4 B. U. Handbook, (1889) 99.

and twenty four. But he noted that Baptists had once been more aggressive in seeking for conversions and that, in their own educated and luxurious age, subtle unbelief was at work.²

The work of home missions was being conducted in three counties through colporteurs; four evangelists were being supported in Hertfordshire and Worcestershire; eighty-eight mission churches; twenty-five mission stations and fifty-eight pastors were also under their oversight and F. C. Spurr had been engaged as a missionary. The claim was made that the Baptist Home Missionary Society and its successors had singularly contributed to the growth of the denomination; one hundred churches having become independent through its work. But, alas, it still failed to receive widespread support and in its centenary year the income for the society which was still recorded as a separate account amounted to only £3,000 - only 3/5ths of what it had been fifty years earlier.³

3.5 Baptist Evangelism in Wider Perspective

The major reason for the lack of support received by the central home missionary organisation among the Baptists was not to be found in their lack of interest or motivation in the question of evangelism. The reason was quite the reverse. Throughout the country and in all manner of ways the Baptists organised their own evangelistic efforts. They valued their independence too much to discipline all those efforts to find expression through one channel.

1 He had already called the Union to train and send out an army of evangelists who could preach both to ploughmen, colliers and navvies on the one hand and to the refined and educated on the other hand. E. G. Gange, Evangelistic Work: or a call to action (London, 1879).

2 B. U. Handbook (1898), 91-106.

3 C. Brown, op. cit., p. 54 and p. 69.

At the end of the century there were three major aspects to these efforts which deserve examination. Firstly, there was the work of the associations. Secondly, there was the advent of special missions. Thirdly, there was the emerging emphasis on a wider means of evangelism.

Many associations had their origins in evangelism,¹ although other issues had become more important. The emphasis on evangelism was to re-emerge at the end of the century and once again find a high priority on their agendas. Relationships between the central body and the local associations, who jealously guarded their independence, were often sensitive. To ease the sensitivities those representing the central body frequently made public reference to the work local associations were doing. Even so, when the British & Irish Baptist Home Missions and the Baptist Union began to work in close co-operation with each other in 1878, the Lancashire and Yorkshire Association made it plain that they would continue as they were, a separate society, 'without reference to any central committee'.² They had no wish to become a mere auxiliary of the Baptist Union.

The work done by the London Baptist Association and the Northern Baptist Association is illustrative of the work associations undertook in the field of home missions.

C. H. Spurgeon was a catalyst in the founding of the London Baptist Association in 1865. The earlier association, at which Spurgeon had preached in 1855, was a moribund affair.³ The association formed in 1865 was an altogether different affair. With Spurgeon were associated Dr. William Brock of Bloomsbury and Dr. William Landels of Regents Park. Fellowship, evangelism and church extension were the three primary

1 See above, p. 10ff.

2 Mins. of B.&I.B.H.M., 14 Jan. 1879.

3 C. H. Spurgeon, Autobiography (London, 1898), ii 87-89.

objectives. On the last of these, W. Charles Johnson, the historian of the London Baptist Association has commented that 'no other Association has a more impressive record of church extension than the L.B.A.. The Constitution of 1865 pledged "the Association to erect at least one new chapel each year".'¹ During the first decade eleven new chapels were built and one more was saved from closing. It was a record that the L.B.A. maintained for many years to come, with Spurgeon alone being instrumental in founding over two hundred churches in London.²

Spurgeon's role in the L.B.A. was indicative of his wider contribution to evangelism which it is difficult to overestimate, so much so, that one contemporary Anglican observer put down the phenomenal growth of the Baptists to Spurgeon and the Sunday Schools alone.³

Spurgeon's direct contribution to home evangelisation reached its zenith in his ministry at the Metropolitan Tabernacle which was built in 1861 to accommodate the crowds flocking to hear him preach.⁴ He had begun his ministry in London at New Park Street Chapel in 1854 preaching to 'a mere handful of people'.⁵ He claimed that he did not himself raise his congregation.

I never got it at all. I did not think it my business to do so, but only to preach the Gospel. Why, my congregation got my congregation. I had 80 or scarcely a hundred when I preached first. The next time I had 200: everybody who had heard me was saying to his neighbour, "You must go and hear this young man." Next meeting we had 400, and in six weeks 800. That was the way in which my people got my congregation.⁶

1 W. Charles Johnson, Encounter in London (London, 1965), p. 2f.

2 ibid., p. 19. In addition to these he exercised widespread direct and indirect influence in the rest of the nation, e.g. Whitley, Baptists in the North West, p. 213, 'The new life in the south stirred up by the advent of Spurgeon to London, had flowered in the Pastors' College and the seed was now being scattered over the north'.

3 O. Chadwick, The Victorian Church (London, 1970) ii, 228.

4 J. F. Thornton, 'The Soteriology of C. H. Spurgeon: Its Biblical & Historical Roots & Its Place in his Preaching', (Cambridge Univ. Ph. D. thesis, 1975), especially pp. 252-260.

5 C. H. Spurgeon, op. cit., i, 361.

6 G. H. Pike, op. cit., iii, 175.

Rapidly Spurgeon became one of the sights of London and a new church, seating 3,600 became a necessity enabling him to exercise an even more extensive influence from its pulpit; a story which has often been recorded.¹ Fullerton records that between 1854 and 1891, the final year of Spurgeon's life, 14,460 had been baptised and added to the church and the membership had grown from 232 at New Park Street to 5,311 at the Metropolitan Tabernacle. Within the single year 1872, 571 new members were added and at two memorable communion services 100 and 150 respectively were received into membership.² Undoubtedly some of this was attributable to Christians transferring from other churches but the majority was due to the conversion of those outside the church as a thorough analysis of the 12,000 written reports of the elders concerning those who were applying for church membership would prove.³

The indirect influence wielded by Spurgeon on home missions was even greater and it was multifarious in form. Firstly there were numerous missions and agencies attached to the Metropolitan Tabernacle including a Colportage Association founded in 1866; Almshouses founded in 1867; an Orphanage commenced in 1867 and approximately 30 missions or Sunday Schools in the surrounding districts.⁴

Spurgeon's second, and perhaps greatest, indirect influence was exercised through the training of ministers and evangelists at the college he founded for this purpose in 1856. His relationship to the college was by no means remote and his contribution to the training programme was formidable, especially through his regular Friday afternoon lectures

- 1 C.H.Spurgeon, op.cit.; G.H.Pike, op.cit.; ii-vii, J.C.Carlile, C.H.Spurgeon, An Interpretive Biography (London, 1933); W.Y.Fullerton, C.H.Spurgeon (London, 1920) pp.133-168; E.W.Hayden, A Centennial History of Spurgeon's Tabernacle (London, 1962).
- 2 Fullerton, Spurgeon, op.cit., p.141.
- 3 The reports are contained in 30 volumes at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, London, The Sword and the Trowel, Dec. 1975, p.3.
- 4 R.Shindler, From the Usher's Desk to the Tabernacle Pulpit (London, 1892) pp.266-270, and E.W.Hayden, op.cit., pp.20-33.

through which he left his stamp on hundreds of future ministers. By the time of his death in 1892 almost 900 had been trained at the Pastor's College¹ and most of these had remained loyal to him when he became relatively isolated as a result of the Down-Grade controversy of 1887-8.² The influence of his students spread far and wide as W.T. Whitley bears witness in his work Baptists in the North West. He comments that, during a period in the 1870s when a wave of evangelism was being experienced and twelve churches coming to maturity, 'The new life in the south stirred up by the advent of Spurgeon to London, had flowered in the Pastors' college, and the seed was now being scattered over the north'³

The third area of contribution Spurgeon made to home missions was through the advocacy of their cause at public meetings. On the first anniversary of the union between the Baptist Home Missionary Society and the Baptist Irish Society, Spurgeon was the chosen preacher. Like R.W. Dale he felt the need for evangelistic work to be undertaken outside the normal structures of the Church to be less than ideal. But he was much more willing to grant the necessity of societies until the church accepted its full responsibility as a missionary agency. Indeed he claimed that

It was a grand thing when Fuller felt that if the Church would not do its work, the work must be undertaken apart from the Church organisation, and it is a noble thing that if the Churches will not do their home mission-work there should be a society to take it under its care;...⁴

Nonetheless he hoped that the day would come when the churches would render the work of a society unnecessary.

The final and more significant contribution of Spurgeon resulted from the Down-Grade controversy. E.A. Payne's final comments on the crisis during which Spurgeon accused the Baptist Union of being on a theological down-grade to liberalism expresses the opinion that the result, which was on the surface a defeat for Spurgeon which culminated in his withdrawing

1 Fullerton, Spurgeon, op.cit., p.231.

2 Carlile, op.cit., p.253.

3 op.cit., p.213.

4 G.H. Pike, op.cit. iii, 159 and Passion for numerous other similar meetings.

from the Union,

showed clearly that all that was represented by and expressed through the Baptist Union was judged more important than the adherence of one individual, however eminent, and that the older biblical or theological frameworks satisfied the majority of Baptists no more than they did those of other denominations. ¹

But another interpretation is possible, if difficult by its very nature to substantiate. The contest was indeed lost by Spurgeon in the sense that the Declarations passed by the Council of the Baptist Union in February 1888 were less than he had hoped for and the L.B.A. failed to support his desire of a credal basis for its Association life. Yet it is significant that in the latter case 85 men voted for such a Basis of Faith, despite the long-standing Baptist aversion to creeds and only 113 against it. Spurgeon did have substantial support even if a majority were not convinced of his tactics in this particular battle. Carlile records that many men trained at the Pastor's College felt it right to stay within the Union and to support his protest from within. ²

Payne suggests that, 'Had Spurgeon lived, the situation in the last decade of the nineteenth century may have been more difficult'. ³ Indeed it might have been. It is difficult, for example, to imagine the Simultaneous Mission of 1901 having quite such a smooth passage as it had over the Aked controversy ⁴ if Spurgeon had remained alive and active. A.G. Brown's role in that controversy is some minor reflection of the part Spurgeon himself may have played. And yet the last decade of the nineteenth century demonstrates that the Baptists did not slide into liberal theology as much as others did and that they revealed concern both for

1 E.A. Payne 'The Down Grade Controversy: A Postscript', Baptist Quarterly xxviii (1979), 146-158. For sympathetic treatments of Spurgeon's part in the controversy see Fullerton, Spurgeon, op.cit., pp.307-316, Carlile, op.cit. pp. 242-257 and W.B.Glover, Evangelical Nonconformists and Higher Criticism in the 19th Century (London, 1954) pp.162-175.

2 op.cit. p.257.

3 The Down Grade, op.cit., p.157 f .

4 See below pp. 362-365.

evangelism and evangelicalism which was certainly more orthodox than is evident among, for example, the Congregationalists. Spurgeon's protest for all its glaring deficiencies and apparent failures may have succeeded in arresting the downgrade. The warning shots, having been fired, may well have been sufficient of themselves to make the Baptist leaders more anxious to prove that Spurgeon's protest was unwarranted and thus more conservative in their theological statements. It may well have been another case of losing the battle only in order to win the war.

In the first ten years of the L.B.A. evangelism took place through mission meetings in public halls, open airs and tract distribution. By 1876 they had grown in support sufficiently to hold the first large-scale simultaneous evangelistic campaign with thirty-five chapels co-operating and twenty-seven pastors sharing in the leadership.¹ In the closing years of the century the L.B.A. was fully involved in the Baptist version of the Forward Movement, led by F.B. Meyer and supported by John Clifford. Though undeviating in its concern for evangelism, this movement led Baptists into broader concerns for the improvement of people's lives than evangelism alone.²

The renewed interest of the Northern Baptist Association was first expressed in its circular letter for 1870, written by the Rev. W.W. Walters, on 'Evangelistic work within the Association'.³ Starting from Ephesians 4: 11 Walters made out a case for setting men apart as full-time evangelists. The task was too big to be handled by pastors alone. He was opposed to revivalists whose work was suspect and only brought churches into a semblance of life. Nor did he wish them to be colporteurs,

1 W.C. Johnson, op. cit., p. 35.

2 ibid., p. 38f.

3 The following details of the Northern Baptist Association are based on an unpublished typescript of a selection of the Minutes of the Northern Association of Baptist Churches 1870-1899, by E. Parker. The typescript contained no pagination.

although they would make good use of tracts. The men chosen would need to be educated, sociable and firmly committed to the principles of the denomination.

In practice, Walters was inviting twenty-seven churches to provide £8 per annum each for the support of two evangelists. The Association readily passed the required resolution and set up a special committee to oversee their work 'in those parts of the Association as yet unprovided with Baptist Churches'. In fact, in the next year enough money was raised for the support of four evangelists to work at Crook, Berwick, north of Northumberland and on the north side of the Tyne.

In 1872 the Association heard that not much fruit had yet been seen but the work needed to be viewed in a long term perspective. The Rev. H. Grey was appointed to serve in Bishop Auckland and a church of sixteen members was formed there on 13 May 1873. Both there and at Crook the need for a chapel building was soon voiced. The building at Bishop Auckland soon proved justified, as in 1876 it was reported that 'with better accommodation the congregations were steadily increasing and the Sunday School is improving'.

Not all subsequent reports were as encouraging. Despite a wish that they should start one new cause a year, the work of the Northern Baptist Association was heavily hit by the depression in trade at the end of the 1870s. Some churches became over dependent on the grants and had to be reminded that they were not perpetual endowments. The committee seemed to prefer to support men on a very short-term basis as when they sent the Rev. E. P. Riley to Consett for six months.

The biggest temptation was the desire to erect chapel buildings prematurely and giving into this temptation led the Northern Association, in contrast to the LBA, into serious financial difficulty. The Minutes for 1890 reported,

There has been much activity on the part of some churches in connection with building operations. Your committee is impressed with the fact that much energy, time and ability are devoted to obtaining money for Chapel Debts, which, if devoted to spiritual aggressive work, would add much to the development and power of the churches.

The subtle desire to invest greater energy in bricks and mortar rather than in people was a perpetual threat to the task of making converts even though many saw it as a means to that end. It may be that this accounted for the tone of the reports in the last decade of the nineteenth century. They were epitomised by the report of 1893 which declared that all was peace and harmony, without a cloud on the horizon. There was however, little progress to report, just a thankfulness that 'no church is without tokens of Divine blessing'. It seemed that 'tokens' were all they were likely to receive.

The minutes of the Northern Baptist Association characterise the general developments which were taking place in home missions. They publicly expressed their gratitude for the visits of D.L. Moody and Ira D. Sankey in 1874.¹ They also began to report the conducting of special missions such as that held at Monkwearmouth in 1886. The two characteristics are not unconnected. It was due to Moody and Sankey's visits that, at the end of the century, Baptists concentrated their efforts on a new type of evangelism; namely, holding popular missions services. It was a religious version of music hall culture. It made the work of evangelism very much more the work of a specialist performer and a regular but intermittent event in the life of the churches.

1 Public support sometimes disguised private reservations, e.g. J. Pollock, Moody without Sankey (London, 1966 edn.), p.139, J.P. Mursell, The Revival Movement in the North (London, 1870) and The Freeman, 5 December 1879, 632.

By 1880 the Baptist Union could state that these evangelistic services had been the chief feature of the year. Archibald G. Brown had visited ten or twelve towns in Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire 'with marked success'. Together with J.R. Wood, Dr. Landels, E.G. Gange, T.W. Medhurst and others, up to seventy towns had been visited for such mission services.¹

One of the most active of these specialist evangelists was J.Manton Smith. Soon after his conversion, which owed a great deal to the persistent prayer and witness of his landlady, Smith began to engage in evangelistic work with his pastor, A. G. Brown. When Moody and Sankey visited London in 1875 they, together with Henry Moorhouse, urged him to engage in mission work full-time. He resisted their overtures but shortly after entered Spurgeon's Pastors' College. The Pastors' College had a Society of Evangelists² which had been pioneered by W.Higgins and, after completing his training, Smith, together with A.J. Clark, were ordained as the college evangelists. Spurgeon felt that such a work was a distinct and special calling.³ Clark's health did not stand up to the strain of itinerancy and so from 1879 Smith was partnered with W.Y.Fullerton. It was a successful partnership which lasted for fifteen years.⁴

Fullerton describes their work as 'salvage evangelism'.⁵ He had a firm conviction of the power of the gospel to change lives and together Smith and Fullerton rehearsed many cases to prove that it did.

- 1 B.U.Handbook, (1880), 27f. The Freeman, 14th March 1879, 121f. Whilst stressing the popular form of these services it was anxious to distinguish them from revivalist services.
- 2 R. Shindler, op.cit., pp.151-163.
- 3 C.H.Spurgeon, op.cit., iv, 334f.
- 4 W.Y.Fullerton, At the Sixtieth Milestone (London, 1917), p.11. J.Manton Smith was an incorrigible story teller and records his life and work in three books, Stray Leaves from my Life Story (London, 1890), More Stray Leaves (London, 1890) and Striking Stories from Real Life (London, 1894).
- 5 Fullerton, Sixtieth Milestone, op.cit., p.11. Fullerton settled as the pastor of Melbourne Hall, Leicester in 1894 and subsequently to work with the Baptist Missionary Society.

Their significance in Baptist history lies in the fact that they represent the epitome of the late nineteenth century missionary and in the fact that in their work features emerge which continue to be found well into the twentieth century.

In their strategy there was a special place given to reaching children with the gospel.¹ They did it, not by the old means of sabbath school teaching, but by use of fun, stories and music. Manton Smith was a cornet player and it was said that 'he would hold them spellbound for an hour and send them out bursting with delight'.² They believed it was the most natural thing in the world for a child to express belief in Christ and if only adults took that belief seriously, Fullerton argued, it would not be jeopardized in later life.

In contrast to their ability to attract children, they found it extraordinarily difficult to attract men to their meetings. They were not without their success among their own sex and their homely sentimental appeal was sometimes the means of winning them.³ but, for the most part, their preaching was too sentimental to reach hardened men. It was not, said Fullerton, that the men were hardened atheists, it was simply that they produced any number of excuses, all of which were variations on the theme that the church was irrelevant.⁴

Another feature of their work was the emergence of an understanding of psychology and its usefulness in producing the required results. To

1 ibid., p. 95, 'Children have a primary place in the heart of Christ'. Fullerton believed that children, along with electricity, would be one of the great discoveries of his age. Souls of Men (London, 1927), p.210f.

2 Fullerton, Sixtieth Milestone, p.95.

3 J.M.Smith, Striking Stories ..., p.175. Manton Smith spoke to six navvies on a train journey about Home, Mother and Heaven. He sobered them with such sentiments as 'You will never forget that dear old mother who used to sit under that big chimney in the corner chair and take you on her knee and teach you, "Gentle Jesus Meek and Mild".'

4 Fullerton, Souls of Men, pp. 171-174.

attract people to the meetings they would acquire the largest hall in a town and announce that no one could come without a ticket. 'That was much better than the entreaty to come, which would have suggested that we had something to gain by getting the people; it aroused desire because it suggested quite truly that the gain was to be theirs.'¹ An equally judicious use of psychological understanding was made in relation to the method of making an appeal to commitment. The aim was to provoke a positive response without allowing the already free expression of emotion to become undisciplined. They loathed spontaneous responses, which would only prove to be transient, as much as others despised them.

The missions were well prepared and suitable advertisements were used. The preaching was homely and full of anecdotes rather than theological propositions. The style was very much that of Moody's.² The sins condemned and from which men were invited to flee were the sins of personal morality. In a sermon on 'Glimpses of life in the East of London', Manton Smith spoke of thimble-rigging; card sharpening; pocket picking; purse shuffling; garter-picking; watch swapping; the painted bird trick; pawn tickets; the imported parrot and pipe selling. His great condemnation was saved for prostitution and drunkenness. Instead of these he wanted to commend temperance and its cheerfulness, and religion and its blessedness.³

1 Fullerton, At the 60th Milestone, p.185.

2 For an analysis see, J.Kent, Holding the Fort (London, 1978), pp.169-203.

3 Ms notes in J.Manton Smith's personal copy of his Song Services I am grateful to Mrs. M. Stuart, Smith's granddaughter, for the loan of this and his other personal notes and documents.

Smith and Fullerton exploited the speciality of Song Services in their missions. Again, the origin of the idea can be traced to Moody and Sankey, but they developed it further; 'a step in advance of what has yet been admitted'. Under their ministry whole meetings were constructed on the basis of songs. Their justification for this word approach was both biblical (Colossians 7:16) and pragmatic, that songs 'have often been used in the past for the salvation of souls...'¹

The simplest form of Song Service was one where between fourteen and eighteen songs were interspersed with short sermonettes. On other occasions the singing of the songs would be shared by the congregation, the choir and a soloist. The following extracts from Song Services gives not only an example of the form but of the flavour of the services as well.

'Christ and His Soldiers' - Part I

<u>His Birth</u>	<u>Purpose to be a Saviour</u> At the name of Jesus Tell Jesus	Congregation Solo
<u>His Boyhood</u>	<u>Our Example</u> Jesus Wept The Very Same Jesus	Solo Solo & Chorus
<u>His Manhood</u>	<u>Righteousness for Us</u> All on Jesus The Cross of Calvary Nothing to Pay	Choir Solo & Chorus Solo & Chorus
<u>His Death</u>	<u>To put away sin</u> Christ the Lord is Risen today Jesus, thy blood and righteousness Rabboni	Congregation Choir Solo
<u>His Resurrection</u>	<u>Our Justification</u> He is Risen The old, old story	Choir Solo & Chorus
<u>His Ascension</u>	<u>Our Glorification</u>	

1 Song Services, Preface.

Part II concentrated on His Soldiers and contained fifteen hymns. The Soldier of Christ has Christ as his Saviour, Keeper, Guide, Lord and Master. The service concluded by saying that the Soldier looks forward to reigning with Him in glory. In this concluding section Smith compared the four great battles of the recent Crimea War (Alma, Balaclava, Sebastopol and Inkerman) with four great stages in the life of Christ (Bethlehem, Nazareth, Gethsemane and Calvary).

Songs for this service were collected from all over his hymn book. But later Smith regularised the position and printed the hymns for such services in separate sections. They are arranged according to the following seven themes:- The Cross of Christ; Egypt to Canaan; Homeward Bound (all to do with the sea); Heaven our Home; Valour and Victory (again using the Military Image); The Fold and the Flock; and The Rock of Ages.

This last Song Service was issued as a separate Service Sheet and printed with connected readings. It could, therefore, be conducted without Fullerton or Smith being present. It began with Prayer and Responsive Readings from the Psalms and then moved through nine stages. Each section made one point and was well illustrated. In summary form the service was as follows:-

1. The Rock is Christ. A weary traveller knows the value of a rock's protection from the sun and Christ protects men from the rays of God's anger. He also protects us from our enemy who is the Devil.
2. A rock stems the drift of sands as Christ stems the drift of evil. As cornices derive strength from the rock, so do men from Christ.
3. A story is told of a train rushing through a cutting and children, who were playing in it, finding safety in a niche. Men likewise need to cling closely to the Rock.
4. A rock tells of its origin and Christ points to His origin as the Son of God.
5. Just as a man can cut his house out of a rock, so people need to dwell in Christ.

6. Toplady's Rock of Ages is followed by two stories of people being rescued.
7. The Rock is a place of supply, as the Israelites found.
8. Make sure your feet are firmly placed on the rock !
9. The Rock is used as a foundation and so it is essential to build on Christ.

The Service concluded with the hymn "My Hope is Built on nothing less than Jesus' Blood and Righteousness".

Towards the end of the century many such missionaries existed, each with their own individual style. One key figure among Baptists, F.C. Spurr, worked originally as an evangelist with the London Baptist Association.¹ and was the first evangelist to be appointed by them to work under the direction of F.B. Meyer in connection with the Forward Movement. An outstanding preacher and personality, he first conducted a series of ten day campaigns but his success led him to be appointed as an evangelist on a wider basis by 1897.² By the time he wrote his manual on the organisation of special missions, the missionaries had their organisation down to a fine art. Success depended on how carefully the previous preparation had been undertaken.³

Spurr's connection with the Forward Movement demonstrates the final aspect of Baptist evangelism towards the end of the century. Whilst remaining firmly evangelical in theology, not all the Baptists remained narrow in the scope of their concerns. As in Methodism there was a broadening of sympathies. None illustrates the point better than F.B.Meyer and Dr. John Clifford.⁴

1 W.C.Johnston, op.cit., p. 51 and 65.

2 C.Brown, op.cit., p.66.

3 F.C.Spurr, Special Missions and How to Make Them Successful (London, 1893), p. vii and p.30.

4 W.C.Johnston, op.cit., p.38f.

Meyer had welcomed the unknown Moody to York in 1873 and had experienced an evangelical transformation of his own ministry through the visit.¹ The transformation was so great that in 1874, after Meyer had moved to Leicester, his deacons objected to his evangelistic zeal, saying, 'We cannot have this sort of thing (an after meeting) here. This is not a gospel shop.'² Consequently, Meyer left that church and founded his own which grew to a congregation of 1,500 to 2,000 before he moved to London in 1887. As in Leicester he expressed practical concern for the poverty and state of the people and was deeply involved in the setting up of philanthropic clubs and societies and in rescue work.³ According to his biographer, A.C.Mann; this great preacher was at his best on a Sunday afternoon when addressing a crowd of men in a Brotherhood.⁴

John Clifford shared this delight with F.B.Meyer and enthusiastically took part in the Pleasant Sunday Afternoons whilst pastor at Paddington.⁵ Some Nonconformists looked on these meetings with suspicion because the addresses showed signs of socialist tendencies and political concern. Like Meyer too, Clifford was involved in a whole range of educational and philanthropic activity. It was, he said,

The business of the Christian Church to find out the real needs of the people in the neighbourhood in which it is placed and, as far as it can, supply all that will make for brightness and joy, for strength and service, for manhood and brotherhood. 6

1 J. Pollock, op.cit., p.101f.

2 A.C.Mann, F.B.Meyer (London, 1929), p.42.

3 ibid., p.53 and pp. 87-90 and W.Y.Fullerton, F.B.Meyer, A Biography (London, 1929), pp. 59-64.

4 Mann, op.cit., p.57 and Fullerton, Meyer, p. 107-116.

5 They had been started by John Blackman in 1875. Blackman was a deacon of the Independent Church at West Bromwich. The afternoons were designed to be 'Brief, Bright and Brotherly'.

6 C.T.Bateman, John Clifford, Free Church Leader and Preacher (London, 1904), p.115.

He firmly believed that the Free Churches needed to witness to the social sympathies of Christ as well as to his sacrifice on the cross, as his address to the Free Church Council of 1897 made clear.¹

Stowell Brown, Spurgeon and a host of other evangelical Baptists had equally been involved in philanthropy as well as evangelism. What was it then that distinguished those involved in the Forward Movement from them? Firstly, that they did not compartmentalise evangelism and social concern in the way other evangelicals did. Secondly, they made an honest attempt to overcome the individualism of traditional evangelicalism. Thirdly, they expressed a concern, not only to deal with the distressing symptoms of social sickness, but to diagnose and rectify the cause of social ills.² Meyer had not always shared these aims but fully announced them when preaching in Edinburgh in 1902, causing, according to C.Mann, alarm and grief to some of his Keswick colleagues, but not in any way intending to deviate from the true evangelical gospel.³

It is no accident that the Baptist Union declaration of principle still holds 'that it is the duty of every disciple to bear personal witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ and to take part in the evangelization of the world'. From the Evangelical Revival onwards the Baptists have shown a persistent concern with missions at home and abroad. They were the earliest denomination to attempt to organise such a mission - even before they were organised themselves as a denomination. Sellers, rightly points out that their search for souls was even more intense than the Congregationalists.⁴

1 ibid., p.225.

2 K.Heasman, Evangelicals in Acton (London, 1962), pp. 61-64 and Fullerton Meyer, op.cit., pp. 172-175.

3 C.Mann, op.cit., p.81. No other reference to his address at Edinburgh can be found in biographies of Meyer nor are their references to it in the religious press. Perhaps Mann overemphasises the point especially in view of the balance always evident in Meyer between spiritual and social concern, as evidenced, for example, in F.B.Meyer, 'Twentieth Century Evangelism,' Free Church Year Book (1902), 90-96.

4 I.Sellers, Nineteenth Century Nonconformity (London, 1977) p.1.

If it is paradoxical that they should attempt to organise home missions before organising themselves, it is also true that their evangelistic work was marked by other paradoxes. The Baptists on the one hand suffered from fierce theological disputes throughout the century¹ and yet in their approach to evangelism they are marked by a greater coherence than can be discovered in other Nonconformist denominations. They largely avoid the extremes, both of revivalism and of the social gospel. Yet on the other hand they seemed completely unable to systematize any national approach to evangelism and their national societies were perpetually condemned to poverty. But this great weakness was possibly their greatest strength, for it allowed for the spontaneous expression of evangelistic zeal at a regional level and constantly permitted a flexibility of approach which might otherwise have been lacking.

1 E.g. over open and closed communion and over the Down-Grade Controversy.

Chapter 4

THE CONGREGATIONALISTS4.1 Early Developments in Home Missions among Independents

Early nineteenth century Congregationalism was no longer a homogeneous movement. On the one hand there were churches which had been largely unaffected by the Evangelical Revival. They assumed that their members were converted, emphasised respectability both in church order and worship and demonstrated little interest in missionary work either at home or abroad. They were a 'regime of conservative conventional propriety' composed of men who were 'masters of deportment'.¹

On the other hand there were churches which owed much, directly or indirectly to the Methodist Revival and these churches of the New Dissent were to become increasingly significant in the development of Congregationalism. Their theology was less rigidly Calvinistic, their attitude to education more functional; their preaching was more popular and they were activists engaged in a host of missionary and philanthropic societies. Above all, they were concerned for mission and even evidenced some concern for revival.² It was this second strand of Congregationalism which began to evangelise England.

A national organisation in respect of home missions was not started until 1819. But a good deal of missionary activity took place before that date on a regional level and the founding of the Home Missionary

1 E.Paxton Hood's comments on John Clayton and his sons at King's Weigh House, Thomas Binney, His mind, life and opinions (London, 1874), p.6. Also, J.Stoughton, Reminiscences of Congregationalism Fifty Years ago (London, 1881), p.6 and G.F.Nuttall, The Early Congregational Conception of the Church (London, 1946).

2 Stoughton, op.cit., p.7; R.W.Dale, History of English Congregationalism (2nd edn., London, 1907), pp. 583-92; R.Tudor Jones, Congregationalism in England 1662-1962 (London, 1962), pp.146-186 and 220-223 and R.Carwardine, 'Methodism, New Dissent & Revivalism,' The Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society, ii (1978), 46-54.

Society itself owes much to its regional forerunners.¹

The earliest association to express concern for overseas missions was the Warwickshire Independent Association, formed in 1794 for the revival of religion and its introduction to places at home and abroad.² The origin of the London Missionary Society has been traced back to a meeting held on 27 June 1793 at the home of the Rev. James Moody in Warwick, when the question of the duty of Christians with respect to the spread of the Gospel was discussed.³ The Association included a number of men who were typical of those ministers who had been affected by the Methodist Revival. James Moody himself, not only looked after his own cause in Warwick, but was instrumental in rescuing the church at Stratford-on-Avon which had been almost annihilated by Arianism.⁴ Similarly he took responsibility for Leamington before a full-time pastor was appointed.⁵ George Burder also served in this association at West Orchard Chapel, Coventry, before moving to Fetter Lane in 1803.⁶ He laboured indefatigably amidst much opposition and violence, to introduce the gospel into destitute towns and villages of the county'.⁷

Much of the extension work in this initial period took place through the Sunday School. Burder had founded Sunday schools in Coventry and their establishment was often the first step in the formation of a church.⁸

1 Home Missionary Society Magazine, xii (1831), 205.

2 The Evangelical Magazine, ii (1794), 509.

3 J. Sibree and M. Caston, Independency in Warwickshire (London, 1855), pp. 139-141.

4 ibid., p.198f.

5 ibid., p.295.

6 There he was to become secretary to the London Missionary Society and an editor of the E.M..

7 Sibree and Caston, op.cit., p.94.

8 e.g. ibid., Stoke Row, p.78; Potter's Green, p.79; Yardley, p.183 and Foleshill, p.254.

Tract distribution, open air preaching and the hiring of rooms in which to preach were the other main means of evangelism. Every opportunity to preach the gospel was seized. Vicar Lane Chapel, Coventry, owed its acceleration of growth in 1820 to the preaching of its pastor, John Sibree, to a crowd of six or seven thousand shortly after the execution of a prisoner whom he had visited in goal. Many were converted as a result.¹ Even the division of a church, as occurred at Vicar Lane in 1776, might be a positive means of growth. Sibree and Caston argue that in the Church of England and Methodist Church division would be a cause of weakness. But the different structure of Independency meant that their churches could be 'strengthened and multiplied' by it.²

When the Home Missionary Society was established much evangelistic work was carried on under its auspices in Warwickshire. But it had no need to introduce a missionary spirit into that county. The spirit and its resulting activity was already well established.

The Methodist Revival had an equal effect in the Berkshire, South Oxfordshire and South Buckinghamshire Association. The earliest attempt at any organised programme of evangelism was made by the Rev. Archibald Douglas who, shortly after settling in Reading, formed the Reading Evangelical Association in 1797.³ The association was responsible for the evangelism of Mortimore,⁴ Pangbourne⁵, Tilehurst⁶ and Theale⁷. A good deal of aggressive work was done until the inhibitions of old dissent were

1 ibid., p.75.

2 ibid., p.81. Growth by planned division was a regular strategy for some nonconformists later in the century, H.S.Brown, His Autobiography (London, 1887), p.132.

3 W.H.Summers, History of the Congregational Churches in the Berkshire, South Oxfordshire and South Buckinghamshire Association (Newbury, 1905), p.165.

4 ibid., p.134.

5 ibid., p.150.

6 ibid., p.175.

7 ibid., p.209.

reasserted, so preventing the expression of evangelist concern between 1820 and 1830.¹

In Hampshire it was David Bogue who proposed the formation of a plan for a county-wide evangelistic programme. Bogue had already been influential in the formation of the Hampshire Association of Churches, but in 1796 he began to tutor Richard Densham, one of John Eyre's itinerants, and this, according to C. Terpstra, began Bogue's thinking about the evangelism of Hampshire.² During the interval at James Bennett's ordination services, Bogue put forward a plan to the assembled ministers to divide Hampshire into four areas, setting up committees for each area so that places of worship could be opened and licenses procured for them. Neighbouring ministers, itinerants and gifted brethren were all called upon to help and each area committee was encouraged both to pray and to give the necessary money to finance the operation.³ Bogue's plan was immediately accepted and from then on, when the ministers of the Hampshire Association met, a meeting of the Society for the Propagating of the Gospel in the County of Hampshire was also held.

In addition to Bogue's direct evangelistic work in and around Gosport,⁴ his work as a college tutor contributed much to the cause of home missions. Waddington comments that the interest in home and foreign missions, which was to be found among Congregationalists in the early decades of the nineteenth century, 'was largely the result of the

1 ibid., p.10.

2 C. Terpstra, 'David Bogue 1750-1825' (Edinburgh University Ph.D. thesis 1959), p.198.

3 The full plan is cited in Terpstra, ibid., pp. 199-201.

4 ibid., p.94 and pp. 207-210.

earnest spirit and sound instruction of theological tutors'.¹ Bogue's aim in his academy was to train 'plain useful ministers',² as the syllabus of studies which took the missionary aim fully into account³ and which involved a good deal of field work shows.⁴ His personal example in evangelism much have had a great impact on his students in itself and would have had added emphasis in the light of his reserved personality.

The example of J. Pye Smith at Homerton College supports the importance of the theological colleges in imparting an evangelistic zeal to their students. He engaged in open air preaching and tract distribution when it was evidently an uncommon thing.⁵ Hoxton Academy and Highbury Academy both had their origins in the need to train itinerants.⁶ The influence of Hoxton can be particularly traced in the committee of the Home Missionary Society. Forty nine out of the eighty one ministers who served on Home Missionary Society Committees in the first twenty-five years of its existence, have a traceable college connection and of these twenty were trained at Hoxton.

In 1797 Surrey formed a missionary society because, with a population of 265,000, there were only thirty-three Independent and Baptist Churches and eight Methodist chapels in the county. The Rev. James Bowden, an Independent of Upper Tooting, was the chief advocate of the society but he was quickly supported by the Rev. Joseph Hughes, a Baptist, who was later to become the secretary of the British and Foreign Bible Society. Within two years they had commissioned two full-time itinerant preachers.⁷

1 J.Waddington, Congregational History 1800-1850 (London, 1878), p.1.

2 Terpstra, op.cit., p.75.

3 ibid., p.47.

4 ibid., p.98.

5 J.Medway, Memoirs of J.Pye Smith (London, 1853), p.155.

6 R.W. Dale, op.cit., p.593f.

7 T.Crippen, 'The Surrey Mission', Tr. Congregational History Society, vi, (1915), 300.

The society aimed not only to introduce the gospel but to form churches and numerous chapels were established under their direction as, for example , at Pains Hill and Worplesden in 1822, at Frensham in 1823 and at Normandy and Felday in 1825.¹ They claimed to have established twenty Congregational churches by 1860.²

The work continued to expand until the mid 1830s when some of its earlier supporters had died and financial difficulties forced them to cut back. Administratively the committee structure had become unwieldy as more and more ministers had been added to it. So, in 1858 an executive was established. By this time, however, the Society was passed its prime. The formation of the Surrey Congregational Union in 1863 rendered it unnecessary, since they now undertook evangelistic work on behalf of the churches of Surrey.³ The mission continued in existence until 1874 when it was dissolved with its churches either being given away or closed.⁴ By that time, too, there was no longer the same emphasis on the urgency of conversion. The change in the theological climate had made the churches more concerned about moral and social improvements and a different channel was needed to express such concerns.

The Surrey Mission is especially significant for its unsectarian character. Its fundamental principle, printed in every annual report, read,

1 ibid., p.303f.

2 ibid., p.311.

3 ibid., p.311.

4 ibid., p.312.

The Society knows no party, it militates against nothing but sin and its powerful auxiliaries, ignorance and infidelity, it seeks no interest but that of Christ and mankind; it aims at uniting the talents, the zeal, the influence and the labours of the friends of the gospel of every name. ¹

The Sussex Missionary Society, formed in 1809, was to make an identical claim. ² In the case of Surrey a serious effort was made to practice its catholic sympathies. Wherever an evangelical clergyman of the Church of England was the incumbent in a parish, they declined to work there. They even recorded the number of evangelical clergy in the county in their annual reports and withdrew an agent if an evangelical clergyman settled where an agent was at work. ³

This characteristic lack of sectarianism manifested itself in numerous ways. ⁴ Although the details are imprecise, the Surrey Mission Society was responsible for the formation of a number of Baptist churches. ⁵ In some cases elsewhere, in the days before denominationalism grew, a church might endure a number of metamorphoses before their true sectarian colours could be detected. The church at Erdington, Warwickshire, was opened by the Methodists, governed for a while by the Church of England before becoming Congregational. ⁶ Even when the Baptists were definitely excluded, as they were by the London Itinerant Society, ⁷ other paedo-Baptists were able to co-operate together. The closest relationship, however, was between members of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion and the Congregationalists. It was this

1 ibid., p.299.

2 J.Burder, Peace with Heaven (London, 1811), Appendix.

3 Crippen, op.cit., p.305 and p.308.

4 Cf. W.R. Ward, Religion and Society in England 1790-1850 (London, 1972).

5 ibid., p.311. Crippen, op.cit., p 311

6 Sibree and Caston, op.cit., p.311f.

7 Minutes and Proceedings of the London Itinerant Society, 16 March 1798.

pan-evangelical legacy which the Home Missionary Society inherited on its formation in 1819. By then, however, pan-evangelicalism was no longer as vital a force as it had been twenty years earlier and, if only the Home Missionary Society had honestly admitted its Congregational nature, it would have been saved from a good deal of heartache.

The most direct antecedent of the Home Missionary Society was the London Itinerant Society, founded by ten people meeting at Surrey Chapel on 8 December 1796. Within a year a plan had been proposed

to spread the knowledge of Christ and his salvation in the villages which are destitute of the Gospel within about ten miles of London by opening Sunday schools and prayer meetings - by catechising children, by visiting and relieving the sick and afflicted - by reading sermons - by distributing religious tracts and by preaching in and out of doors as occasion may offer.¹

Its non-sectarianism was not without bounds. It chose only to work with paedo-Baptists and was in any case mainly supported by Congregationalists with a few Independent Methodists on its committee. Even strict Calvinists, who refused to recognise the general call of God to sinners, were excluded.² An unfortunate corollary of its non-sectarianism was that men who owed allegiance to no church found employment through the Society. The matter was raised at its Tenth Annual General Meeting on 3 January 1807 as being contrary to its own rules when it was referred to the committee, who quickly resolved that no young man should be employed as a preacher for more than six months, who was not a member of a local church.³ But this was a weakening of

1 Minutes of London Itinerant Society, 18 August 1797.

2 ibid., 16 March 1798 and 16 January 1828.

3 ibid., 20 February 1807.

its previous rule which had required twelve months' church membership before employment was considered.

During the course of its life a number of abortive attempts took place to amalgamate the London Itinerant Society with other societies engaged in similar work. The committee of the London Itinerant Society, however, contained independently minded individuals who always came to the same conclusion as they reached in their discussion with the Hoxton Itinerant Society, namely, 'that the teaching of Christ will be most promoted by both societies remaining distinct...'¹

The work of the society was chiefly executed by preachers and teachers. By 1808 they regularly employed eleven preachers and thirty teachers who boasted of one thousand one hundred hearers, one hundred and ten communicants and six hundred children in their schools.² The society was not content merely to support preachers and early on agreed that it was a legitimate aspect of their work to erect buildings for worship.³ In the well-researched opinion of T.G.Crippen, this policy led to the eventual downfall of the London Itinerant Society, since they did not have sufficiently large resources to do the work of the Church Building Society⁴ and so were condemned to perpetual financial difficulty. They grew painfully, to the point of occupying fifty-five preaching stations but then in 1847 the society appears to have gone out of existence. No reason is given for the sudden silence that falls over its minutes.⁵

1 ibid., 18 July 1806 discussion regarding amalgamation with the Congregational Union was discontinued. In 1842 union with the London Board of Congregational Ministers was indefinitely postponed.

2 ibid., 15 January 1808.

3 ibid., 20 September 1797. Despite its non-sectarianism the churches formed were all Congregational.

4 T. Crippen, 'The London Itinerant Society', Trans. Congregational History Society vii (1918), 362

5 ibid., p.360.

4.2 The Early Years of the Home Missionary Society

Thomas Wilson's wish, in 1794, that there should be an itinerant system 'extended throughout the kingdom'¹ was not to be fulfilled by the Independent churches until 1819. Thomas Thompson, a member of the Stock Exchange was to be the catalyst which brought the Home Missionary Society into being. En route to a Bible Society meeting in Tunbridge Wells, Thompson had been made aware, first hand, of England's moral poverty. Shaken from his apathy and inspired by the work of overseas missionary societies, he called a meeting in London on 11 August 1819 to inaugurate a new society which would administer a general system of itinerancy throughout the kingdom and grant aid to local associations. It was an ill-chosen day, since many wealthy men were absent from London on holiday. Nonetheless, the formation of the society was greeted by evangelical Christians with general enthusiasm and it received adequate financial support.²

The motives which inspired the sponsors of the new work were a mixture of patriotism, condescending pity, hopes of the millenium and a desire to save souls. Without, they claimed, transgressing into politics,³ Christians were called upon 'on the ground of patriotism to convey, with all possible speed, to the lower orders of the people yet in ignorance, that knowledge, which is the only firm basis of National stability, and the only secure guarantee of internal tranquility, as well as that which alone can prepare them for their immortal destinies.'⁴ The lower orders

1 J. Wilson, Memoir of the Life and Character of Thomas Wilson (London, 1849), p. 144, and E. M., xxvii (1819), 335f.

2 A. Mearns, England for Christ (London, 1856), pp. 30-36.

3 Though rejecting the idea of political motivation, they demonstrate opposition to working class organisations, e.g. Home Missionary Society Magazine, xv (1834), 378-380.

4 Home Missionary Society Annual Report, (1831), 32 and J. Harris, Christian Patriotism, Sermon preached before Home Missionary Society (London, 1842).

were believed to be rushing into a state of 'barbarism'¹ and 'suffering from the demoralising and fatal effects of mental darkness and of a condition necessarily resulting from irreligion, degraded as low as any of those who in foreign and remote lands live and die estranged from God ...'²

The appeal was movingly sentimental. The cover of the Home Missionary Magazine for 1831 epitomised the spirit of the Home missionaries:

Our Country's weal shall urge our prayer,
 Father of Lights, Let Britain share
 Those gifts of grace Thou dost bestow
 Which through a Saviour's love do flow
 And by the Spirit's power, impart
 Peace to the conscience and the heart!
 Each wilderness shall resume
 The garden's culture and perfume
 Darkness and sin, and strife o'ercome
 And England bless'd our much Lov'd Home.

The glory of the latter day³ was to be hastened by the spreading of the gospel and Eden would be restored again through the work of societies like the Home Missionary Society.

The Home Missionary Society began its national network of itinerants in Sussex and Wiltshire, where it ordained Messrs. Bishop and Larter to do the work of evangelists.⁴ Within a year it was also assisting work in Oxfordshire, Cornwall, Devonshire and Sussex. The choice of these southern counties was not accidental. It was like its Baptist counterpart, self-consciously a rural missionary society and it remained so. They laboured under the conviction that the conversion of the lower orders in the villages was of strategic importance in the conversion of other classes in England.⁵

1 Mearns, op. cit., pp. 14-16.

2 H. M. S. Mag., xi (1830), 186-7.

3 H. M. S. Mag., i (1820), 108f; xv (1834), 230-231.
 For further patriotism see T. S. Raffles, Memoirs of the Life and Ministry of the Rev. Thomas Raffles (London, 1865), p. 292f.

4 Mearns, op. cit., p. 41.

5 H. M. S. Mag., iv (1823) Preface, i and ii and H. M. S. Annual Report, (1836) 26.

It was a perpetual temptation for the society to widen its aims and to become a rallying point for all types of evangelism. In its early days it engaged in evangelism among gipsies, hop-pickers, navvies and railway men. It used tents to preach to the poor of London. Furthermore, it spawned a free library service, set up a Ladies Auxiliary Village Clothing Society and started a Widows Fund.¹ But, wherever possible, the committee quickly retreated to their primary aim of village evangelism. To that end they gladly gave away their tents to the Christian Instruction Society in 1826 and they welcomed the formation of the London City Mission and the District Visiting Societies.²

In line with the policy of pure and simple evangelism among the rural population, the Home Missionary Society was reluctant to build chapels too hastily and for some years did not do so at all.³ They recognised that the potential converts of the society's agents were probably not in a position to offer much financial support to maintain a chapel building, so they avoided becoming responsible for this extra liability wherever possible. With equal insight, they recognised that they were engaged in a long-term work and they were doubtful that they would see much immediate success.⁴ But they may well have made their task more difficult by their condescending attitudes. The Annual Report for 1845 remarked that,

1 Mearns, op. cit., pp. 53-59.

2 H. M. S. Annual Report (1826), 16 and 18; (1828), 8 and (1836) 14; H. M. S. Mag., x (1829), 266-9 and xvii (1836), 1-14. See also H. D. Rack, 'Domestic Visitation; a Chapter in Early Nineteenth Century Evangelism,' Journal of Ecclesiastical History, xxiv (1973), 357-376.

3 H. M. S. Mag., vi (1825), 99f and x (1829), 13.

4 H. M. S. Annual Report, (1841), 21.

People living in the metropolis, or in large towns where there are so many subjects to excite the mental powers and call forth all their energies, can hardly understand the difficulty of moving the dull sluggish mass of mind, so frequently to be found among an agricultural population.

If anything, the report added, could bring such people intellectual improvement, it was the gospel of Christ.¹

Their agents, for the most part, came from the lower classes among whom the society worked. Robert Gribble of North Devon began as a Sunday School teacher in a village near to his home shortly after his conversion, when such a move was still a novelty.² He soon had three hundred children in the Sunday School and had collected an audience too for an evening service, to whom he read Burder's sermons.³ Gribble was a waggoner and his missionary work was carried out among the agricultural poor, for whom he felt a particular attachment.⁴ Not long after his conversion, which appears to have been spontaneous and without any human agency,⁵ he was dismissed from his job. It seems probable that his dismissal was connected with his zealous testimony to his new found faith, since a groom and a maid in the same household were soon converted through him.⁶

Gribble did not become a full-time agent of the Home Missionary Society until 1829, although he had been partially aided by them from the society's foundation.⁷ During the period when he was supported full time, he was sent to work in a part of Devon which had already been evangelised. Even so, he led a number of people to conversion, including

1 ibid., p. 13.

2 R. Gribble, Recollections of an Evangelist (London, 1858), p. 1.

3 G. Burder, Village Sermons i-vii (London, 1797-1816).

4 op. cit., p. 16 and p. 58.

5 ibid., p. 16.

6 ibid., pp. 16-20 and p. 37.

7 ibid., p. 55 and H. M. S. Annual Report, (1820), 16.

two men who themselves became missionaries once he had resigned from the society.¹ The reason for his resignation is obscure. He became concerned about prophetic teaching and believers' baptism, but neither of these seems to have been an issue of contention. His journal records that the Home Missionary Society Committee did not countenance his fellowship with a certain unnamed brother and Gribble's response was to think men of wealth too much paid heed to.²

Withdrawal from the Home Missionary Society in no way curtailed his evangelistic endeavours. He became a fervent preacher at revivals and wakes³ and felt himself to be like one of the primitive apostolic band.⁴ His 'circuit' was a twenty mile radius of Barnstaple, where he preached in about thirty villages. In the 1830s he began to erect chapels without the aid of borrowed money.⁵ Reviewing his activity for the years 1815-42, he could claim to have founded six 'companies of believers', been instrumental in introducing ten people to the ministry and seen between three and four hundred converted.⁶

The life of Robert Gribble illustrates some of the difficulties encountered by the Home Missionary Society committee. Their agents were not always very educated or sophisticated and, although this provided them with a cultural sympathy with those they were trying to convert, it did not smooth relations between the committee, with its middle class outlook, and its employees. This lack of common perspective was also revealed over the issues of ecumenism. The committee seems to have been far less sectarian than their agents.⁷

1 ibid., p. 67.

2 ibid., p. 66f.

3 ibid., p. 72f.

4 ibid., p. 77.

5 ibid., p. 123.

6 ibid., p. 212.

7 H. M. S. Mag., xvi (1835), 153.

The committee struggled with the independent mindedness of their agents by carefully providing their agents with detailed instructions.

They began,

In committing the destitute District of and its surrounding neighbourhood to your care, we think it necessary to inform you, that we are very anxious that you use your utmost exertions to introduce, as soon as possible, Evangelical knowledge among the whole of its inhabitants. We, therefore, strongly recommend you to open as many places for preaching as you can procure, and to occupy them as frequently as your time and strength will allow. To accomplish this we recommend you never preach three times at one place on the Lord's day, but if practicable, to divide your labours among three congregations, that "the incorruptible seed" may be more extensively scattered - to open schools for the instruction of Children and Adults - to distribute Tracts - to visit and converse with all villagers at their own habitations and diligently to use every effort to promote their moral and spiritual welfare.¹

Many of the subsequent rules consisted of an exposition of this statement. They show that the method of operation was economical; tracts were to be lent rather than given away.² Opposition was to be handled firmly and opponents warned that the Society would not permit them to breach the law of the land with impunity.³ A special tract was printed "To disturbers of Public Worship" for this benefit. A 'Catholic Spirit' was enjoined and the places to be occupied first were those 'destitute of evangelical instruction'. No unfriendly allusions or comparisons were to be made concerning existing churches and wherever possible the agent was encouraged to attend the worship of existing churches.⁴ Chapel building was discouraged unless the prior consent of the committee had been obtained.⁵ A final paragraph emphasised that the end of their missionary labours was to seek only the glory of God.

1 Instructions reprinted in H. M. S Mag., x (1829), 9-13.

2 ibid., rule 7. 3 ibid., rule 8. 4 ibid., rule 9.

5 ibid., rule 15.

Table 4.1 enumerates the growth of the society from its inception to its amalgamation with the Congregational Union. It demonstrates

Table 4.1¹

The Home Missionary Society, 1819-1839

	Centres ²	Villages	Hearers	Sunday Schools	Teachers	Children	Income ³
							716
1820	3						
1821		100	12,000			1,800	1,564
1822		159	15,000	47	177	2,000	2,810
1823		189	15,000	47	266	2,803	4,311
1824		212	18,723		318	3,103	6,694
1825		268	19,000	64	342	2,092	5,902
1826		289	20,658	65	380	3,226	5,987
1827							3,711
1828		268	20,000	60		3,000+	4,479
1829		182		77		3,500	4,751
1830		200				4,000	4,634
1831	35						4,744
1832	28						4,635
1833	26	189					4,862
1834	60	400				4,000	4,509
1835	65						4,381
1836	80						4,431 ³
1837	80						9,592 ³
1838	100		30,000	90	500	6,000	7,884
1839	110		50,000	130	540	7,000	6,736
			60,000			8,500	

1 H.M.S. Annual Reports

2 A centre was usually a conveniently situated larger village which has anything from four to fifteen other villages attached to it.

3 The increase in income is largely explained by the receipt of exceptionally large legacies.

initial growth until 1826 but then a period of stagnation, marked by declining funds and a declining number of agents until 1834. The sharp financial decline, which took place in 1826-27, was due to the commercial slump which hit the country.¹ By 1828 the financial problems were severe and the society was £2,000 in debt. By then the society's expenditure had been brought within the limits set by their yearly receipts but the accumulated debt still had to be cleared.²

In addition to the economic circumstances of the country having a powerful effect on the fortunes of the Home Missionary Society, there was another factor which made them financially vulnerable. If Thomas Thompson is to be believed, and the evidence would appear to support him, the society never secured an adequate financial basis when it began. He celebrated the raising of £50,000 for the work of the Home Missionary Society in the Annual Report of 1831 but added cautiously that most of it had been raised from the poorer classes.³ The previous year when the Wiltshire Association had become an official auxiliary of the Home Missionary Society, the society had expressed the wish for other associations to follow suit in order that a more general, combined and energetic system of co-operation would be brought about, which would raise double or treble the amount of money collected up to then.⁴ It promised that the money collected in this way would be returned to the County which had contributed it if necessary.⁵ But few associations were willing

1 H. M. S. Annual Report, (1826), 11 and (1827), 25.

2 ibid., (1828), 34-35.

3 ibid., (1831), 10.

4 ibid., (1830), 22.

5 This would have to some extent defeated the object of a more even distribution of finance over the UK and would have led the Home Missionary Society into the same problems as suffered by the Baptist Home Missionary Society prior to the revision of their rules in 1882. Its only advantage would have been if it had raised more money.

to take up the offer.

The society showed a modest recovery in the 1830s with the debt altogether liquidated by 1833.¹ In 1834 the committee commented that '... at no period of its existence did the Society ever stand in a more favourable position, both as it respects the state of its finances and the degree in which it has attained the esteem and confidence of the public'.² That year it was able to open eight new stations.

For the next few years it enjoyed relative financial prosperity, not least because of a huge increase in legacies left to it. But the warning shots had been fired and it was aware of its need long-term to ensure that it operated from a much more adequate financial basis. In the minds of some of its supporters that need led to the logical conclusion that closer co-operation with the Congregational Union was desirable and it was that issue which came to dominate and divide the next few years.

4.3 The Union with the Congregational Union

Thomas Thompson's vision for the Home Missionary Society was that it should be a catholic society which would embrace all who would wish to achieve its aims and co-operate with other agencies engaged in the same task. When chairing the Annual Meeting of the society in 1832 he boasted of 'the unsectarian character of the Society' and claimed 'they had no feeling toward any Christian denomination, other than that of love to all who loved our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity'.³ 'Controversy,' he argued, 'unfits us for the work we do.'⁴ And he pleaded that sectarian interests should be forgotten for the cause of Christ. The Home Missionary Society was thus, in theory, not an Independent society at its formation.

1 H. M. S. Annual Report, (1833), 11.

2 ibid., (1834), 21.

3 ibid., (1832). 9.

4 ibid., (1839), 13.

The society demonstrated its catholic spirit by its warm fraternal relations with other home missionary societies. In addition to the specialist societies,¹ there was a particularly warm relationship with the Baptist Home Missionary Society. Whenever possible, too, it boasted of the support it received from Members of the Church of England.² Tangible expression of its catholicity took the form of readily withdrawing from areas where an evangelical clergyman came to reside or where another evangelistic agency was already at work.³

In spite of this, a careful examination of the evidence suggests that its catholicity was, in practice, a myth. Four factors point to that conclusion. Firstly, since the Home Missionary Society allowed the boundaries of its operations to be defined by other missionary organisations, it was inevitably allowing them to give it a specific identity. Since it withdrew from places where Baptists and Anglicans were at work, it was, by inference, defining itself as a non-Baptist, non-Anglican society.

Secondly, despite the support of some members of the Church of England, it boasted, there was no real involvement by the Established Church in the Home Missionary Society. Thompson himself had said as much in announcing his warmest regards for 'their excellent brethren of the established church': when, he added, that 'he trusted that two thousand Evangelical ministers of that church would soon be unfettered and join them in their Evangelical labours'.⁴ To some members of the Church

1 For which see p. 168, footnote 2.

2 E.g. *ibid.*, (1835), 29. *E. M., N. S.* xii (1834), 539-41. They also made much of Sir Robert Peel's commendations of Dissenters, *H. M. S. Mag.*, xvi (1835), 322. For Peel's practical support see, J. Sibree and M. Caston, *op. cit.*, p. 339f.

3 *E.g., H. M. S. Annual Report*, (1825), 12f., & *H. M. S. Mag.*, xv (1834), 233.

4 *H. M. S. Annual Report*, (1832), 9.

of England, however, Thompson's wish was unlikely to be fulfilled for the very title of the society was an offence to them. The name, declared the Rector of St. Dunstan's in the West End of Midhurst, was an insult to 'the Christian nation and its accredited clergy'.¹ The opposition in this respect from members of the Church of England was to increase, particularly as, faced with the threat of Nonconformity, the Church of England itself became more aggressive.²

A third factor limiting the catholicity of the Home Missionary Society was the divorce between the unsectarian spirit of the hierarchy and the more aggressively sectarian attitudes of their agents. Despite their careful rules, the Home Missionary Society committee were embarrassed more than once by the zealous behaviour of a missionary in their attacks on the spiritual poverty of the Church of England clergy. The Rev. D. J. Burdett, Rector of Gilmorton, was not alone in protesting at the 'general abuse, frothy declamation and insolent assumption' which he believed had been hurled at him during a Home Missionary Society meeting at Lutterworth. In his eyes the particular incident was typical of the 'slandorous tricks ... so frequently employed ... for the purposes of vilifying the church and advancing "the interest" of Dissent'.³

The fourth, and most important factor, which casts doubt on the

- 1 Cited in Home Missionary Society Magazine, vii (1826), 13-16; v (1824), 300-302 and J.Bennett, The History of Dissenters during the last Thirty Years from 1808 to 1838 (London, 1839), p.326.
- 2 A.Hume, The Church of England: the Home Missionary to the Poor (London, 1862); J.Sandford, The Mission and Extension of the Church at Home (London, 1861); E.J.Speck, The Church Pastoral-Aid Society (London, 1881) and B.I.Coleman, 'Anglican Church Extension and Related Movements: 1800-1860' (Cambridge University Ph.D. thesis, 1966).
- 3 D.J.Burdett, The Home Missionary Society - Dissenting Slander Exposed or a Rat Lugged out of his lurking place. Correspondence printed in the Leicester Journal for 1839. Also H.M.S.Mag., xvi (1835), 153.

claim of the Home Missionary Society to catholicity is the fact that right from the beginning most of its personnel and support came from the Independents. The chairman, speakers and movers of resolutions at the Annual Meetings represented many denominations but this public image did not reflect the private reality.

The society was governed by two sets of directors, one of which was confined to London and the other of which represented the rest of the country. The London committee was composed of forty members, of whom usually just over half were laymen and the rest ministers. An analysis of the ministers who served on the committee during the first twenty-five years of its history shows that eighty-one men served. Of these all but twelve are clearly identifiable as Independent ministers.¹ The chief non-Congregational contribution came from the Calvinistic Methodists. Furthermore, any churches founded by the Home Missionary Society had been Congregational.² The reality of the matter was expressed by the Rev. George Smith in the debate on the union of the Home Missionary Society with the Congregational Union. 'Nine tenths of its support, after all that might be said of catholicity, came from Congregational churches. If that support, then, were withdrawn or turned into a new channel, it must come to an end...'³

It had always been the intention of the Congregational Union, formed in 1831, 'to promote Evangelical Religion, in connection with the Congregational Denomination' without compromising the independence of the

1 Of the sixty-nine Independent ministers one, the Rev. R. Ainslie, left the denomination and two, the Rev. G. Smith, a Tent Methodist, and the Rev. T. Stevenson, ordained by the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion, entered the denomination from elsewhere. Source of information is 'The List of Congregational Ministers, maintained at The Memorial Hall, London.

2 E.M., xviii (1840), 65.

3 Cited in A. Peel, These Hundred Years (London, 1931), p.113.

churches or prejudicing the work already undertaken by existing associations and institutions. By 1835 there was still a sense of incompleteness in the Union because the missionary objective had found no channel of expression. The discussion at the Union meetings that year recognised the immense work to be done at home and yet decided, in view of what was already being done for home missions, to channel their energies into the formation of a Colonial Society.¹

The needs of the Home Mission field were not to be silenced, however, and the growth of Tractarianism soon gave the home cause added urgency. The 1837 Union meetings passed a resolution urging the committee to discuss 'the practicability and expediency of a general system of home missionary operations, in connection with our denomination'.² They were aware that it was a sensitive issue because the Congregational Union could not appear to be compromising the principle of Independency by taking over existing work. Nonetheless, if the resolution were to be carried into effect, it would mean that negotiations would have to commence with the Home Missionary Society.

The issue proved as provocative as the committee had feared and all their wisdom was needed to maintain good fellowship among the interested parties. The Home Missionary Society Magazine cheerfully reported the resolutions of the Congregational Union that 'some plan by which this Union might promote Home Missionary efforts in harmony with other organisations at present existing' should be given attention.³ But the directors of the Home Missionary Society seemed inflexible⁴ and were unwilling to admit

1 ibid., pp. 98-101.

2 Mearns, op.cit., p.78.

3 H.M.S. Magazine, NS. iii (1838), 119.

4 Waddington, op.cit., pp.524-526. Thompson was not an inflexible as many of his committee.

thay they were, de facto, a Congregational society. They insisted on maintaining their independence and thus preserving their non-sectarian stance.

The Congregational Union was not to be shaken from its determination to pursue some home missionary enterprise. Consequently, it pressed ahead with a conference called to discuss a proposed plan on 9-10 October 1839 in Birmingham with Thomas Raffles in the chair. The degree of their sectarian intent became apparent at that conference. It was time, they agreed, for Congregational churches to reap the benefit of home missionary work which was already being done; it was time to multiply the churches expressing a pure faith and to show that Congregational principles worked.¹ The Rev. Algernon Wells, secretary to the Congregational Union, had prepared the draft plan, the final part of which contained a resolution that, 'The Congregational Union ... undertake a Home Mission under the designation of the Home Mission of the Congregational Union of England and Wales.'²

The debate was prolonged and its outcome was not a foregone conclusion. The primary issue of the discussion was how a denominational society could be squared with the belief in catholicity. Dr. Redford of Worcester argued that denominationalism and catholicity were not opposed to each other, indeed congregationalism was the most catholic denomination there was. The Home Missionary Society suffered, he said, not because it was too catholic but not catholic enough. Dr Joseph Fletcher protested that up till then the Congregationalists 'have been

1 The Congregational Magazine, NS iii (1839), 681. & Peel, opt.cit., p. 109f.

2 Minutes of the Special Adjourned Meeting of the Ninth Annual Assembly of the Congregational Union, 9-10 Oct. 1839. The plan was reprinted in Con. Mag., NS iii (1839), 677-686.

doing everybody's work but our own, (we have been) the common fags of the whole Christian workshop'.¹ Now he believed the time had come to amend and extend their own Congregational principles. John Angell James and George Smith argued that there was nothing to be gained from non-sectarianism since the support for the work of the Home Missionary Society came, almost exclusively, from the Congregationalists. Smith added that the Home Missionary Society lacked the confidence of Congregationalism as a whole and consequently failed to achieve what was expected of it.² Dr. Matheson agreed that Congregationalism was the most Catholic denomination there was and yet it could not continue to have its liberty of action curtailed by denominations who were opposed to its principles.

There was less agreement, to begin with, on the second issue of debate which was how closely the new home missionary organisation should be tied to the recently formed Congregational Union. A number of the existing Independent associations had not become, and had no intention of becoming, members of the Congregational Union, even though they were happy to support the Home Missionary Society. The Rev. R. Burls spoke for them and proposed that the new Congregational Society should not be tied to the Congregational Union. He was persuasive and the influential John Angell James was inclined to support him. It was the dramatic intervention of Algernon Wells which decisively tipped the balance in favour of the new organisation being part of the Union. With tears he argued that, without a home missionary work, the Congregational Union would soon collapse. Faced with such a prospect, the meeting voted in favour of Wells' scheme and judged it 'eminently satisfactory'.

1 . Peel, op. cit., p. 111.

2 Waddington, op. cit., p. 526.

Since the new home missionary organisation was now planned, and they hoped to be able to introduce it in the Spring, the destiny of the Home Missionary Society was an urgent question. During the course of the October Assembly, John Blackburn had announced that the Home Missionary Society was not willing to become a constituent member of the Congregational Union.¹ In the months that followed, strong opinions were expressed by members of the Home Missionary Society for and against its amalgamation with the Congregational Union. At one stage it looked as if the Home Missionary Society was going stubbornly to refuse even to discuss the issue with the Congregational Union.²

There were, however, two overwhelming reasons why either an amalgamation or a compromise between the two parties was inevitable. Firstly, the duplication involved if two societies existed in the way envisaged was not only unnecessary but ridiculous. Secondly, and even more to the point, the Home Missionary Society committee were aware that a refusal to co-operate was tantamount to signing their own death warrant; since, in practice, as had been disclosed, virtually all their support did come from the Congregationalists. It was a fair assumption that their existing support would in future be largely redirected to the Congregational Union; leaving the Home Missionary Society to an embarrassing and painful suicide. The determination of the Congregational Union to press ahead really left the Home Missionary Society no choice in the matter.³

1 Peel, op. cit., p. 113.

2 E. M., xviii (1840), 64-66 and Waddington, op. cit., p. 526.

3 Con. Mag., N S iv (1840), 61f. Dale's explanation that the Home Missionary Society had drifted into financial difficulty and was being rescued by the Congregational Union is partial. Home Missionary Society finances for 1837-39 were good. Potential financial problems or rather a recurrence of their earlier financial problems were inevitable in view of the Congregational Union's attitude. Dale, op. cit., p. 716f.

Once the true position became clear to the Home Missionary Society, negotiations were opened and a face-saving compromise between the two parties was reached. It was proposed that rule 4 of the Home Missionary Society regulations be changed so that its relation to the Congregational Union be made explicit. The officers of the Home Missionary Society were to become ex officio members of the Congregational Union Council and vice versa.¹ The Home Missionary Society would report annually to the Congregational Union Assembly and a new pattern of relationships with the county associations would be worked out.²

By the time the Home Missionary Society held its annual meeting all was prepared for 'cordial co-operation' to be introduced. The public presentation of the new position was well managed and no public hint of the preceding months of controversy was allowed to show itself. Members of other denominations, such as Charles Hindley, MP, a Unitarian, who chaired the meeting, and the Rev. T. Archer, a Presbyterian, expressed delight at the proposed union. The salvation of souls was the overriding objective and if more souls could be saved by the denominationalising of a non-sectarian organisation, who were they to hinder it?³ John Angell James, who had been an ardent advocate of the idea of the Congregational Union,⁴ made his first appearance at an Home Missionary Society meeting, in order to wish the marriage well, despite the fact that he was supposed to be recuperating from an illness. To him it was a welcome advance in Congregational policy.

1 H. M. S. Annual Report, (1840), p. 22 and Con. Mag., N. S. iv (1840), 255-259.

2 ibid., (1841) Appendix F, pp. 75-82.

3 H. M. S. Annual Report, (1840), 16.

4 The Life and Letters of John Angell James, ed. R. W. Dale (London, 1849), p. 197ff.

Only Dr. Redford seems to have entered anything other than a congratulatory note. Whilst he firmly believed the proposed steps were right and that the increased co-operation would lead to the augmentation of home missionary work, he doubted whether the connexion would greatly increase the finances of the Home Missionary Society. Redford pointed out that marriages were entered into for better or worse and this one was to be no different.¹ In the light of subsequent events, his comments were the most pertinent ones made on that euphoric day.

There were three main changes introduced to the tactics of the Home Missionary Society by the union. Firstly, the policy of the society became much more church centred and they became less reluctant to engage in church building. Secondly, in theory, towns became as important as villages. Thirdly, although lay agents could still be employed without education, it was considered henceforth indispensable to train ministerial missionaries.² Within a year it was reported that home missionary candidates were being required to pass examinations in Greek, Popery; Theology, Historical Theology, Christian Evidences and related subjects.³ The injection of these academic disciplines into the training programme of evangelists provided such training with a tendency towards intellectualism which in the long term resulted in Congregational ministers being educated beyond the level required for them to maintain their ability to communicate with the mass of people on a proper level.

4.4. The Home Missionary Society and the Congregational Union (1840-1858)

By the time the connexion between the Home Missionary Society and the Congregational Union had taken place, it was generally believed that a new era was being entered which would provide the Congregationalists with unparalleled opportunity. They were united for the cause of Christ and

1 H.M.S. Annual Report, (1840), 23f.

2 Peel, op.cit., p.110 and H.M.S. Magazine, NS i (1841), 3-6.

3 H.M.S. Magazine, NS i (1841), 191f.

the restoration of England¹ and 'union was strength (whereas) division was feebleness (and) might be ruin'.² The connexion had not taken place 'for a name or show, but for great practical ends'³ and it was the extent to which those ends were achieved by which the union would be judged.

The first year was spent in reorganisation and in seeking to secure fuller and smoother co-operation with the Associations. At the end of that year the committee expressed modest optimism for although 'the sanguine expectations of some friends may not have been realised to their full extent, there has been such an amount of success as to call for devout thanksgiving to God'.⁴ The funds had risen by approximately twenty-five per cent and they believed that the cause of Home was 'beginning to assume its legitimate importance among the objects receiving generous aid from the churches of Christ'.⁵

For the next few years the reformed Home Missionary Society committee laboured under the impression that a larger increase in support would follow. The work was allowed to expand until in 1844 they were reporting that they had never had such a large hearing in the country.⁶ Their success oscillated around this point for a few years but their progress was not as secure as they pretended.

1 A Mearns, op.cit., p.89.

2 H.M.S.Mag., NS i (1841), 3.

3 ibid., NS v (1840), 137-140 contains the letter to the Congregational churches announcing the union.

4 H.M.S. Annual Report, (1841), 10.

5 ibid., pp.16 & 18.

6 That year they estimated that they had 52,423 hearers and 14,760 in their Sunday Schools. 630 members were added to the churches and 63 new places opened. ibid., (1844), 14f.

Whilst boasting of the number of new causes opened, they disguised the number of situations terminated. In 1844 they announced that they had occupied sixty-three new places, but the overall figures only show an expansion of nine new villages added to their lists. They thus disguised the fact that they had failed to continue their work in fifty-four villages. The number of agents fluctuated from year to year by a significant number.¹

More seriously, the expansion had taken place in the hope that additional income would be forthcoming but the hope was not to be fulfilled. When the society met to celebrate its twenty-fifth anniversary, it had to report that its account was £2,000 overdrawn.² A special effort was made that year and the debt was reduced to £500 by the next annual meeting. The committee still had visions of expansion and recommended a new departure in its method that year. It proposed setting aside £500 per annum to commence a new form of lay agency in the guise of Scripture Readers or Colporteurs.³

The fact of the matter was that the Home Missionary Society was never to enjoy as much income as they had received in 1842 and 1844 again. With only a few minor exceptional years their income was to demonstrate a steady decline until 1858.⁴

1 In 1845 they had 153 agents and in 1846 only 130.

2 H.M.S. Annual Report, (1844).

3 H.M.S. Annual Report, (1845), pp.17 & 70.

4 The exceptions were 1851, 1853 (when the increase was £181) and 1855. The decline is not easily explicable in terms of the overall economic situation. It is more satisfactory to relate it to the internal politics and situation of the churches. Recognising the complexity of any such measurements and admitting some clear exceptions, e.g. 1826, there seems little relationship between the prosperity of the Home Missionary Society and the standard of living. Sources for the standard of living, P. Matthias, The First Industrial Nation (London, 1965), pp. 213-223 and 225-226 and E.J.Hobsbawm, Labouring Men (London, 1968 edn.), pp.64-104.

It was obvious to members of the Congregational Union that some improvement in the situation was required and the answer seemed to lie, for many, in a further step of unity. It was not simply the conditions of the Home Missionary Society which needed improving, but the conditions of societies engaged in related tasks, that is to say, the Colonial Missionary Society, formed in 1836, and the Irish Evangelical Society which had been formed in 1814. It was agreed 'that it is not advisable that the names, objects, funds, regulations or agencies of these institutions should be merged and blended in one entirely new society.'¹ But it was deemed advisable that a much more united presentation of the case for missions should be made to the churches on behalf of the three societies and in 1846 the Congregational Union agreed to take steps to achieve this aim.

To fulfil this rationalisation it was proposed to recommend to the churches that an annual collection be held for the 'British Missions', as they came to be known, in the month of October. There would also be one Board of Directors and one annual report to the Congregational Union. Each society was to keep its own secretary, although that too was shortly to be unified when the Rev. E.A. Dunn retired as secretary to the Home Missionary Society in 1847² and was replaced by the Rev. James W. Massie. Only the treasurers remained separate after that time. By 1848 the reorganisation was complete.

No improvement in the interests of the Home Missionary Society followed this reorganisation. An examination of the activities and finances shows that both were reduced in size in the years that followed. The Home Missionary Society was not even able to maintain the size it had reached in 1846, let alone enjoy the hoped for expansion.

1 Congregational Year Book, (1846), 59f.

2 British Missions, Annual Report, (1847), p.15.

A number of explanations have been put forward to explain this decline. Andrew Mearns suggested that the national drain on resources due to the Crimea War¹ was responsible. But this is the least convincing of all the explanations, in view of the fact that the decline was well advanced before the war was contemplated. The period during which the Home Missionary Society declined spanned the years of prosperity in the late 1840s, as well as the years when Britain was progressing to the brink of war, which broke out in 1854.

Table 4.2

The Home Missionary Society, 1840-58

	Agents		Villages	Hearers	Sunday Schools	Teachers	Children	Income £
	Full Time	- Aided						
1840	58	+ 62		60,000	130	580	8,500	6,285
1841	65	+ 71	578	40,137	173	1,260	9,799	8,603
1842		149	654	48,000	204	1,476	11,800	12,671
1843		150	662	50,000	218	1,757	13,445	7,862
1844		145	671	52,423	222	1,971	14,760	11,315
1845		153	647	50,500	223	1,959	14,383	8,164
1846		130	624	50,275	210	1,984	15,007	7,176
1847	47		517	51,169	192	1,726	13,722	6,841
1848	50		495	47,747	189	1,544	13,719	6,572
1849	52	+ 71	513	48,886	197	1,815	14,462	6,445
1850		116	440	41,000		1,652	12,700	6,407
1851		118		40,000		1,691	12,900	8,985
1852	47	+ 60	434	40,348	175	1,679	12,782	5,646
1853	47		389	36,000		1,600	13,000	5,827
1854	51	+ 63	397	34,801	172	1,673	13,171	5,341
1855	51	+ 63	386	30,758			13,401	7,008
1856	54	+ 56						5,050
1857	50	+ 54						7,526
1858	46	+ 63	345	29,191	170	1,808	13,797	4,683

1 Mearns, op.cit., p.107f.

It is more probable that the funds which people wished to contribute to home evangelisation were being diverted elsewhere. In particular there were two special sources of temptation ready to hand for Congregationalists. On the one hand there were the local associations who sponsored a good deal of evangelistic work and who often appeared to think that a national organisation was irrelevant. It was precisely to supply the chief defect of voluntaryism, the uneven distribution of resources, that the Home Missionary Society was brought into existence. It seems, however, as if it were easier for most people to envisage the needs of their immediate area and, since those needs were immense, the needs of other areas were often neglected.¹

On the other hand funds were being diverted into the building of chapels, with the result that such funds were not available for aggressive work. Thomas Wilson was the early pioneer of Congregational Chapel building, having been converted to the view that the building of chapels was a means to growth.² He was the obvious choice for the treasurership of the Metropolitan Chapel Fund Association when it was inaugurated in 1837. From that society there emerged the London Congregational Chapel Building Society in 1848. The denomination as a whole was not far behind in this development and an English Congregational Chapel Building Society was constituted at the Spring Assembly of the Congregational Union in 1853.

1 H. M. S. Annual Report, (1841), pp. 69-74 and 90-93.

2 J. Wilson, op. cit., ch. 12.

3 E. M., NS xxxi (1853), 74-78 and Dale, History, p. 719.

Many believed that, since London had a population of two and a half million but only enough accommodation in churches and chapels for seven hundred thousand, the provision of church and chapel accommodation was lamentably inadequate. An article in The Evangelical Magazine estimated that five hundred new places of worship were required in London to make it comparable in this respect with most other towns. And with a population growing at the rate of forty thousand a year, the need would become even more pressing. Any evangelistic agency was only of value, the article argued, in so far as it induced people to attend worship and consequently there needed to be places for people to attend.¹

It was an attractive statement but one which was not totally convincing. Thomas Chalmers had pointed out a decade earlier that London had spent £1 million on the building of churches but the net result was that preachers were preaching to empty churches. He claimed,

They were greatly mortified at this; but the reason is obvious. They have no adequate notion of the aggressive system - not enough of the district agency wrought by Christian elders and laymen. And without these aggressive operations, you never will succeed in bringing out² the masses of a city population to attend on Gospel ordinances.

Somehow the proponents of chapel building thought they had adequately met Chalmers' structures in saying,

It is lamentably true, that many of the people do not attend our places of worship when they are erected; but this only lessens without destroying the power for good which such places exert upon the surrounding neighbourhood, and rather³ increases than diminishes the necessity for their erection.

1 E. M., NS xxxi (1853), 74-78.

2 Cited in H. M. S. Magazine, NS iv (1844), 212-5.

3 E. M., NS xxxiii (1853), 7.

The logic of this position is mystifying and the conclusion is debatable. However, in the present context the point is neither to justify nor oppose the value of chapel building; it is to comment that it was inevitable that when Congregationalism entered its great phase of chapel building it would leave more directly aggressive work devoid of funds.¹

The lack of finance was symptomatic of greater problems faced by the Home Missionary Society. The relationship between the Home Missionary Society, the other affiliated societies and the Congregational Union had never been clearly defined and the imprecision led to a feeling of unease in all the parties concerned. Where did the final responsibility lie for policy, raising funds and the development of the society? A sub-committee was appointed to investigate the issue and report to the 1852 Congregational Union Assembly in order that greater efficiency could be achieved. Their judgment was that the relationship was 'friendly, sympathetic and encouraging' in character but involved no authoritative control over the societies by the Congregational Union. Moral influence alone was to be brought to bear.²

The report did nothing to answer the fundamental questions or produce greater efficiency. The income of the Home Missionary Society for 1856 was the lowest it had received for twenty years. The following year the Annual Report admitted that 'the plan devised sixteen years ago for simultaneous collections for these missions has not been as productive as its projectors had hoped'.³ Only three hundred and twenty churches, including ten in Ireland and twenty one in Wales, contributed to the work of British Missions. Probably a thousand other Congregational churches failed to see it as their responsibility.

1 Mearns, op. cit., p. 108.

2 C. Y. B., (1852), p. 83 and p. 90.

3 ibid., (1857), p. 26.

By 1858 discontent about the relationship between the Congregational Union and its affiliated bodies was widespread. It was doubtless heightened by John Campbell's role, as editor of the denomination's magazines, in the Rivulet Controversy which was raging at the time,¹ and that issue doubtless had an effect on the eventual solution to the problem. To Peel, the Congregational Union was almost wrecked because it had overloaded the ship and taken on far more than it was capable of adequately controlling. Dale and Baldwin Brown spoke of the problem in terms of control. If the Congregational Union was really to exercise any leadership over the societies, the whole of the Congregational Union Assembly meetings would have to be devoted to them. But such a step was impossible, even if it had been desirable.² The reports, therefore, lengthy enough as they were, were mere window dressing.

The 1852 answer to the question of the relationship was no longer held to be adequate. Consequently a new investigative sub-committee was appointed, consisting of R. W. Dale, who had served on the 1852 sub-committee, N. Hall, Rice Hopkins and J. G. Rogers.³ After 'a calm, candid and prayerful consideration of the matter', they unanimously recommended to the assembly that,

while firmly adhering to the principles which the Congregational Union has always maintained on the voluntary support of religion and education ... under the existing circumstances of a diversity of judgment among the members of the Union respecting the connexion between the affiliated Societies and the Union, it is desirable that those societies should be placed on an independent footing in the hope that this change may prove practically advantageous alike to the unions and the Institutions.⁴

1 A. Peel, op. cit., 216-235 and R. Ferguson and A. M. Brown, Life and Labours of John Campbell, DD (London, 1867), pp. 366-376.

2 Dale, History, p. 719f and A. Peel, op. cit., 214f.

3 C. Y. B., (1858), p. 44f.

4 ibid., p. 60.

The membership of the committees were once again separated. Occasional statements by the affiliated societies to the Congregational Union were still welcomed but annual reports were no longer required. And the Congregational Union pledged itself not to repeat its failures in the case of other societies. In future they were to 'stand in friendly relation only to the Union, not being subject, in any degree, to legislative control or official interference.'¹ Denominationalism had failed to produce the fruits it longed to see in the field of Home missions and it was now the responsibility of the Home Missionary Society, who had only entered the union reluctantly in the first place, to see if it would fare better independently.

4.5. The Temporary Revival of the independent Home Missionary Society

The proposer of the motion to disaffiliate the societies from the Congregational Union was Samuel Morley and the seconder was R. W. Dale. Samuel Morley, a merchant in the City of London, who later became Liberal MP for Nottingham and then Bristol, has been aptly described by Clyde Binfield as 'Nonconformity's representative layman'.² Morley championed many philanthropic causes and, at this critical juncture in the history of the Home Missionary Society, he invested his energies and finance in its affairs and was responsible for its revival.

A number of letters written by James Massie, secretary of the Home Missionary Society, to Joshua Wilson in 1858 shows the Home Missionary Society to have been in a critical position. The society owed its Bankers £1,000. Joshua Wilson was given four reasons for the deficit.³ Several contingent contributions had not been received; the British Missions

1. ibid., emphasis mine.

2. C. Binfield, George Williams and the YMCA (London, 1973), p.231.

3. Letter; Memorial Hall Library, MS, 17 June 1858.

collection for the previous years had been small; a number of the long-standing original subscribers had died and they had failed to cut back their operations earlier in the year in the hope that increased funds would arrive later that year. Joshua Wilson did not feel obliged to make a swift reply which caused Massie some concern and added to his existing anxieties, created by the long absences of Thomas Thompson, who was still the society's Treasurer, from the society's affairs.¹ Not until September did Wilson assist by contributing £1,000² and only in November could Massie declare the debt finally cleared.³

It was thus a demoralised society, led by aged people and devoid of adequate finance that Samuel Morley inherited. He became its Treasurer in 1858 and quickly persuaded the Rev. J. H. Wilson of the Albion Street Mission in Aberdeen to work with him in the capacity of secretary. Immediately they set about visiting the stations in order to acquaint themselves with the work. After a year or so they had formulated their ideas and were ready to announce their plans to the churches at large. A Circular Letter⁴ was issued inviting people to a Conference on 22 November 1860 at the Congregational Library to discuss the matter.

The letter revealed that the commitment of the Home Missionary Society was still to rural England. This left the Congregational Union free to deal with the large towns.⁵ The Home Missionary Society would choose new and important fields of labour and sustain ministers in them until they could become independent. Villages were to be grouped together and the united stations were to form mission churches. Agents were to be employed in districts as Evangelists.

1 ibid., 10 July, 1858.

2 ibid., 20 September, 1858.

3 ibid., 24 November 1858.

4 Circular Letter, 7 November, 1860, Memorial Hall Library.

5 C. Binfield, So Down to Prayers (London, 1977), p.15f.

Morley was especially enthusiastic about the use of lay agency¹ even though the Circular Letter made it clear that such evangelists would be subordinate to the regular ministry. The men would be especially trained for the task and institutes in Bristol and Nottingham were opened for the purpose.² It was even recommended that each church should have its own evangelist. It was never intended that these men would form churches, so much as make converts and take them to the mission churches which had been constituted in the centre of a group of villages. There was a fear that some might use the office of an evangelist merely as a stepping stone to a regular ministry but such a view was strongly discouraged. The evangelist was to be distinguished from the pastor as much as possible, both by his training and his expected mode of operation.³ The letter was detailed by the Home Missionary Society Committee in the following terms,

That while the Committee would say nothing to depreciate or discourage preaching yet it felt that the Evangelist should give himself first and chiefly, to house-visitation, personal contact with the individual and the family, Christian Instruction in the form of Scripture readings, exposition and prayer, Cottage services or meetings in given localities and suitable rooms and whatever else his heart may prompt under the influence of the Spirit of truth and love. 4.

Morley's belief that the time was ripe for advance and renewed aggression was not shared by all. John Sugden of High Street, Lancaster, doubted whether anything had really changed. Nothing less than a thorough re-organisation of Congregational effort in one united efficient system where large churches planted smaller churches would excite him.⁵

1 E.Hodder, The Life of Samuel Morley (London, 1887), p.143.

2 A.Mearns, op.cit., p.132f and E.Hodder, op.cit., p.159.

3 ibid., p.131f.

4 Circular Letter, Suggestion 3.

5 Letters in response to the Home Missionary Society by John Sugden, 21 July 1860 and 6 August 1860, Ms, Memorial Hall Library.

Still others were now engaged in battles other than the battle for home evangelisation; battles of a political or social nature.

In the face of this criticism and indifference Morley's achievement in bringing some measure of rejuvenation to the Home Missionary Society is commendable. The achievement was a three-fold one. Firstly, he raised the level of financial support for the Home Missionary Society from £10,000 in 1860 to £25,000 in 1878.¹

Secondly, he increased the amount of activity in which the society was engaged. When Morley assumed responsibility for the work, the Home Missionary Society was active in one hundred stations. Within three years that had risen to one hundred and twelve stations with fifty evangelists going to three hundred and eight new towns or villages with the result that six hundred and eighty-five persons were added to the church that year.² The work continued to progress steadily until 1878, the year in which further changes in the administration of the society took place. The Home Missionary Society jubilantly reported in that year that they had supported one hundred and thirty-four home mission pastors and one hundred evangelists who had worked in one thousand and thirty villages and hamlets on one hundred and forty-one mission stations, with seven hundred and seventy-three chapels or mission rooms at their disposal for the benefit of their 47,395 hearers. They could boast of one thousand additions to the churches through their work that year.³ The Home Missionary Society had sometimes boasted larger numbers of hearers but never had they exhibited more prosperity and fruitfulness.

1 Peel, op.cit., p.237 and Hodder, op.cit., p.134. The figures given by Mearns are much lower but do not include the funds raised in conjunction with the Home Missionary Society by the Associations.

2 Mearns, op.cit., p.138.

3 ibid., p.138.

The third achievement of Morley was to maintain good relationships with the Congregational Union. The Union soon recognised that the re-organisation of the home missionary work had been beneficial because it had re-emphasised the responsibility of the County Associations in the task.¹ The Congregational Union continued to hear of the work with interest and gave it all the encouragement it could.² Morley, was, of course, thoroughly committed to the work of the Congregational Union and involved in many aspects of its life. When, therefore, the time came for the Home Missionary Society to become once more a part of the Congregational Union, although there was still some debate, the incorporation of the society in the Union was far less divisive than it had been in 1840.

It seems likely that the fresh impetus given to the work of the Home Missionary Society in 1860 owed something to the 1859 revival. Its reinvigoration occurred in the context of a tremendous efflorescence of evangelistic activity which followed the revival.³ In its official pronouncements the Congregationalists expressed gratitude for the revival,⁴ although privately their generally cautious religious character would have somewhat tempered this welcome. The documents of the Home Missionary Society for this period do not trace any explicit connection between the 1859 revival and its own renewal, but the general awakening could not but have aided the objectives of the Home Missionary Society.

1 Cited by Peel, op.cit., p.238, C.Y.B., (1861), 12.

2 C.Y.B., (1865), 351f. Details of the co-operation are given.

3 See G.E.Morgan, R.C.Morgan: His Life and Times (London, 1909), and I.Sellars, 'Liverpool Nonconformity 1786-1914', (Keele University Ph.D. Thesis, 1968), p.24.

4 J.E.Orr, The Second Evangelical Awakening in Britain (London, 1949), p.192.

Even if the 1859 revival did provide the stimulus needed to launch the work of the Home Missionary Society on a new plain, its continuing success is to be owed to the energetic work, shrewd management and genial personality of Samuel Morley.

4.6. The Congregational Style of Home Missions at the End of the Century

In the closing decades of the nineteenth century the Congregationalists demonstrate change in three respects: in respect to theology, the methodology of evangelism and administration.

Theologically, as with the other nonconformist bodies, they became broader in sympathy, less evangelical and less biblically based in their thinking.¹ Reflecting on fifty years of Congregationalism, J. Stoughton was quick to recognise the advances made in the denomination during those years. The church, he felt, had a better understanding of theology; they were more tolerant with those who differed from them; Christianity was related more to everyday life; Christology was more balanced and there was much more activity than at any previous time. But Stoughton was also aware that there had been losses. He named them as a loss of simplicity of life, a loss of doctrinal content in preaching and in church government, which was now based on expediency rather than Scripture; and a loss of prayer meetings.² Furthermore, he did not dissent when a friend lamented the diminished sense of sin and so a diminished sense of salvation; a depreciation of doctrine; a lack of real preaching and directness in dealing with souls and a neglect of the need for conversion, with a consequent breaking down of the barriers which separate the church from the world.³

1 J.W.Grant, Free Churchmanship in England, 1870-1940 (London, nd), especially p.71f.

2 Stoughton, op.cit., pp.82-84.

3 ibid., p.90.

The movement towards a less rigid theological view had begun in the 1850s when those in the ascendency in the leadership of the Congregational Union believed it right to permit 'a little latitude' in doctrinal belief.¹ By the time that James Baldwin Brown became the Chairman of the Congregational Union in 1878, according to his biography, rigid orthodoxy had been defeated, Calvinism was banished and the Gospel had taken on a large and inclusive character.² The more tolerant theological perspective was sufficiently well established for the Congregational Union to elect Edward White, who had previously been regarded with much suspicion because of his publications on doctrine, as its Chairman in 1886.³

The fruit of the tolerant spirit is to be seen in the work of a minister like C. Silvester Horne, who imbibed the teachings of J. Baldwin Brown. Horne became the leading figure of the Congregational Forward Movement and was vigorously engaged in wide-ranging mission work based on Whitfield's Tabernacle. But by then the distinction between evangelism and social action had become blurred and politics was regarded as essential to mission as preaching had been regarded as essential by an earlier generation. He entered Parliament as a member for Ipswich in 1910 but his sympathies were too broad, even for some of his own mission council, with the result that he felt obliged to resign from the ministry of Whitfield's Tabernacle in 1914.⁴

The broadening theological base did not lessen the Congregationalists' commitment to home mission, although it altered the terms on which that mission was conducted. It changed the message which was preached and

1 Brewin Grant, The Dissenting World, An Autobiography (London and Sheffield, 1869), pp. 170-173.

2 In Memoriam, James Baldwin Brown ed. Elizabeth Baldwin Brown (London, 1884), pp. 26-30.

3 F.A. Freer, Edward White, His Life and Work (London, 1902), p. 187.

4 Binfield, So Down to Prayers, pp. 199-205.

made them far less confident about the methods to be adopted.

Moody and Sankey's visits to England received some active support among Congregationalists. R.W.Dale was prominent among their supporters and publically remonstrated with Archbishop Tait who had expressed a negative attitude towards the American evangelists.¹ One wonders how much of what Dale had to say to Tait was intended for Congregational ears as well. Lay evangelism, Dale pointed out, was no innovation among the free churches. To a converted drunkard, he said, whether the Archbishop sanctioned the visit or not would be seen as entirely irrelevant. The changes which Tait wished to see would, in fact, so alter the whole nature of Moody and Sankey's approach as to kill their distinctiveness altogether. The most important issue, argued Dale, was not Moody's theory of repentance but that men were actually led to repent under his preaching. Dale concluded,

The history of religious thought and life in England during the last century is familiar to the Archbishop of Canterbury. He knows that this country was rescued from atheism - not by scholarly and dignified Boyle lectures, where learning and logic, entombed in stately folios, sleep the sleep of the just in great libraries - but by the faith and zeal of the evangelists who did their work without the "official sanction" of the clergy. 1

A number of those who espoused broader theological views assisted Moody. Edward White was among them and even counselled in the Enquiry Room.³ Still others, like J. Hirst Hollowell addressing the Nottinghamshire Association of Congregational Ministers and Deacons, gave cautiously apologetic addresses, pleading that in spite of the extraordinary nature

1 R.W.Dale, The Day of Salvation (London and Birmingham, 1875).

2 ibid., p.23.

3 Freer, op.cit., p.180.

of Moody's approach he should be assessed on merit and not by prejudice.¹

The most enduring positive legacy which Moody bequeathed to the Congregationalists was that some preachers and even more churches adopted special missions as a strategy for evangelism. Dale tried to place himself in the role of a missionary before concluding that that was not where his gifts lay.² Almost a decade later R.F.Horton, of Hampstead, drew his inspiration for mission work from Moody.³ He began his own itinerant work with a week of mission services in his own church, during which 'some remarkable things happened', which led to his receiving a number of other requests to conduct missions in other places.⁴ Among the invitations was one from Silvester Horne to conduct a mission in Kensington in 1895.

The broadening of theology, then, did not at first lead to a neglect of evangelism nor necessarily to a rejection of the methods used by evangelicals. Not all Congregationalists, however, would have been happy to accept the views of Dale, White or Horton in this matter. When the subject of special mission services was first brought to the attention of the Congregational Church Aid and Home Missionary Society they were quite unconvinced about their value and an investigation of the views of the Association did little to clarify their thinking.⁵ A few years later they were happy to recommend the method of special missions, but not to

1 Con. Mag., ii (1883), 49-53.

2 A.W.W.Dale, The Life of R.W.Dale (London, 1898), p.321f.

3 R.F.Horton, An Autobiography (London, 1917), p.69.

4 ibid., pp. 70-75.

5 Church Aid Society Report, (1879), 31.

make finance available for them.¹ Even where this particular method of home mission was recommended, due attention was paid to the dangers involved and caution was urged in the way the services were planned.

'Among ourselves,' wrote J. Scott James, 'with characteristic conservatism they have been little used, and in many cases have been viewed with positive distrust.'² The positive distrust lingered for many and sometimes found expression in outright hostility. Speaking at the Congregational Union Assembly in 1875 the Rev. A. Mackennal indulged in a blistering attack of such services. He accused them of awakening dislike in men of cultivated method; of producing a piety which was 'self-conscious, dogmatic, swift to speak and lacking in modesty' and of producing literature whose 'indelicacy' was 'painful and startling'. Above all, he feared that many converts subsequently fell away and so confirmed the psychological law that 'vehement excitement are succeeded by indifference and often disgust'.³

Just three years later, when James Baldwin Brown was in the chair of the Congregational Union, he was similarly critical of the mission service approach. In particular, he criticised the shallow doctrine of the gospel, as he understood it, which was usually proclaimed in such services.

I mark the nature of the most potent and trust^{ed} influence in current revivals; I see a county town placarded with the notice that a minister "will preach and sing the Gospel", and then I recall the men, in the place of one of whom I stand (Thomas Raffles) who did not paint or carve the Gospel, who did not parade the Gospel in procession, but who preached the Gospel, with all the fervour of intense conviction.

1 ibid., (1884), 25; (1886), 29 and 32; and (1887), 38.

2 Con. Mag., ii (1883), 74.

3 C.Y.B., (1875), 52-57.

He trembled for

the contempt into which many of our childish methods are bringing¹ the Gospel in honest minds and manly hearts.

The truth was that the revivalist approach, of which mission services were a diluted offspring, never fitted the culture of Congregationalism which was essentially middle class and saw its mission as essentially to the middle classes.² It was consistent with that cultural atmosphere that the Congregationalists' primary concern in respect to home missions should have been church centred. Dale's criticism that the Evangelical Revival had lacked a concern for the church³ was a criticism which was frequently expressed by Congregationalists about evangelistic societies, missions and missionaries.

Almost annually the Congregationalists pronounced that the trouble with evangelism was that it was not sufficiently connected with the church so that the church did not benefit from it. The call became almost a ritual, but the answer was not so readily to hand. The 1878 Conference heard papers on the need for evangelistic work to be systematic and on 'the importance of its being connected with and controlled by the Churches'.⁴ In 1879 they listened to a paper on 'The Importance of so conducting Home Missionary endeavours as to Gather its fruit into churches and preferably churches which give promise of early self support'.⁵ The problem with Moody and Sankey was said to be that they were not church-centred and early the conference had already confessed that its aggressive exertions 'have been fitful, too much dependent upon individuals'. What

1. ibid., (1879), 94f., cited in Binfield, So Down to Prayers, p.198f.

2. E.Paxton Hood, op.cit., p.219.

3. R.W.Dale, The Old Evangelicalism and the New (London, 1889), p.17.

4. C.Y.B., (1878), 72-80.

5. ibid., (1879), 119-24.

was needed, they agreed, was 'more supervision in the founding of new interests and in the erection of new places of worship'.¹

The church centred perspective of Congregationalism led to an emphasis on the importance of worship, ministry, order and architecture. It had found its classic expression in John Campbell's prize winning essay of 1839 or in James Matheson's essay which won second prize in the same competition.² And although the application of the system was to change over the century, the essence of it - a church centred system - was to remain the same. This perspective explains why reaching out to the poor through mission halls³ was permitted, while mission services were suspected. The former, it was rather simplistically agreed, was controlled by the church and its fruits channelled into the church, whilst the latter was not. It further explains the developments at the end of the century when the Home Missionary Society again ceased to exist as an independent society and once more became a part of the work of the Congregational Union.

The chief incentive to administrative reform in the work of Congregational Home Missions came not so much, in the end, from the desire to systematize evangelism as from the desire to care for the welfare of poorly paid pastors. The Union had heard the Rev. W. Guest plead, at their autumn meetings in 1869, for the adoption of the objective that 'the resources of the strong may be brought to supply the deficiencies of the weak'.⁴

1 ibid., p.101.

2 The essays were written in response to an invitation by the Congregational Union to submit essays on the subject of Lay Agency. The prizes were given by an anonymous philanthropist and judged by a committee of the Congregational Union. J.Campbell, Jethro: A System of Lay Agency in connection with Congregational Churches (London, 1839) and J.Matheson, Our Country (London, 1839). For more on these works see pp.326-333.

3 E.g. E.Baldwin Brown, op.cit., p.134.

4 Cited in Mearns, op.cit., p.171.

Guest's plea met with general sympathy. The plight of some pastors, especially in rural districts, was known to be severe. The chief objection to any suggestion of a general sustentation fund was a fear of centralization and the fear that such a system would be a denial of the genius of Independency. But the Rev. W. M. Statham spoke for many when he said that 'the genius of a system which confesses that multitudes of its pastors are ill-paid and their homes are scenes of a prolonged and perpetual battle with necessity, is a genius for which I do not care !'¹

The following year the fund was approved in principle and the idea was remitted to the County Associations and the Home Missionary Society for discussion.² Initially it was considered that the difficulties in the way of such a fund were insuperable, but a sectional meeting at the 1872 Congregational Union Assembly pushed ahead with ideas and it was decided to call a lay conference to consider proposals in 1873.³ The conference met in Birmingham in 1873 and again in Leicester in 1874 and presented a report to the Congregational Union Assembly later that year. The discussion at the Assembly was prolonged and lacked any real sense of agreement. The first eight sections of the report setting out the need for a sustentation fund proved acceptable but the suggestions regarding free offerings and pew rents were not. Alexander Hannay, who had become Secretary to the Congregational Union in 1870 and was committed to centralization, recommended that the controversial elements be dropped and a new committee appointed, officially representing the Union, who would be

1 C.Y.B., (1870), 53. For an assessment of the fear of centralization in relation to the proposed Home Missionary Society, see Cong.Mag., i, (1882), 25-27.

2 ibid., (1871), 74f.

3 Mearns, op.cit., p.172.

4 Peel, op.cit., p.303.

asked to correspond on the matter with the County Associations.¹ When they reported back a year later they said, 'The sum of the matter in the judgment of the committee is that the question is not ripe for settlement.'²

Although disagreement about the practicability of such a scheme continued for a few years, the idea was never removed from the Congregational agenda. Henry Lee played a vital role in reconciling diverse opinions through his deft chairmanship³ and so by 1876 the Congregational Union was determined to press ahead with the idea. 1877 saw the matter discussed by the Associations yet again and, although they still failed to reach unanimity, they were, in the eyes of the centralists, showing good sense and making steady progress towards the desired goal.⁴

It was impossible that a scheme which proposed the formation of a Church Aid and Home Missionary Society, with the aim of aiding weaker churches, planting and fostering new ones and providing for the preaching of the gospel and other evangelistic work in spiritually destitute places, would go ahead without the full co-operation of the existing Home Missionary Society.⁵ It was suggested to the Home Missionary Society that the re-organisation would provide for a confederation within the Congregational Union of county unions and a consolidation in one fund of all contributions made for the relevant purposes, which would be distributed through their representatives.⁶

1 C.Y.B., (1875), 91-98.

2 ibid., (1876), 118.

3 ibid., (1877), 38f.

4 ibid., (1878), 36.

5 ibid., pp. 103-6.

6 Mearns, op.cit., p.177.

The Home Missionary Society met to discuss the matter on 16 January 1878 under Samuel Morley's direction. The meeting was said to be long and prayerful but no other details are known. It is possible that Mearns' account passes over the hard discussion that took place lightly, since he writes as a supporter of the re-organisation. Be that as it may, in the end a unanimous decision to re-organise the Home Missionary Society was reached. The re-organisation was not exactly on the lines originally proposed, since opportunity was made for subscribers to become personal members and for some existing Home Missionary links to be maintained.¹

As in 1840 there was now one channel through which the Congregational denomination could express its concern for home missions. But equally, as in 1840, it was a channel which was to disappoint the hopes of its founders.

The Church Aid Society commenced its life at an economically unfavourable time and the commercial depression was a useful scapegoat for the society's failure to obtain as large an income as they had hoped during its first year.² Lack of finance was to be a recurring theme of the reports.³ Indeed the complaint occurred as much in relation to home missionary work after the re-organisation, which was supposed to solve the problem, as before. For some years the Church Aid Society funds were augmented by the Jubilee Fund, but when that came to an end in 1883 they faced a financial crisis.⁴ Various cosmetic changes were made whilst the committee searched for a solution. A special committee in 1885

1 ibid., p.178 and p.182. C.Y.B., (1879), 37.

2 Church Aid Society Report, (1878), 21.

3 ibid., (188), 17; (1882), 21; (1886), 18; (1887), 21; (1888), 23; (1894), 21f; (1899), 16f.

4 ibid., p.17ff.

suggested that the council should be made responsible for the raising of money and not rely on the voluntary donations of the Associations.¹ Ten years later the funds from the County Union, which were most often reinvested straight away in that county, were separated from those funds received separately, in order to emphasise just how little was received without being already designated.²

Lack of finance was, however, a symptom of other problems. The major problems lay in the ill-defined nature of their work and their inability to capture the interest of the Congregational churches as a whole.

Their aims were broad and, as so often when an organisation attempts to achieve diverse aims simultaneously, internal conflicts arose with some aims inevitably achieving a precedence in practice over others. They were concerned with improving and regularising the support of ministers, with aiding new and weak churches and with aggressive extension work. The first of these objectives was largely in the investigative stage during the period under consideration.³ The third objective should have been the primary one and was potentially the one which gave rise to the most extensive work. In addition to aiding pastors and churches the Church Aid Society employed evangelists to engage in visiting, preaching, Bible Class teaching, prayer meetings, distributing religious tracts and so on. Each evangelist was expected to engage in these pursuits for, on average, seven hours a day and he was required to submit detailed reports to the committee.⁴ In 1889 the Church Aid Society

1 ibid., (1885), 17.

2 ibid., (1895), 12.

3 ibid., (1880), 21; (1882), 18; (1887), 22.

4 Proposed Rules for County Associations, 14 May 1887, published by the Congregational Church Aid and Home Missionary Societies, Section XVI, Evangelists.

was supporting three hundred and eighty one evangelistic and mission stations to fulfil these ends. Later still they overcame their caution regarding special missions and fully backed them as a means of aggressive work. A special missions committee was appointed in 1893 and under its direction numerous missions, lasting between five and eight days, were conducted in the churches.¹

And yet, for all that was accomplished in aggressive work, it was the second objective, that of aiding weaker churches and looking after property interests, that assumed the priority and gave rise to the great drain on the society's resources. In 1889 when they were supporting three hundred and eighty-one mission stations, they were also supporting six hundred and seventy-seven churches which did not necessarily have the same commitment to extension work as the mission stations.² They had to remind their churches that their grants were made for aggressive work, not internal work, and that they were purely a means to an end; the end being to enable a church to become self-supporting and spiritually reproductive as quickly as possible.³ They had to admit that much of their money was used to pay interest on chapel debts and to stress that, although it was difficult to assess the results of spiritual work, results were expected.⁴ They did not exist to provide a life support mechanism for feeble churches, which would never show signs of real vitality. The Congregational Union had already been alerted to 'the injury caused by the multiplication of weak churches'⁵ but it was an injury that the Church Aid Society was destined to prolong by its own rules. Although they proposed

1 Church Aid Society Report, (1893), 20f; (1896), 15 and (1897), 12.

2 ibid., (1889), 21.

3 ibid., (1886), 21.

4 ibid., (1887), 23-28.

5 C.Y.B., (1873), 4f.

only to aid Church property interests 'where absolutely necessary'¹ and although they tried to aid weak churches which had a potential for growth, it was notoriously difficult to exercise wise discernment in such matters. Money, therefore, which should have been used for mission was used instead for maintenance, with the result that the Congregationalism at the end of the nineteenth century did not demonstrate as healthy a growth pattern as it had earlier in the century.

This confusion of aims was aggravated by a lack of support from the Congregational churches and associations. Together these ingredients made a recipe for failure. The committee of the Church Aid Society found it difficult to obtain adequate information from the churches, who viewed their requests as a threat to their freedom. As the committee somewhat bitterly commented, the churches did not show the same concern for their freedom when it came to receiving money.² They attempted, with only a degree of success, to ensure 'an inflexible adherence to the principle that no aid shall be given to any church without such returns...'³ But the churches felt that the need to submit a report implied questions as to their competence in deciding their use of the money for local needs.

Throughout the period, too, the churches displayed a great fear of centralization. The assurances of the Church Aid Society that such a move was prevented by their own constitution failed to convince the churches.⁴ Their actions in trying to regularize the quality of the ministry,⁵ to impose an annual visitation of aided churches⁶ and to systematize Annual

1 Proposed Rules ... XV, 1 (4).

2 Church Aid Society Report, (1883), 17f., (1887), 27.

3 ibid., (1886), 21.

4 ibid., (1885), 26:

5 Proposed Rules ... XII D (4). Special Sub-Committee and Church Aid Society Report, (1895), 18 and (1899), 20.

6 ibid., (1889), 24.

Deputations on behalf of the society was probably seen by many as evidence of their centralising tendencies. The tensions of Independency were never resolved in a creative way as far as home missions were concerned.

Yet another reason why the Church Aid Society could not but 'feel humbled that the Society has been able to accomplish so little in enlisting the support, and awakening the enthusiasm of the Congregational Church'² was that the Congregationalists were enthusiastically supporting other evangelistic causes. The committee complained that, whilst people were satisfied with membership of a Congregational church themselves, they were happy to support 'Catholicism, undenominationalism, Brethrenism or some other method' when it came to the conversion of others.³ The servants of the denominations, at the centre of its life, demonstrated a much greater concern with denominationalism than men on the periphery of the denomination's life.⁴

At the very end of the century the Church Aid Society still espoused a 'definite and lofty' aim - to lift the place of home mission work in the Congregational churches. Their aim had definite implications for denominational life. They were opposed to individualism in evangelism and protested that 'aggressive work which might have been accomplished by the enthusiasm of united forces has too often been left alone and even unattempted'.⁵ It was good that the vision remained clear. But it was to remain only a vision. Within a year they were threatening to reduce their work by ten or fifteen per cent because of lack of income. The fact

1 ibid., (1898), 13.

2 ibid., (1884), 17.

3 ibid., (1888), 25.

4 This is in reversal of the situation earlier in the century when it was the Home Missionary Society Committee who were more ecumenically minded than their agents. But it is only another form of a recurring theme that those actively engaged at ground level and those bureaucratically engaged at the centre often do not share the same perspective on their common task.

5 Church Aid Society Report, (1898), 11.

is that they had reached the limits of their growth decades before and from then on they lived on a plateau. Further expansion was an elusive dream. They were also rejoicing that a new phase of co-operation was being entered as the Evangelical Free Churches were planning to substitute 'hearty co-operation for suicidal competition' in a National Mission.¹ It is ironic that they should have been so ready to welcome the opportunity to work together with others in view of their failure to work together themselves.

Hanney, for whom the formation of the Church Aid Society has been said to be his greatest achievement,² was a disappointed man. He claimed that the idea was launched twenty years too soon. Its problem, according to him, was to make an appeal on a national scale whilst only having parochial and diocesan administration.³ But the problem, at root, was not an organisational one, as he supposed. It was caused by the lack of an agreed vision, both as to the importance of home mission and as to the method by which the task could be accomplished.

1 ibid., (1899-1900), 16-19.

2 R.T.Jones, op.cit., p.312.

3 A.Peel, op.cit., p.319f.

Chapter 5

NONCONFORMISTS AND INTER-DENOMINATIONAL HOME MISSIONARY SOCIETIES

5.1 Introduction

R. W. Dale's penetrating critique of the Evangelical Revivals, both old and new, accused the evangelicals of being lamentably weak in their understanding of ethics and ecclesiology. The idea of the church, he claimed, had been 'almost swept away by the vehement tide of the Evangelical movement'. 'Evangelicals', he said,

owe no allegiance to the church to which they happen to belong. They do not recognise its authority. That the church is in any sense their home has never occurred to them. That any close ties of exceptional sacredness bind them to those who belong to it has never occurred to them. They are conscious of nearer kinship to men of other communions who share their special religious "views" or who are engaged in similar religious work.¹

The legacy of the revivals, Dale complained, has been to make fellowship accidental and precarious and to make men eager to engage in sporadic forms of fellowship whilst being indifferent to a continuous commitment to the church of Christ. Revivalism had been the handmade of individualism.²

Dale was the most articulate critic of evangelicalism's lack of ecclesiology, but he was by no means a lone voice in expressing his fears.³ The lack of ecclesiastical discipline expressed itself in a number of ways. There were those whose spiritual lives revolved around occasional meetings, conferences and conventions. There were itinerant revivalists whose call to preach was more or less self-authenticated. But the principal expression

1 R. W. Dale, The Evangelical Revival (London, 1880), p. 31.

2 R. W. Dale, The Old Evangelicalism and the New (London, 1889), pp. 17 and 32.

3 J. Campbell, Jethro (London, 1839), pp. 182-4, Congregational Year Book, (1879), 101 & 119-124, Church Aid Society Report, (1888), 25, Baptist Record, (1845), 77-80 & Baptist Union Handbook, (1886), 17.

of the tendency was to be seen in the formation of numerous societies. Those who lived in the nineteenth century seemed to organise a society for every cause and among the many educational and philanthropic societies there was a place for several societies which were exclusively devoted to the cause of missionary work at home.¹ In many of these societies the Nonconformist churches formed an alliance against ignorance and evil and in some they joined forces too with Evangelical Anglicans to defeat the same enemies.

All Nonconformist groups conspired together in these societies and all fell under the strictures outlined by Dale. The Methodists were less involved than others and the Baptists and Congregationalists were more forward than others. The Congregationalists were perhaps the most active in encouraging their members to support the interdenominational societies, advocating their cause, as they did, in the Congregational Year Book. It is perhaps, therefore, no accident that the protest against the societies was also most explicit among Congregationalists; for the closer the involvement between church and societies, the greater the tensions engendered between them. For all Dale's comments, such a conclusion is further supported by the fact that it was those most involved in the management of the societies who were also heavily involved in the work of the Congregational Union. John Blackburn, for example, was a former Baptist minister who, having become convinced of a paedobaptist position in 1810, entered the Congregational ministry and served as pastor of the chapels at Finchingfield and Pentonville. Concurrently, he was an agent of the Irish Evangelical Society, a secretary of the Christian Instruction Society

¹ See Ford K. Brown, Fathers of the Victorians (Cambridge, 1961), esp. pp. 334-339.

from 1825 to 1846 and a secretary of the Congregational Union of England and Wales.

Congregationalism encouraged its members to support some societies by publishing their details in the Year Book. Among many societies of a philanthropic or overseas missionary nature, the Year Book for 1858 included references to the following home missionary societies:

The Society for Promoting Christian Instruction in London and its Vicinity.
Founded in 1825 to advance evangelical religion and Christian charity.

The London City Mission.
Formed in 1835 to extend the knowledge of the Gospel among the inhabitants of London and its vicinity, especially the poor, without any reference to denominational distinctions, or the peculiarities of church government.

Ragged School Union.
President, the Right Honourable the Earl of Shaftesbury.
Founded in 1844 to promote and assist in the running of Ragged Schools.

Ragged Church and Chapel Union.
Formed in 1853 to build places of worship for use on Sundays for the destitute poor in London. The Right Honourable the Lord Ebury was President.

Open Air Mission.
Established in 1853 for the preaching of the Gospel by ministers and laymen in the open air.

Country Town Mission.
Founded in 1837 to employ scripture readers, missionaries and colporteurs.

British Society for the Propagation of the Gospel Among the Jews.
Formed in 1842, it was led in 1858 by Sir Culling Eardley, Bart., the Rev. J. Hamilton, the Rev. W. M. Bunting and the Rev. J. Stoughton.

The British and Foreign Sailors' Society.
Established in 1818 to promote the religious, intellectual and social elevation of British and Foreign Seamen.

(1) The United British Army and Scripture Readers' and Soldiers Friendly Society.
'The sole object of this society is to spread the saving knowledge of Christ among our soldiers. But it forbids, upon the part of any of its agents, the discussion of denominational differences and every attempt to proselytizing.'

British and Foreign Bible Society.
Founded in 1804.

The Religious Tract Society.¹

Founded in 1799, it was originally an Independent Society until gaining the support of the Anglican Clergy in 1808.

The English Monthly Tract Society.

Formed in 1837 to distribute tracts to the higher classes.

The Weekly Tract Society.

Established in 1847 for the improvement of the working classes.

The Book Society for Promoting Religious Knowledge Among the Poor.
One of the oldest societies, established in 1750.

The Young Men's Christian Association.²

Founded in 1844 for the improvement of the spiritual and mental condition of young men.

Christian Evidence Society.

Established to defend Christianity against Atheism, Pantheists and other opponants by sermons, lectures, publications and controversial addresses. The President was the Archbishop of Canterbury.

The Methodists supported the interdenominational societies the least, although their support was evident from time to time.³ A number of factors explain their relative lack of involvement, the chief one being their preoccupation with their own identity. They had themselves originally come into existence as a society within the Church of England and only at the very end of the eighteenth century had they assumed the identity of a church. For much of the early part of the nineteenth century their acceptance of this identity was still troublesome and they were much occupied by dissension and dispute. This provided them with little opportunity to concern themselves with lesser societies.

Conversely, the organisation of Wesleyanism which was emerging was much tighter than that of the Congregationalists or Baptists and it did not permit its members to involve themselves so freely in extra-curricular activities. Once it accepted its designation as a Church, its doctrine

1 S. G. Green, The Story of the Religious Tract Society (London, 1899).

2 C. Binfield, George Williams and the YMCA (London, 1973).

3 J. Matheson, Our Country (London, 1839), p. 36 and R. Cleves, Mission of Mercy (Bristol, 1979), p. 65.

of authority and ministry made it inevitable that it should be less concerned with societies which did not fall within their own structures. Furthermore, as a consequence of their strong organisation and central direction, they organised for themselves a great deal of home mission work in areas very similar to those in which many of the interdenominational societies were working, as the numerous city missions demonstrate. These Methodist causes were often as prosperous and as effective as the interdenominational societies and Methodist involvement in the latter was therefore rendered superfluous.

The interdenominational societies of the nineteenth century were far from static organisations. Some were denominationalized, like the London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews or the Home Missionary Society, which became respectively Anglican and Independent. Others like the Religious Tract Society or even the London City Mission broadened their bases and became more firmly interdenominational as time went on. Many did not survive the century, having lost their support to other causes or lost their role. The Christian Instruction Society falls within this category. Many societies, however, did survive.¹ Of the survivors, some stuck rigidly to their foundation principles and even fossilized their structures. The Evangelisation Society, City Missions and the Scripture Gift Mission exemplify that stance. Others were more flexible, changing their style, name and even aims as the changing years seemed to dictate. Among the latter, the National Sunday School Union and the Ragged School Union would be prime examples.

Various strategies were adopted by the societies to ensure as much as possible the smooth relationship between the denominations and particularly between the Anglicans and Nonconformists. Unity was rarely achieved easily

¹ For a list of present day home missionary societies which had their origin in the nineteenth century, see Appendix C.

and sometimes rarely achieved, in any meaningful sense, at all. R. H. Martin has concluded that the non-denominational society was 'based on the idea of consensus; that issues divisive to unity could be suppressed or overcome, these issues often proved more troublesome than expected and Martin doubts that the secondary issues could be suppressed or relegated that easily.¹

Among the home missionary societies three strategies were adopted to deal with the issue of interdenominational relationships. They may be termed the co-operation of pretence, the co-operation of constitutionalism and the co-operation of avoidance.² Although these were not exclusive strategies and elements of each may be found in some societies, the societies tended to adopt one or other of the approaches.

The co-operation of pretence was the strategy of the Home Missionary Society in its early days and of societies such as the Christian Instruction Society. Although claiming to be interdenominational and although actually gaining support from a number of churches, the interdenominational element was more hypothetical than real. One denomination would so outweigh the others in the contribution it made to the society's management or supporters, that it virtually belonged to that denomination. Others who wished to be involved had minimal chance of influencing it in a less denominational direction. There was almost no Anglican involvement in such societies.

The co-operation of constitutionalism is represented by the London City Mission. In this case the co-operation of pretence was vigorously challenged in the early days of the society's existence, with the result

1 R. H. Martin, 'The Pan-Evangelical Impulse in Britain, 1795-1830 with special reference to four London Societies' (Oxford Univ. D.Phil. thesis, 1974), p. 362.

2 This seems a more helpful analysis than Martin's distinction between idealistic and realistic conceptions of unity, *ibid.*, pp. 57-60.

that a thorough and explicit settlement was worked out which defined the respective roles of Anglican and Dissenters. Within the constitution an elaborate system of rules and usages were established and treated as a legal framework. In some measure, therefore, genuine co-operation was achieved, but it was a co-operation which tended to be efficient and bureaucratic rather than relaxed and cordial.

The third strategy was the co-operation of avoidance. Many societies adopted very specific aims and were single-minded in pursuing them. The aims were so defined as to avoid controversial issues and the societies rigorously refused to step outside their limited brief. Consequently, issues which would test the strength of co-operation were avoided. Those who were happy to pursue the minimal aims of the societies participated, whilst others did not. The Evangelisation Society affords much evidence of this approach, demonstrating as it does a passion to make men Christian but avoiding altogether making them churchmen. As long as supporters of the society were committed to its aims, their churchmanship was an irrelevance. The effect was to mix men from very diverse denominational backgrounds but men who were in fact doctrinally very homogeneous. It was unnecessary for the constitution of such societies to spell out the denominational balance of power on the management committee. Such an issue simply did not arise. Such societies were vigorously undenominational in character.

5.2 The Christian Instruction Society

One of the many concerns of the Independent Home Missionary Society in its earliest years was the poor inhabitants of London. Since its concerns were wide and it was in danger of spreading its resources too thinly, it was a matter of relief to the Home Missionary Society when it was able to

free itself from spiritual responsibility for London's poor on the formation of the Christian Instruction Society in 1825.¹

The incentive to form a separate society for the metropolis lay in an offer made to the Home Missionary Society by a gentleman who was willing to donate one thousand guineas for the work of city missions to the first twenty cities with a population of more than ten thousand who could organise a society for evangelistic work.² It was stipulated that visiting and tent preaching were to be part of the plan, since many whom it was hoped to reach

will not tread the threshold of the sanctuary without the most earnest and tender persuasions, and can only be made to listen to instructions and allow their children to be taught, by even converting portions of their own or their neighbours' dwelling into Sabbath schools and places of divine worship.³

John Blackburn, then minister of Claremont Chapel, Pentonville, became one of the honorary secretaries of the Christian Instruction Society and in an address delivered in 1827 quoted its original purpose as being,

irrespective of the particular denomination of Christians, to advance evangelical religion amongst the inhabitants of the Metropolis, by promoting the observance of the Lord's day; the preaching of the Gospel; the establishment of prayer meetings and Sabbath schools; the circulation of religious tracts; accompanied with a systematic visitation; and by the establishment of gratuitous circulating libraries; with every other method which the Committee, from time to time, may approve for the accomplishment of the great object contemplated by this Society.⁴

1 A. Mearns, England for Christ (London, 1886), p. 51.

2 Evangelical Magazine, NS iii (1825), 423 and 513f. Bristol was excluded since it was considered to have adequate provision already.

3 ibid., p. 514. Within a year the Christian Instruction Society had been given three tents for its evangelistic work by the Home Missionary Society, ibid., NS iv (1826), 384.

4 J. Blackburn, Reflections on the Moral and Spiritual Claims of the Metropolis (London, 1827), p. 23.

Although Blackburn was right to claim that the Christian Instruction Society worked 'irrespective of the particular denomination of Christian', its origin closely tied it to the Independent churches and in its operation it derived most of its leadership and support from Independent churches. An analysis of the local branches of the Christian Instruction Society which existed in 1831 in the City of London and the Boroughs of Finsbury, Marylebone, Lambeth and Southwark, reveals that eighteen societies were based on Independent churches, six on Baptist churches, two on Presbyterian churches and three each on the Calvinistic Methodists and the Church of England.¹ The explicit connection between the Christian Instruction Society and Congregational churches was made a matter of boasting by some and used as evidence for the superiority of the Voluntary System.² In fact, the Anglicans already had an organisational means of fulfilling the same aims through the District Visiting Societies and so would have found it largely unnecessary to co-operate with this newer venture.³ It was in effect a solidly nonconformist society and almost a solidly Congregational society with members of other Nonconformist groups playing a subordinate role.

Christian Instruction Societies were formed in local churches with a view to extensively and systematically visiting the poor who lived in the church's area. The work of Thomas Chalmers was used as a pattern for their work.⁴ The designated area was divided into districts and visitors would speak with the people in their homes or in the alleys and garrets on a

1 Congregational Magazine, NS viii (1832), 811-820.

2 ibid., NS vii (1831), 343 and 446.

3 H. D. Rack, 'Domestic Visitation: A Chapter in Early Nineteenth Century Evangelism', Journal of Ecclesiastical History, xxiv (1973), 361-365.

4 E.M., NS iv (1826), 109.

regular , often a fortnightly, basis.¹ The visitors would dispense moral advice and tracts but did not generally dispense any monetary assistance since this would be considered ill-advised.²

The conditions in which the poor lived were disturbing to the middle class visitors. John Blackburn referred to the way in which, during the course of their business, many potential visitors had 'glanced at their squalid or guilty inhabitants, and have hastened on as if we feared they would impart contagion at a touch!'.³ He invited his hearers instead to see these inhabitants as the object of Christian instruction. Elsewhere the Christian public was encouraged to perceive of the poor as 'ignorant of the essential principles of Christianity as the untaught heathen, and who are also accessible, yea, even ready to welcome the visits of the Christian instructors'.⁴

The poor then were seen as passive recipients of the good news or better life-style which the middle class visitors were able to dispense. It would not appear that they were ever considered to have a voice for themselves.⁵ Everywhere they were assumed to be in ignorance, darkness and guilt and everywhere it was assumed that they would immediately and warmly welcome their visitors.

In pursuing their aim of bringing the poor under 'the stated ordinances of religion', the visitors joined battle with illiteracy, Sabbath breaking and the Bible famine. They aggressively recruited the

1 Letter from John Sibree to John Blackburn on the founding of the Coventry Christian Instruction Society in 1827. New College, London. MSS L. 52/5/14 (Dr. Williams's Library, London).

2 Rack, op. cit., p. 367.

3 Blackburn, op. cit., p. 12.

4 E.M., NS vi (1828), 152.

5 E.g. Chartism was seen as an evil to be counteracted not an appeal to be heard, ibid., NS xviii (1840), 290.

young for the Sabbath schools so that the rising generation might be trained in virtue and godliness. Their maximum effectiveness, in this regard, came in 1841 when as many as three thousand six hundred and sixty seven children were members of their Sunday schools.¹ They also rejoiced in the number of adults they had induced to attend worship and reported as many as one thousand eight hundred and ninety eight in this category in 1848.² The onslaught on the Bible famine meant that, within the first eight years of their history, they had distributed as many as four thousand five hundred Bibles, whilst in the early 1840s they were regularly distributing over nine hundred Bibles annually.³

The Christian Instruction Society operated almost wholly through unpaid, part-time visitors and regular appeals were made to Christians to shake themselves free from the need to work in business six days a week and then seek further personal enjoyment of a spiritual kind on the Sabbath. Blackburn castigated those who 'must hear three sermons or are contented with two, and indulge themselves in the social circle during the remaining sacred hours which might be most beneficially employed amongst the destitute around them'.⁴

Nonetheless before many years the Society was searching for a full-time agent and in 1830 John Pyer, the former Tent Methodist, was brought down from Manchester, full of enthusiasm to serve in that capacity.⁵

1 C.I.S. Annual Report, cited by E.M., NS xix (1841), 295.

2 E.M., NS xxvi (1848), 309.

3 ibid., NS xv (1837), 268f; NS xviii (1840), 290; NS xix (1841), 295; NS xxi (1843), 296 and NS xxii (1844), 306.

4 Blackburn, op. cit., p. 15.

5 Letter from J. Pyer to J. Blackburn on 11 Jan 1830 expressed his enthusiasm and explains that he has been hindered somewhat from leaving Manchester and would possibly be delayed a little further since W. Roby had died that morning. New College, London, MSS, L 52/5/18.

Pyer's enthusiasm was well rewarded, although not without its drawbacks. After his commissioning on 21 April 1830 at Claremont Chapel, at which the Rev. Joseph Fletcher preached,¹ he set to work visiting and preaching evangelistically and occasionally visiting the churches which supported Christian Instruction Society branches. On average he preached four times a day. In January 1831 he recorded in his diary,

This was, upon the whole, the very best season I have had in preaching, since my connection with the Christian Instruction Society. The word was given; it seemed to fall with power, midst the deepest attention, interrupted only by sobs and tears of many, both male and female.²

The draw-backs to his preaching were two-fold. Firstly, it often attracted hostile attention with 'brutes' shouting him down and making his services uncomfortable. Such opposition was not unique to Pyer since there are several recorded instances of Christian Instruction Society meetings being interrupted in one way or another.³

The second drawback was the Pyer was unable to sustain the pace required by so much travelling and preaching for long and within a few years he was frequently complaining of fatigue due to the long walks involved in his work. He took steps to preserve his health by reducing the number of sermons he preached each day, but his zealous commitment to his work made him ill-suited to this lesser burden. 'Some ministers!', he wrote, 'take it very easy. This I could never do, nor am I now disposed to begin. All the world is in earnest; why should not ministers of Christ be too?'⁴ Late in 1837 Pyer was forced to take a

1 K. P. Russell, Memoirs of the Rev. John Pyer (London, 1865), p. 156f.

2 ibid., p. 159f.

3 ibid., p. 161. See also E.M., NS vii (1829), 258 and Con. Mag., NS v (1829), 684.

4 Russell, op. cit., p. 180. See also pp. 163ff, 182 & 189-191.

holiday in an attempt to regain his vigour but he was unable to do so and when invited the following year to serve as Pastor of a church in South Molton he readily accepted the call.¹

Pyer was the first of a number of men who were to serve the Christian Instruction Society as full-time paid agents; although the numbers were never large, reaching fifteen at their highest in 1838. The policy of the Christian Instruction Society, however, never altered from its original position of relying mainly on voluntary visitors and the number of these recorded in the Annual Reports throughout the 1840s were in excess of two thousand.

Another regular feature of the work of the Christian Instruction Society were the lectures which it sponsored for mechanics. They were blatantly evangelistic in purpose. Blackburn told the mechanics at the beginning of one such series of lectures that 'these exercises are not established to obtain your money, but to win your souls!'² But they were also informative and reflected the increasing importance of self-help in education which was characteristic of the age.

An analysis of the topics of the lectures given under the auspices of the Christian Instruction Society between 1837 and 1840³ shows that they fell within four general themes. Firstly, there were lectures which were aggressively apologetic; setting out the evidences for believing in the Christian faith and for accepting it as a reasonable faith. In this category, for example, there would come. 'The Mosaic account of Creation and Deluge, illustrated by the discoveries of modern science'; 'The accuracy of the Sacred writers on scientific subjects'; and 'Historical confirmation of facts recorded in the New Testament'.

1 ibid., p. 194f..

2 Blackburn, op. cit., p. 28.

3 For a list of published Christian Instruction Society lectures for these years, see Appendix D.

Secondly, there were lectures which were defensively apologetic in that they compared Christianity to alternative world views and concluded in favour of Christianity. For example, there were lectures on 'The claims of the Koran and other writers deemed sacred not to be compared with those of the Bible'. There was also a whole series of lectures against Socialism.

A third category of lectures were more simply expositions of Christian doctrine. The final category contained lectures on a number of practical issues designed to encourage the mechanic to be a more virtuous Christian through his choice of friends or entertainment, his use of time and avoidance of immorality and impurity.

The pattern established by the London Christian Instruction Society was soon adopted by many other cities throughout England. By 1833 the Christian Instruction Society was in contact with one hundred and twenty similar works.¹ In fact, the interest was not limited to the cities² and had spread overseas to the colonies as well.³

The Christian Instruction Society displayed rapid growth for the first ten years of its life but began to plateau in the following years. Within ten years of its commencement it was past its peak and all its statistics, of families visited, of visitors, of Sunday School children, of distinct cases helped and of tracts and Bibles distributed were on the decline.⁴

After the prosperous opening years of the 1840s, the first warning

1 E.M., NS xi (1833), 447.

2 E.g., Farncombe, near Godalming, New College, London, MSS L 52/5/124 (1840).

3 ibid., L 52/5/52 (1834), from Van Dieman's Land.

4 The maximum numbers recorded were as follows: Families visited, 59,549 (1841); Visitors, 2,354 (1842); Sunday school children, 3,667 (1841); Distinct cases helped, 3,635 (1843); Bibles distributed, 1,421 (1843).

shots regarding the health of the Christian Instruction Society were fired in 1845. In that year funds were scarce and the rules were altered to give the voluntary visitors the opportunity of becoming members of the society; presumably with a view to gaining increased subscriptions.¹ At the annual meeting a year later, John Blackburn voiced his disquiet. He lamented the 'reprehensibly small' number of pastors who were present at the meeting and went on to claim

that this society has not yet received the support it deserved. He and Mr. Pitman had served it for twenty-one years without any remuneration. All they asked was the support of a noble, disinterested, Christian public. Because they had not hired an agency to dog gentlemen for subscriptions, they had seen the society's funds decline year after year, till they were now below £300. If this state of things was to continue he would not remain their secretary; but² if they would sustain it, he was willing to be their servant.

Following Blackburn's plea there was a slight, but almost imperceptible, improvement in conditions. But it was not adequate to meet the problems and Blackburn, true to his word, left the society. The Rev. R. Ashton replaced him.³ For a few years Ashton was optimistic about the prospects of the Christian Instruction Society. Both in 1850 and 1851 there was an increased attendance of ministers and members at the Annual Meetings.⁴ But it was only a temporary interruption to a downward trend and from 1852 it was the smallness of the meeting and the slenderness of their resources which occupied their attention.⁵ By 1855 a number of special sermons were arranged in the London churches to raise support and pay off a debt. But these still did not prevent the committee from having to sell some of

1 E.M., NS xxiii (1845), 308.

2 E.M., NS xxiv (1846), 313.

3 The Rev. R. Ashton, 1798-1878, was educated at Hoxton and served in churches at Dedham (1824-32), Warminster (1832-39), Putney (1840-50) before becoming joint secretary of the Congregational Union (1852-70).

4 E.M., NS xxviii (1850), 310 and xxix (1851), 354.

5 E.M., NS xxx (1852), 339f; xxxi (1853) 356 and xxxii (1854), 346.

the Society's property in order to meet their liabilities.¹

Hope for the increased prospects of the Society persisted for a further year. The committee believed that, if the Rev. J. H. Wilson of Aberdeen could be induced to take up the post of general superintendent, his advocacy of aggressive Christianity might save them. But Mr. Wilson declined the post, being too busy in Scotland,² and the most they could secure from him was a deputation tour on their behalf during which he spoke at fifty meetings to seventy thousand people.³

The Christian Instruction Society never recovered its strength or vitality and from 1860 onwards drifted out of the sight of the Christian public. The records, already despairingly brief and ill-preserved, then virtually cease altogether, although it is probable that it continued to exist in a much reduced form for many years after that.⁴

The reason for the Christian Instruction Society's rapid decline was almost certainly two-fold. A number of the original visionary supporters were, by 1845, either ageing or had moved away from London. Furthermore, other supporters, like Blackburn himself, by then had other exciting and novel projects with which to fill their time, such as the formation of the Congregational Union. The second reason is almost certainly the establishment, in 1835, of the London City Mission to fulfil identical objectives to the Christian Instruction Society. It is difficult to prove a direct connection between the rise of the one society and the decline of the other, but the connection almost certainly existed. The wider and firmer basis on which the London City Mission was established, after its initial difficulties, meant that it was destined to be the society which would flourish whilst the Christian Instruction Society would sink almost without trace.

1 ibid., NS xxxiii (1855), 351. 2 ibid., NS xxxvi (1858), 358.

3 ibid., p. 35f.

4 Rack, op. cit., p. 367, footnote 7.

5.3 The London City Mission

For most of the nineteenth century the London City Mission appeared to have such a well-established place in the affections of the churches that it is difficult to appreciate how unpromising a beginning it had. David Nasmith, its founder, brought it to birth against all odds. He himself was a restless activist who began his career in evangelical societies by serving as secretary to a group of twenty three societies in Glasgow whilst a mere youth.¹ Even this institution proved too confined for him and within a short time he had moved on to generate the formation of numerous Young Men's Associations and City Missions throughout the western world. Between 1823 and his death in 1838, he was the catalyst for seventy Young Men's Societies in the U.K., U.S.A. and France. Through them he wanted 'to bless young men and to make them blessings and!', he wrote, 'I have not been disappointed'.² The first city mission for which he was responsible was that of Glasgow, founded in 1826. After two years there he was looking for new mountains to conquer and so went to Dublin to engage in evangelistic work and found a city mission.³ In 1830 it was the turn of America and Canada to receive his attention. After a tour of some forty cities, he summarised his achievements there as being instrumental in founding sixteen city missions, the American Young Men's Society, plus eight or ten of its auxiliaries. In addition, various benevolent institutions for coloured folk were formed.⁴ Following his visit to the U.S.A. he visited Paris, Glasgow and Ireland before venturing to London, on which his heart had been set for some time, in 1835.

1 J. Campbell, Memoirs of David Nasmith (London, 1844), pp. 72-74.

2 ibid., p. 95 and p. 136.

3 ibid., p. 138 and p. 167ff.

4 ibid., p. 260.

Nasmith, like many aggressive and charismatic leaders, must have been an uncomfortable man to work with, as the subsequent history of the London City Mission and his brief relationship with it shows. He had a number of defects which makes his record of success even more remarkable. The impression given is that he could be autocratic and efficient, pushing on ahead with his plans before others fully accepted them or even understood them.¹ Secondly, he never remained in a place long enough to see his work really established, with the result that only a fraction of the work he initiated survived.² Thirdly, he was almost totally naive regarding ecclesiastical politics and was unnecessarily antagonistic to the churches, riding roughshod over their own desires to engage in evangelistic work in their own way. Nonetheless, he was responsible for generating the foundation of a number of societies which have made an outstanding and enduring contribution to the work of home missions and the London City Mission is not the least of these.

On arrival in London, Nasmith received little encouragement to pursue his aim of founding a city mission. For the Nonconformists, Dr. John Campbell, a former fellow church member in Glasgow and later to become Nasmith's biographer, advised him against the scheme. 'He felt, with many others, that one of the reigning evils of the day, especially in London, was the endless multiplication of new Societies, to the neglect of those then existing ...'³ Furthermore, Campbell perceived of the proposed London City Mission as an artificial institution; a 'promiscuous body' which owed allegiance to no one and not being of congregational was bound to be unstable.⁴ Nor did Campbell believe that the required co-operation between Anglicans and Dissenters would be forthcoming.

1 E.g., *ibid.*, p. 248.

2 *ibid.*, pp. 454-6.

3 R. Ferguson and A. M. Brown, *Life and Labours of John Campbell D.D.*, (London, 1867), p. 221.

4 J. M. Weylland, *These Fifty Years* (London, 1884), p. 18.

The Anglicans were no more encouraging. The Bishop of London received him politely but promised no assistance. The Rev. and Hon. Baptist W. Noel, who had already published his concern for the cities in a letter to the Bishop of London, was also sure that it was not a propitious time to try to get Anglicans and Dissenters to work together. Each body had their own societies to achieve the objects of a city mission - the District Visiting Society and the Christian Instruction Society - and Noel's opinion was that it was wiser for people to choose between them and invest in one of them for the moment.¹

Undaunted, Nasmith called a meeting which was attended by just two other laymen, Mr. Richard Dear and Mr. William Bullock. Together they launched the new society and stipulated its aims and rules.

The object of this Society shall be to extend the knowledge of the Gospel irrespective of peculiar tenets in regard to church government among the inhabitants of London and its vicinity (especially the poor) by domiciliary visits for religious conversation and reading the Scriptures, by meetings for prayer and Christian instruction, by promoting the circulation of the Scriptures and religious tracts, by stimulating a regular attendance on the preaching of the Gospel, by increasing Scriptural education, by the formation of local libraries and by adoption of such other means as the managers may judge important in order to attain the design of this society.²

A number of features made this society different from the Christian Instruction Society, namely, its desire to unite both Anglicans and Nonconformists in the task; the systematic design to divide the whole city into districts and to engage in a thorough rather than ad hoc visitation programme; and the reliance on employed agents in contrast to voluntary part-time helpers.³

1 ibid., p. 17f. and Campbell, op. cit., p. 304.

2 Minutes of the London City Mission, 16 May 1835.

3 The Christian Instruction Society and District Visiting Society had both toyed with the idea of paid agents but neither was wholly committed to it. ibid., 30 July 1835 and Weylland, op. cit., p. 26.

The agents, of whom there was never a shortage of applicants, were to be tightly controlled by the committee and under the close scrutiny of Superintendents. Their job description was periodically spelled out in fine detail.¹ They were appointed to be evangelists and were to see themselves as very clearly distinguished from either ministers of religion or social workers. They were not to engage in providing temporal relief, no money was to be handled by them, nor were they to deviate from their spiritual duties by issuing secondhand clothing.² The society as a whole rigidly abstained from any comment on social or political affairs.³

The London City Mission saw itself as a spiritual rescue mission and those engaged in the rescue were from the same classes as those they were attempting to rescue. As Binfield has expressed it, 'the London City Mission was a charity without room for the delicacy of Lady Bountiful and with no place for condescension'.⁴ And yet the operation of the mission did have implications for the question of social control. For all their desire to confine their concerns to the spiritual issues, there was a fine line to be drawn between the desire to control the lawless, make better citizens and convert the socially or politically disaffected. Weylland, indeed, the official historian of the London City Mission, related the formation of the mission to the failure of the constabulary to deal adequately with lawlessness and the anxiety which it occasioned.⁵ On the

1 ibid., 20 May 1835, 27 July 1835, 4 Nov. 1835 and 20 July 1836.

2 ibid., 2 Apr. 1839, it was resolved that 'as the object of the mission is purely of a spiritual nature it is not deemed consistent nor expedient that the missionaries should be almoners of the temporal bounty of the benevolent of their districts being assured that their religious labours will be hypocritically sought for if the poor hear the idea that the missionary has it in his power to distribute money ...' See also 28 Dec. 1840 and 25 Jan. 1841.

3 ibid., 27 June 1842 and Weylland, op. cit., pp. 229-237.

4 C. Binfield, George Williams, op.cit., p.151

5 Weylland, op. cit., p. 6f. See also pp. 276-286. They were ardently anti-socialists. L.C.M. Mins, 23 Sept. 1839, 30 Jan. 1840, 24 Feb 1840 etc.

whole, however, the London City Mission kept within the line drawn around its spiritual objectives and jealously maintained its independence from every establishment body.

Within a year of its foundation many of the initial fears about the London City Mission had been overcome, at least among the Dissenters.¹ The Home Missionary Society welcomed it in terms very similar to those it had expressed on the formation of the Christian Instruction Society. Its existence was to relieve the Directors of the Home Missionary Society from the burden of the inner cities. They were overjoyed at the oneness of heart demonstrated by its supporters for the cause of missions at home.² Even Baptist Noel had been convinced of the mission's viability to the extent that he chaired its first Annual Meeting and had the pleasure of presiding on that occasion over a congregation which represented five denominations.³

The harmonious growth of the London City Mission was not, however, to be allowed to continue for long. The relationship between the denominations in the management of the mission's affairs was only to be forged through controversy and disappointment. There was to be a constitutional settlement agreed regarding the co-operation of the denominations and the society was to have its role and operations defined in minute legal ways in order to circumvent further controversy.⁴

From the beginning the Mission had attempted to be non-controversial. Its agents were forbidden to supply regular pulpits;⁵ no ordained

1 J. Garwood, The Importance of City and Town Missions preserving a Strictly Catholic Character, (Birmingham, 1858), p. 14f.

2 Home Missionary Society Magazine, xvii (1836), 1-14.

3 E.M., NS xiv (1836), 68.

4 Garwood, Catholic Character, op. cit., p. 7.

5 L.C.M. Mins, 7 Sept. 1835. Even the use of pulpit cushions was frowned upon, 18 Dec. 1837.

minister was eligible as an agent¹ and the society withdrew from areas where their work might be seen to duplicate the work of another evangelical.² The agents occasionally proved a liability to the mission and could cause embarrassment, especially to its Anglican supporters.³ Where an agent compromised the neutrality of the mission it could lead to his dismissal.⁴

The more serious problem arose at the management level of the society. Here the inevitable tensions were aggravated by the naïvety of David Nasmith and the inflexibility of the Bishop of London. The first sign of trouble appeared in the early part of 1837 when David Nasmith's leadership was called into question on account of his involvement with other societies which he had started. He protested that he was accountable to God, both for these societies and the London City Mission, but that he wished nothing more than to be known by the public as the Secretary of the London City Mission. The matter was never resolved⁵ and two members of the committee, the Rev. R. Ainslie and Brother Sloper, felt compelled to resign.⁶ Within weeks the general discontent expressed itself through a different issue - that of the balance of the denominations among the agents and managers.

The Rev. Sanderson Robins raised the issue first in a letter protesting that he had lost confidence in the management committee, although not in the principles of the mission, and that his uncertainties, which had led him to tender his resignation, had been compounded by the

1 ibid., 8 Mar. 1841.

2 ibid., 27 Feb. 1836.

3 ibid., 29 Jan. 1838, 28 May 1838 and 31 Oct. 1842.

4 ibid., 23 July 1838 and 31 Oct. 1842.

5 ibid., 7 Feb. 1838.

6 ibid., 15 Feb. 1837 and 22 Feb. 1837.

fact that so large a proportion of the agents were Baptists.¹ The Reverends Noel and Rodwell also proposed withdrawing from the mission for the same reasons.

The immediate response to this was to exercise a moratorium on the appointment of all new agents and public meetings until a new constitution had been written. The constitution adopted laid down that there was to be a management committee of twenty, ten of whom were to be churchmen and ten of whom were to represent other denominations. Of the three full-time and remunerated secretaries, one was to be an Anglican Clergyman, one a Dissenting minister and one a layman. There were also to be eight examiners, of which four were to be Anglicans and four Dissenters.² Nasmith clearly could not understand why all these regulations were necessary. He was used to being a much freer agent and not concerned with ecclesiastical politics. He defended the way he had conducted the mission's affairs but having made his defense, so that there should be no obstacle in the way of the society achieving widespread support, he resigned as its secretary. The committee expressed their regret and pain at losing him but were determined not to give in to his personalised style of leadership and so they parted company.³ Nasmith immediately turned his hand to establishing yet more societies and town missions, but in Campbell's opinion never really recovered from the shock of surrendering the London City Mission.⁴ Nasmith only lived one further year and then died at the youthful age of thirty nine.

The new constitution pacified some of the Anglican supporters of the London City Mission and enabled the Rev. Baptist Noel to defend it publicly.⁵ But the new constitution did nothing to mollify Bishop

1 ibid., 8 Mar. 1837 & Campbell, op. cit., p. 339f.

2 ibid., 17 Mar. 1837. See also, 24 June 1844.

3 ibid., & Campbell, op. cit., pp. 341-355 for an apology for Nasmith.

4 Campbell, op. cit., p. 466.

5 E.M., NS xvii (1839), 125f. Cites a letter of Baptist Noel to The Record.

Blomfield of London, whose continued antagonism to the London City Mission caused them to be deprived of much Anglican support. Blomfield was unapproachable and lacked tact at the best of times.¹ On 15 November 1838, the Rev. John Garwood, the corresponding secretary of the London City Mission, informed the committee that the Bishop of London had forbidden him to attend the monthly prayer meeting of the London City Mission and told him that he must not sign any more circulars to the clergy. In future, he had been informed, no sermons were to be preached in the London diocese on behalf of the London City Mission.

The London City Mission immediately arranged for an urgent and anxious deputation to wait upon Bishop Blomfield. Captain Harcourt, Edward Buxton and Bartholomew Caypon were received by the Bishop with great courtesy but really made no progress. Blomfield informed them that he objected to all societies which used lay agents and that on exactly the same grounds he refused to support the Church Pastoral-Aid Society. In their case, however, the crime was compounded by their desire to unite Churchmen and Dissenters in one society. Blomfield considered prayer meetings to be 'highly improper' and he 'disapproved of' churches being used to publicize the needs of societies which were imparting religious instruction. That was the proper work of the church and of the church alone. The deputation was promised that the Bishop would not actively oppose the London City Mission but that they would encounter his passive opposition from time to time.²

Within a month John Garwood felt compelled to resign because of Blomfield's attitude, although he himself was perfectly satisfied 'that the society carried out the principle of its constitution with impartiality and without reasonable offence to Christians of any persuasion'.³ A month

1 For an assessment of his character see O. Chadwick, The Victorian Church (2nd. edn., London, 1970), i, 133f.

2 L.C.M. Mins., 4 Dec. 1838.

3 ibid., 1 Jan. 1839.

later, however, Garwood resumed his office, having discovered that the Bishop had not required him to take that course of action.¹

It was said that the Bishop's attitude to the London City Mission gradually improved. Garwood claimed that seven years after the foundation of the mission Anglican clergy in London began to give them public support but it was to be some years after that before Anglicans supported them in large numbers.² There was much excitement at the Committee meeting held on 20 November 1843 when Mr. Owen reported an unofficial interview he had had with Bishop Blomfield during which he had ascertained that the Bishop had withdrawn his opposition to the London City Mission. That Blomfield ever became favourable to the London City Mission, however, would seem to be a myth. Over a year after his reported change of mind, Baptist Noel still felt unable to preach on behalf of the mission 'either in or out of the Diocese of London ... having promised the Bishop of London to that effect'.³ Many eminent public and ecclesiastical figures, such as the Lord Mayor of London and the Archbishop of Canterbury, gave support to the mission,⁴ but the Bishop of London was unrepentant.

The records and history of the London City Mission are so concerned with the securing and maintenance of Anglican support that they are virtually silent about the Nonconformist contribution to the mission. Nonconformist support is taken for granted but it was evidently widespread. Thomas Thompson of the Home Missionary Society early became a supporter of the new mission and served both as auditor and a Superintendent.⁵ He even

1 ibid., 5 Feb 1839. Weylland's chronology is inaccurate here, op. cit., p. 40f.

2 Garwood's Catholic Character, op. cit., p. 14. Prior to that time he claims that clergy were brought in from other dioceses to lend support.

3 L.C.M.Mins., 20 Oct. 1845. 4 ibid., 7 Jan. 1839 & 16 July 1849.

5 ibid., 10 Feb. 1836 & 15 June 1836.

tried to bring the Home Missionary Society and the London City Mission into a closer public relationship but his overtures were declined.¹ The Rev. R. Ainslie began his influential if stormy career with the London City Mission as its literary assistant in October 1839, whilst the minister of Carey Street Independent Chapel in London, before becoming a full-time secretary in 1839. A succession of Nonconformist worthies appear in the Minutes or appeared on the platform to plead the cause of the London City Mission, including amongst senior Independents, J. Clayton Jnr., Dr. J. Leifchild, Dr. J. Collyer and from the Baptists Dr. F. A. Cox. Furthermore, it must not be overlooked that part of the trouble in the early days of the society was due to Nasmith's preference for employing Dissenters as missionaries and the paucity of supply of missionaries coming from the Church of England.²

There is no record of the reaction of Nonconformists to the constitutional changes of 1837 but their continued support indicates that they not only acquiesced in the distribution of power but genuinely approved of it.

The key to Nasmith's success, as has often been recognised, lay in the type of men he employed as missionaries. Shaftesbury highlighted this as one of the essential features of the London City Mission, namely that 'the classes from which the missionaries are selected are akin to those they are appointed to visit'.³ Such men were bound to have a greater understanding and sympathy for those they were trying to reach. They would not be quick to condemn. Nor would they be subject to the

1 ibid., 19 Oct. 1836.

2 Weylland, op. cit., p. 34.

3 ibid., vii, Foreward.

suspicious of having ulterior motives as middle class missionaries would be.

An examination of the applications received for the post of agent by the London City Mission between 1844 and 1849 shows that the society remained true to Nasmith's insight on this point. Occasionally the applications came from a teacher, tutor or even a theological student. But, more frequently the applicants were linen weavers, domestic servants, shoe makers, carpenters, drappers, cabinet makers or printers. As the years went by so an increasing number of applications came from those who wished to transfer from other home missionary societies. Most of the applicants belonged occupationally to the deferential working class rather than to any section of the working class which was likely to produce radicals.

Educationally the applicants were on the whole poorly qualified. Illiteracy, lack of knowledge and confusion of thought or inability to express oneself were the chief cause of declining an applicant. Thirty-three out of seventy-eight applicants declined between 1847 and 1849 fell within the category of being insufficiently educated.¹ An applicant with a good education was a matter of special comment by the interviewing committee. Next to being unprepared educationally, the chief cause of declining an application was a lack of piety, spiritual vitality or doctrinal conviction. Thirteen out of seventy-eight applicants fell within that category. The other notable cause of rejection was debt. Nine of the applicants during 1847 to 1849 were declined on that ground and several others in the earlier period. For some, becoming a city missionary was seen as a way of freeing oneself from past failures and providing a passport to a better social status.² Rarely was such an applicant given a chance

1 Source: Minutes of the London City Mission, v, passim.

2 G. Robinson makes this point in relation to other evangelistic societies. 'The failures of Success: Working Class Evangelists in Early Victorian Britain', Religious Motivation: Biographical and Sociological Problems for the Church Historian ed. Derek Baker, Studies in Church History, xv, (Oxford, 1978), p. 382.

by the London City Mission, although occasionally the selection committees were compassionate. The matter of debt was a serious issue to the London City Mission committee, who made it a regular matter of examination when a candidate came before them, having served his twelve months probation.¹

An amazing variety of persons applied to the Mission and were accepted to serve as agents. Jenkin Joel, for example, was 'not fluent in English though he was in Welsh'. He shared this disadvantage with A. Rowlands. John Magauran was an ex Roman Catholic Priest. M. Moran, being rough and unpolished, was sent to a rough district to work among Roman Catholics. David Tennant was a shoemaker who had spent twenty one years in the Footguards. J. Tozer, a woolcomber, was accepted despite being £18 in debt, perhaps out of compassion, since he was married with eight children. S. Trotman was a high Calvinist but not a controversialist. T. Atkins had 'originally been an infidel'. Another ex Roman Catholic priest, the Rev. V. Crespi, was employed as a missionary to the Italians. R. Fipp was 'fresh from the country and never had been to London before' but this was not considered a sufficient reason to decline his application. W. Green was a bird dealer and 'a very rough diamond'. W. Hillyer brought with him experience of similar work in Jamaica. G. Hunt was another Calvinist 'but not objectionable'. D. McDonald, a gas labourer, and T. H. Lee, an ex Roman Catholic priest, were both converts of the London City Mission. The one person who boasted a university education, J. L. Lee, who was a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin, did not remain with the mission long before being dismissed for complaints arising out of his work.

Welding this motley collection of converted men² into a fighting

1 L.C.M. Mins., 23 Nov. 1836.

2 Only men were employed by L.C.M.. An application by a lady was declined on the grounds that it would 'not be at all expedient for them to appropriate any proportion of their funds to such an object', and it was suggested that she organised her own society for work among women of a bad character. ibid., 7 June 1836. The L.C.M. still does not employ women agents.

missionary force was no easy task and relations between the managers and agents were severely strained on occasions. The basic method employed by the committee to ensure that they got the required amount of work from their agents was again a legal method. The work and hours of a missionary were spelled out in minute detail. The initial job description contained thirteen points setting out the tasks to be accomplished, such as visiting and reading the Scriptures in every home in the district assigned and the manner in which they were to conduct themselves; they were to avoid talking on any religious issue likely to cause controversy and to avoid politics altogether, above all they were to prove themselves earnest in the extent to which the work should be undertaken with three meetings a week, six hours visiting a day and a weekly report to the Superintendent.¹

Subsequent minutes amended this basic outline. It was discovered that Saturday was an unfavourable day for visiting because the poor were much occupied in cleaning their houses, so agents were only required to spend three hours on the task that day and were advised to give special attention to the sick.² A few months later the demands were amended to read that 'agents be required to spend not less than thirty eight hours weekly visiting and holding meetings and to pay one hundred visits weekly and five visits less to be allowed for each meeting held'.³ Agents were required to live in the districts they served⁴ and were permitted two weeks holiday in the country each year.⁵ All their work was undertaken under the close scrutiny of their superintendents.⁶ Infringement of the rules or failure to satisfy the committee that sufficient work was

1 ibid., 20 May 1835.

2 ibid., 27 July 1835.

3 ibid., 4 Nov. 1835.

4 ibid., 4 July 1837.

5 ibid., 20 July 1836.

6 ibid., 24 June 1844.

undertaken could lead, and often did, to dismissal.¹

There was, in fact, a fairly high turnover of agents and the committee frequently resorted to dismissal as a way of keeping the agents in line. Mr. J. Donovan, a native Irish missionary to the Irish, was dismissed for neglecting his wife and leaving her in a state of comparative destitution.² Drunkenness, immorality, debt or even the conduct of one's wife could mean dismissal.³ In fact, anything that reflected badly on the mission would cause the dismissal of an agent. Hence, when Messrs. Phillips and Gibson became insane⁴ and Messrs. Foley and Girlestone made disloyal comments,⁵ the remedy was the same. On occasions the dismissal could be caused by a religious dispute, such as when Mr. McClatchly refused to distribute a tract entitled 'Do you ever pray?' on the grounds that he would not encourage people to pray unless first they were believers.⁶ But for the most part, dismissal was for behavioural reasons rather than doctrinal ones.

The government of the agents was autocratic in spirit from the start. Permission was given for the agents to meet with the secretary periodically 'for consideration of subjects as may be likely to lend to their increased usefulness'.⁷ But when a meeting did take place it was reported that 'a spirit was manifested by some of the agents that was not of the loveliest character'. In response to this the committee decided that they should not sit together as a body at public meetings; that any request

1 ibid., 19 Oct. 1836; 25 Feb. 1839; 3 Dec. 1839; 28 June 1841 & 17 June 1844.

2 ibid., 6 Sept. 1836.

3 ibid., 18 Oct. 1841; 25 Sept. 1843; 24 Mar. 1845; 12 Jan. 1846 and 24 July 1843.

4 ibid., 16 Aug. 1837 and 24 Dec. 1878.

5 ibid., 6 Feb. 1838.

6 ibid., 4 July 1837.

7 ibid., 23 Mar. 1836.

they wished to make to the committee should be made in writing and conveyed through the Secretary; that no united request would be received but only requests from individuals and that in future they would not meet as a whole body but meet only in groups of ten to report.¹

When the committee persisted in their refusal to permit all the agents to meet together,² one of the agents arranged for them all to meet in any case to discuss 'business of importance'. When asked to explain the purpose of this meeting, Mr. J. W. Doxsey, who had called it, said that it was 'to organise a Society for providing an annuity for the widows of the agents after their death and that they had not thought it necessary to occupy the attention of the Committee with the subject in its present stage'. The committee responded by deprecating the manner in which the meeting was arranged but approved the object of the meeting. It is difficult to see, however, if the agents had been given any option but to meet in this manner. The committee, at the same time, also provided the agents the opportunity of calling on Robert Ainslie who henceforth would hold a clinic to answer agents' questions on Tuesday mornings.³

It was over the question of money that the committee demonstrated themselves to be most autocratic. The discontent among the agents force the committee to give serious consideration to the question of the agents' wages. It was decided that each agent would have his salary reviewed at the end of his probationary period and the sum then determined would be what he could expect to receive throughout his connection with the mission. No requests for salary increases would be entertained.⁴ Only several years later did the London City Mission decide that it was better to pay their agents according to a general scale rather than for the wages

1 ibid., 10 May 1836.

2 ibid., 3 Aug. 1836.

3 ibid., 26 Aug. 1836.

4 ibid., 8 Nov. 1836.

to be individually determined.¹

The committee were also slow to provide adequately for the needs of retired or disabled agents. Apparently nothing came of Mr. Doxsey's attempt in 1836² and on 13 February 1843 the managing committee still declined to inaugurate such a fund, believing that a practical scheme had not yet been put forward. One month later, however, a fund for aged or disabled missionaries was at last established.³

On David Nasmith's withdrawal from the society, the relationship between the agents and the committee did not improve. Robert Ainslie was the chief go-between between them and he was hardly skilful in his management of the missionaries. Matters came to a crisis in 1844 when fifty four missionaries sent a memorial to the committee complaining of his handling of affairs.⁴ Enquiries were made of all those who had served with the society for more than six months and it became clear that the real issue was the personality of Robert Ainslie.⁵ After thorough investigation the committee passed a long resolution stating,

That whilst the committee very deeply regrets the occurrence of any circumstances between the minute secretary and the agents calculated to disturb the harmony and the peace of the mission, it is a matter of satisfaction to find that with some few exceptions the agents bear testimony to his personal kindness and unwearied efforts for their mental improvement and spiritual usefulness; but after a lengthened investigation the committee is concerned to learn that the tone and manner and occasionally the substance and matter of Mr. Ainslie's remarks have given pain to the agents and discouraged and dispirited them in their work. This committee feeling that the authority of the chair can be maintained with kindness of manner to the persons addressed or examined have affectionately suggested to Mr. Ainslie the wisdom and propriety of so consulting the capacities and feelings of the agents as to restore that

1 ibid., 3 Mar. 1845. The actual salaries were £65 per annum for a single agent, £70 for a married man, £75 if he had one child under 14, £80 if he had 3 to 6 children and £85 if he had more than six children.

2 ibid., 10 May 1836.

3 ibid., 3 Aug. 1836.

4 ibid., 26 Aug. 1836.

5 ibid., 8 Nov. 1836.

mutual confidence and esteem which are indispensibly necessary to secure the best intents of the Mission, the committee rejoice in being able to communicate to the agents the assurance that for the future Mr. Ainslie's aim and object will be to secure their confidence and affection.¹

Unfortunately Mr. Ainslie objected to this resolution and promptly resigned.² An attempt was made at reconciliation with the committee toning down the above resolution and expressing its 'unabated confidence' in Mr. Ainslie.³ But when Mr. Ainslie next spoke to the agents on 26 August 1844, his address only served to fuel the fires of discontent. The weeks that followed were frantic with arbitration causing Dr. Leifchild unusually to attend the committee and play a leading role in the attempted settlement. But it was clear that no settlement could be reached and on 9 September Mr. Garwood took over Mr. Ainslie's duties.⁴ Even then the matter was not fully settled and Mr. Ainslie complained about the way in which his resignation was published by the London City Mission.⁵ Not until 2 December were they finally to be rid of the issue, although harmony had been restored to the London City Mission earlier. Mr. Ainslie left the ministry and Christian work and applied for the post of General Secretary of the Christian Education Society, for which the London City Mission provided him with a verbal testimony.⁶ From his departure onwards relations between the committee and the agents entered a far more relaxed and healthy period. The regulations were still enforce and the agents were still prohibited from commenting on reports which concerned them,⁷ but greater attention was given to their needs and

1 ibid., 3 Aug. 1844.

2 ibid., 7 Aug. 1844.

3 ibid., 12 Aug. 1844.

4 ibid., 2 Sept. 1844 and 5 Sept 1844.

5 ibid., 30 Sept. 1844.

6 ibid., 14 Oct. 1844.

7 ibid., 27 Jan. 1845 and 10 Mar. 1845.

an altogether much more gracious spirit prevailed.¹

The unpromising beginning, combined with the delicate task of managing the type of agent which the London City Mission employed, and did not initially manage well, makes the survival of the Mission a great achievement by those responsible for it. When the additional fact is added that, like most home missionary societies, money was in short supply for the London City Mission, its survival and growth is a matter of amazement. Like other societies the London City Mission frequently expressed the need for more money and examined various ways, including that of house to house collections and appeals to public bodies and churches to raise it.² In 1837 the financial shortage was so severe that they were forced temporarily to reduce the number of agents by nine.³ The following year they were forced to borrow £500 which, however, they were able to repay within eight months.⁴ In 1848 they had to report that the previous year they had suffered a deficit of £734 13. 2d.⁵

In spite of these difficulties, the London City Mission developed and overcame all obstacles. By the sheer energy and commitment of its workers it earned the widespread support of Christians of all denominations and became firmly entrenched as part of the London scene as well; receiving recognition from public bodies in London.⁶ By the time that a wave of new societies were being formed as a result of the 1859 Revival, the London City Mission had no reason to fear any competition.

The growth of the mission was firstly a general growth with a rapid expansion in the number of agents and families visited. In 1861 they were

1 ibid., 4 Nov. 1844; 27 Jan. 1845; 3 Mar. 1845; 9 Mar. 1845.

2 ibid., 14 Dec. 1836; 27 Nov. 1837; 20 Aug. 1838; 13 Jan. 1845; 28 June 1847; 5 July 1847 and 26 June 1848.

3 ibid., 5 Sept. 1837.

4 ibid., 20 Aug. 1838 and 8 Apr. 1839.

5 ibid., 26 June 1848.

6 E.g., ibid., 24 Mar. 1845 and 2 June 1845.

employing three hundred and eighty nine agents and visiting over two million families regularly. The report, given that year, calculated that their agents had been responsible for restoring one thousand eight hundred backsliders and communicants; causing six hundred families to commence domestic worship; reclaiming twelve thousand drunkards; inducing three hundred couples living together in an unmarried state to marry; rescuing seven hundred fallen women; closing two hundred shops on the Sabbath and sending ten thousand children to school.¹

Expansion continued after the first twenty five years but the most rapid expansion took place up to the silver jubilee. By the time of their jubilee the mission was employing four hundred and sixty men and had an income of £62,970 13s. 5d.. Between 1869 and 1884 the mission estimated that they had been responsible for causing one hundred and fifteen thousand and four hundred and twelve to attend worship; thirty eight thousand three hundred and eighty-seven to become communicants; one hundred and seventy-three thousand and thirteen children to attend school; four thousand five hundred and eighty-seven shops to close on Sunday; sixteen thousand two hundred and eighty families to begin family prayers; thirty eight thousand eight hundred and thirty-two drunkards to be reclaimed; fourteen thousand four hundred and forty-six fallen women to be reclaimed; for twenty seven thousand three hundred and seventy Bibles or portions of Bibles to be distributed and their missionaries had visited fifty two thousand four hundred and sixty-seven people during their final illnesses.²

The growth of the mission was secondly characterized by the growth of specialized agencies to cater for every sub-culture which went to make up the

1 E.M., xl (1861), 414.

2 Weylland, op. cit., p. 312.

mosaic of London. The earliest specialist missionaries sought after were for the Irish, the Jews, the Rich and the Seamen.¹ Weylland's history of the London City Mission provides a detailed chronological account of the various agencies which were appointed to particular sub-cultures in the first fifty years of the mission's activity.² But an earlier work by John Garwood, though less comprehensive, provided a deeper insight into the nature of the work they undertook. Garwood described the work of the City Missioners in relation to criminal juveniles, the Greenwich and Chelsea pensioners, the London Cab and Omnibus drivers and the Irish. The needs of each sub-culture dictated the approach of the missionaries to their work.

It was variously estimated that there were between twenty and thirty thousand juvenile criminals in London who were the children of criminals, illegitimate orphans, foundlings, step children or the children of the very poor. These children were trained in the art of stealing.³ The basic concern of the missionaries was to provide these children with education believing that 'it ought distinctly to be understood that there are very many indeed of this class who are willing to be reformed and brought under Christian instruction and training.'⁴ Education was certainly a preferable state to the harsh penalties which the law would mete out to them if caught.⁵ In view of this the work of the London City Mission and the Ragged Schools became interwoven and in 1852 alone the Mission sent five thousand nine hundred and eighty six children to such schools.⁶

In addition to the provision of education the London City Mission were to provide other means of alleviating the condition of these poor children. Dormitory accommodation was provided to prevent some from having to sleep

1 L.C.M. Mins., 20 Jan. 1836; 1 Mar. 1836; 6 July 1836 & 2 Aug. 1836.

2 Weylland, op. cit., pp. 151-208 & 238-265.

3 J. Garwood, The Million-Peopled City (London, 1853), pp. 10-12.

4 ibid., p. 16.

5 ibid., p. 8.

6 ibid., p. 20.

in the open.¹ A special interest was taken in the opportunities provided by emigration and a school was set up to train people for life in the colonies.² And much encouragement was given to ways and means of providing these juveniles with useful employment so that they could find honest means of financial support.³

Garwood's account stresses the importance of Christian voluntary help in this area in view of the inability of the Government to cope with every demand of this sort made upon it. He argued that it was so much better to prevent crime by education than punish it once it had taken place.⁴ He also boasted of the successes which the Mission had achieved in this area; one London City Missioner being entirely devoted to it though his entire support came from Lord Shaftesbury.⁵ He estimated that between eight and ten thousand of the juvenile criminal fraternity of London were brought under Christian instruction by means of the London City Mission or related work.⁶

The demands of the work in the Greenwich Hospital which catered for over two thousand aged or injured ex-servicemen were altogether different.⁷ Although the Hospital had two official chaplains they were unable to care adequately for the spiritual needs of the patients and so the London City Mission provided one of their agents to supplement their work in a lay capacity. He worked harmoniously both with the Chaplains and the Hospital authorities.⁸ The missionary's main work was to visit the patients who, by all accounts, were generally discontented because they had so little to do.⁹ He also led Bible study groups and prayer meetings.

1 ibid., p. 59.

2 ibid., p. 63f.

3 ibid., pp. 77-80.

4 ibid., p. 80.

5 ibid., p. 84.

6 ibid., p. 85.

7 ibid., p. 92.

8 ibid., p. 97f.

9 ibid., p. 95.

Again there was evidence that his work was successful in that drunken men, rebels against God and inveterate swearers were converted.¹ Since it was only a small minority of pensioners who ever attended a Church or Chapel for Holy Communion the missionary found plenty of need for his services.²

The work among the London Omnibus men demanded yet another approach. The growth of the omnibus business which, when Garwood was writing, was a comparatively new development, had given rise to a number of evils which the city missionary sought to overcome.³ The chief problem was that financial necessities demanded that omnibus drivers and conductors worked a fifteen hour day, seven days a week for the pitiful sum of 34 shillings.⁴ To the nineteenth century missionary the chief evil which resulted was that the sanctity of the Sabbath was violated and a whole class of men were prevented from ever attending worship and thus unable to be brought into an acquaintance with God.⁵ Furthermore the working conditions of these men drove them to fall into other temptations such as drink and embezzlement.⁶ The London City Mission demonstrated a concern to improve the lot of these men but seemed at a loss to know how to do so in view of the fact that they shunned anything which might be construed as political action.⁷ Their strategy therefore was on the one hand to inform the owners of the company that increased prosperity would result if they chose to obey the law of God and not operate their business on Sunday.⁸ On the other hand they sought to bring spiritual benefit to the drivers and conductors. Finding an opportunity to witness to these men in their yards without hindering their work and causing further blasphemies to be uttered

1 ibid., pp. 100ff.

2 ibid., p. 95. Only 83 out of 2350 patients communicated at Dissenting Chapels.

3 The omnibus was a French invention introduced into Britain only after a prolonged period of prejudice against it in 1829. ibid., p. 199.

4 ibid., p. 224.

5 ibid., pp. 212ff.

6 ibid., p. 224f.

7 ibid., p. 234.

8 ibid., p. 213.

required skill. But there were several accounts of missionaries who had won the confidence of the men and who eventually had been able to take the gospel to them. The real benefit of their work often did not appear for several years and it was not until the driver became too ill to continue in employment that he became ready to listen to the message that the missionary had to give.¹

The work among the London Cab men was similar to that among the Omnibus drivers. Their needs merited the employment of a full-time agent by the London City Mission in 1844. Within the first four months of his appointment he had visited one hundred and seventy eight cab stands, held two thousand one hundred and fifty six conversations, visited one hundred and sixty nine dying men and distributed three thousand and ten tracts.²

Missionary work among the Irish was of a more exclusively spiritual nature. One family in seven visited by the London City Missionaries was of Irish origin.³ The Irish immigrant in London was among the poorest section of the population. Occupationally they were almost wholly limited to being costermongers, bricklayers or dockers.⁴ Whilst acknowledging that they were naturally hospitable and buoyant and had many attractive national characteristics the London City Mission was chiefly concerned with their total spiritual ignorance, their unfamiliarity with the Bible and their hatred of Protestants which on occasions led to the lives of one of their agents being threatened.⁵ This spiritual darkness was held to

1 ibid., p. 234.

2 ibid., p. 183.

3 ibid., p. 245.

4 ibid., pp. 300 & 315.

5 ibid., pp. 262, 270-2 & 284-6.

account for the idleness, dirt and drunkenness which was evident among them.¹ The chief strategy of the missionary was to distribute copies of the Scriptures to them but the Mission had to admit that its encouragements were few.²

Through these and other specialised activities the London City Mission must be judged to have made a more significant and novel contribution to the cause of home missions than any other home missionary society. The evidence is that they were eventually unsuccessful in creating the massive shift they longed for among Londoners away from evil and unbelief.³ But the equally massive attempt they made to create that change of attitude and the success they did achieve should not be underestimated. Perhaps a typical and grand tribute to the novelty and difficulty of their work came from a chimney sweep who is reported to have commented, 'Comin' to make us religious - well I never - down here we be God and man forsaken; who would ever have thought on it'.⁴ The London City Mission protested that they were not concerned merely to get men to go to church and their activities demonstrated their genuinely broad sympathies.⁵ Nonetheless the chimney sweep who lived in a cellar was right: through the London City Mission such men were neither God nor man forsaken.

1 ibid., pp. 263 & 313.

2 ibid., pp. 278f. & 289-91.

3 For evidence see H. McLeod, Class and Religion in the Late Victorian City (London, 1974), pp. 1-132 and O. Chadwick, The Secularization of the European Mind (1975), pp. 88-106.

4 Weylland, op. cit., p. 28.

5 Garwood, Million-Peopled City, op. cit., passim.

5.4 The Evangelisation Society

The 1859 Revival brought a new impetus to the home missionary enterprise, the pace of which had been slowing down during the 1840s and 1850s. Following the Revival, a vast new machinery of home missions was brought about, staffed and financed by revival converts, and existing missions found a new lease of life.¹ Among the societies which were founded at this time was the so-far unresearched Evangelisation Society.

It began in 1864 simply as a register for evangelists, who could be recommended by three or more known persons. The purpose of compiling the register was so that the names of suitable evangelists could be circulated more widely or so that particular names could be recommended to those who enquired for a preacher suitable for a particular area or task. It was to be known as a Registry of Evangelists. The word 'society' was to be avoided, presumably because it gave too grand an impression of the Register's work.² For several years it resisted altogether employing full-time evangelists and remained content to supply, if necessary, the travelling expenses of the lay evangelists whose names were on the list.³ By October 1864 one hundred names were recorded. By December of the same year the committee heard that 'more than two hundred meetings had been held within the last six months in different parts of the country, entirely through the instrumentality of friends of the Register!'⁴

The Evangelisation Society slowly evolved to the point where it took on its settled character; practicalities forcing it to modify its mode of operation as time went by. Having for some time had applications from

1 G. E. Morgan, Mighty Days of Revival, R. C. Morgan: His Life and Times (London, 1909), p. 57 & p. 160 and J. E. Orr, The Second Evangelical Awakening in Britain (London, 1949), pp. 208-229.

2 Minutes of The Evangelisation Society, 9 Jan. 1864 & 18 Mar. 1864.

3 ibid., 27 Oct. 1864.

4 ibid., 7 Dec. 1864.

one hundred and fifty seven men, whose names could not be entered on the Register because they lacked the necessary three signatures, it was agreed to waive this requirement and give the committee the power to enter names on the list if they wished to do so.¹ That led to a situation whereby there were so many names on the list, many of whom were never employed, that a select list was drawn up of those who were really available for work. It was then discovered that the real situation was that there were thirty two men used regularly by the society whilst forty one were occasionally sent out and a good number more who were never used at all.²

It was another practicality, the promise of £5,000, which also persuaded the Registry to change its name. Mr. Henry Bewley of Dublin offered the sum of £5,000 and fifty million tracts to be made available to the society for use within a two year period, providing two conditions were fulfilled. Firstly, the money was not to be used for the purchasing of building or the maintenance of an office. Secondly, they were to change their name to The Evangelisation Society.³ It took them only a matter of days to concede on the issue of the name.⁴

The next major change of policy came in 1871 when it was decided to begin to employ 'desirable men' as paid evangelists.⁵ The decision seems to have been forced on them by their somewhat overbearing honorary secretary, Captain W. E. Smith. Captain Smith had had a distinguished military career, which came to a climax in his appointment as Adjutant of the School of Musketry in 1861.⁶ On becoming secretary to the

1 ibid., 1 Feb. 1866.

2 ibid., 31 Oct. 1866, 12 Dec 1866 & 15 Feb. 1866.

3 ibid., 26 Jan. 1867.

4 ibid., 1 Feb. 1867.

5 ibid., 4 July 1871.

6 J. Wood, The Story of the Evangelisation Society (London, 1907), p. 12.

Evangelisation Society, he seems to have been unable to leave his military manner behind in the Army. After just a few months with the Society, Mr. Gilbert, the office secretary, was asked to resign and the committee 'acquiesced' in Captain Smith's proposition that Mr. Gilbert should no longer attend the office during the remainder of his engagement with them.¹

Nonetheless, it is to Captain Smith that the honour belongs of really establishing The Evangelisation Society as a viable society. Mr. Bewley's handsome gift had given the society a false sense of financial security and when Smith became the secretary they were having to reduce their operations for lack of funds.² It was Smith's driving leadership that forced them out of the recession. It would seem that he had threatened to resign unless steps were taken 'to collect funds to enlarge the operation of the society'. The committee expressed their unabated confidence in Smith as their secretary, recognised that they were under some obligation to him because of the difficulties under which he had been working and determined to appeal for funds so that the work of the society could be augmented.³ It was part of that augmentation that paid evangelists came to be employed and their salaries became an increasingly large part of the society's budget until it became the major item of their expenditure.

It was yet another practicality, the hope of eventually receiving a legacy from Mr. A. Briscoe, that led The Evangelisation Society to adopt the doctrinal basis of the Evangelical Alliance as their own in 1894.⁴ The adoption of this doctrinal basis merely made explicit the theological

1 T-E-S. Mins., 10 June 1868 & 24 June 1868.

2 ibid., 6 Mar. 1868, 1 Apr. 1868, 8 Apr. 1868, 29 Apr. 1868 and 13 May 1868.

3 ibid., 10 Jan 1870. See also the comments of Smith's successor about his strong personality, ibid., 12 Oct. 1897.

4 ibid., 9 Oct. 1894. They did in fact make one alteration since Clause 9 of the Evangelical Alliance's Basis was considered inappropriate.

position which had been adopted from the beginning. The Evangelisation Society had always been careful to guard against any erosion to its strict evangelical orthodoxy. Charles Marshall and W. Boardman both had their names withdrawn from the register on 31 October 1866 on account of their doctrinal unsoundness. In Boardman's case, at least, this was due to his belief in the non-eternity of punishment.¹ Even Admiral Fishbourne, who had been with the society since he was a Captain and since the society had commenced, and was well known for his philanthropic work, had to forfeit his place on the committee once his views were no longer in accord with the fundamental principles of the society. Regretfully the Minutes do not record how Admiral Fishbourne had changed his views.²

New Theology was lampooned by The Evangelisation Society and Bible simplicity was prized. John Wood, who became the society's secretary in 1897, proudly boasted,

We believe 'all things written'. We are not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ. We are not ashamed of Pauline Theology. We are not afraid of being called 'antiquated', 'out of date', 'behind the times', nay, we glory in it!³

Throughout its history the Evangelisation Society has had a crisp summary of the gospel which its evangelists have been instructed to use. It contains five points: ruin; redemption; reception; renewal and responsibility. After thorough schooling in this analysis of the gospel hundreds of sermons have been but variations of this one theme. In effect the preaching of these evangelists was largely Arminian in orientation although an even more major characteristic would be its theological simplicity which meant that they largely side-stepped issues such as the

1 ibid., 24 May 1866 & 14 June 1866.

2 ibid., 18 Apr. 1882.

3 Wood, op. cit., p. 242.

4 The points were enshrined in the 'Address to Evangelists', Wood, op. cit., p. 254ff. See also p. 27ff.

Calvinist-Arminian debate which might have led to division. Such matters were left to educated ministers or theologians.

The Evangelisation Society, typical of many post-revival societies, was characterized then by a strong theological homogeneity. In contrast to this, it was ecclesiastically heterogeneous. Any who accepted their version of the gospel were welcomed, irrespective of their denominational background. Evangelists were all expected to be members of a church¹ but were to avoid preaching so as to be labelled. Any controversial issue, such as the sacraments or church government, was to be avoided,² nor were evangelists permitted to preach other than on neutral ground.³ The society was determined to be so non-controversial in character that they steadfastly refused to co-operate in prophetic or even strongly Protestant movements.⁴

The position of The Evangelisation Society on the issue of denominations was summarized in their reply to Mr. Paton on Nottingham, who wrote to ask if they would consider a person to have broken faith if, having been instrumental in converting a number of people, the evangelists then stayed to be their pastor in a congregational form of church. They replied,

this committee does not enquire into the denominational character of those who labour in the work but gladly welcome all who come to preach Christ and him crucified in an undenominational way and that any future course the evangelist might take in another direction could not be entered into by this committee.⁵

They were interested in conversion; they were not interested in any way in churchmanship and thereby begged a number of important theological questions about the meaning of conversion, baptism and church membership

1 ibid., p. 252.

2 T.E.S. Mins., 26 Jan. 1867.

3 ibid., 27 May 1868 & 10 July 1900. Tents, theatres and music halls were the usual venues.

4 ibid., 27 Mar. 1867; 22 Nov. 1898 and 8 July 1902.

5 ibid., 24 July 1867.

which inevitably had to be faced sooner or later. Consequently, the records of The Evangelisation Society studiously avoid referring to the denominational background of those involved. Among the founders, Robert Baxter was certainly an Anglican. He was a parliamentary lawyer who did much to promote the interests of the Great Northern Railway Company. He was also well known for his involvement in other missionary and philanthropic causes.¹

Similarly, Lord Radstock, a member of the first committee and an ardent supporter of the Society until 1895, was an Anglican, but not one who was much restricted by his churchmanship. Indeed, his ardent evangelism, his exercise of the power of healing and his belief in demon possession led him to experience some opposition from the regular clergy. After some flirtation with the Plymouth Brethren, he remained loyally, if loosely, within the established fold. His correspondence also reveals him to have been a man of broad sympathies including having many friends among the Roman Catholics.²

Of the others mentioned by Wood as starting the work with Baxter, the Bevans, members of the banking fraternity, were Anglicans, and it is likely that the high ranking gentlemen from the services were too. Brownlow North, though of Anglican stock, was commissioned as an evangelist by the Free Church of Scotland. George Williams and probably also George Pearse were Nonconformists. Henry Bewley was a leading member of the Plymouth Brethren from Merrion Hall, Dublin.³ It is clear that The Evangelisation Society laboured under the misapprehension in many people's eyes of being a

1 Wood, op. cit., pp. 7-10. Among his other interests Wood lists Miss Daniell's Soldiers' Homes, The Midnight Meeting Movement, The Christian Community, The Open-Air Mission and the Ragged School Union.

2 Mrs. Edward Trotter, Lord Radstock, An Interpretation and a Record (London, n.d.). F. K. Brown, op. cit., p. 354, states that Radstock was involved in 18 societies, 1 as President, 2 as Vice-President, 2 as a committee member and 3 as a Governor.

3 H. Pickering, Chief Men Among the Brethren (2nd. edn., London, 1931), p. 146f.

nonconformist society. Yet the truth was far otherwise. It would seem to have been supported and used as much by Anglicans as by Free Churchmen.¹ And yet the very question of the denominational balance had been rendered an irrelevancy by the Society itself. The men who arose out of the 1859 Revival are not primarily seen in denominational terms but simply in an undenominational evangelical perspective. Of all men these were the ones to whom Dale's criticisms applied most exactly. To him it was a weakness but to them a strength and a matter of pride that their churchmanship should be so unimportant as not to be a hindrance to the preaching of Christ.²

The method of The Evangelisation Society was almost exclusively preaching. The emphasis on visiting in the first half of the century had been replaced by the holding of preaching-centred missions. For decades evangelicals had been saying that it was the business of the church to go to the people but now they believed that the people would come to them. Between 1864 and 1907 the Society's evangelists conducted six hundred thousand meetings.³ Many of those were part of a mission which often lasted fifteen days rather than a single meeting. Many too would have been held in tents, which were used extensively during the summer months. By the end of the century it was recognised that it was more difficult to collect a congregation together than it had been. One of the obstacles came from 'the working people now having the privilege of securing small allotments of land in the neighbourhood of their homes on which they are engaged until after dark'.⁴ Even so, the policy that the primary method of evangelism was preaching was not changed.

1 T.E.S.Mins., 28 May 1864 & Wood, op. cit., pp. 89-93.

2 For a favourable examination of this undenominationalism see J. W. White, 'The Influence of North American Evangelism in Great Britain between 1830 & 1914 on the Origin and Development of the Ecumenical Movement' (Oxford Univ. D. Phil. thesis, 1963).

3 Wood, op. cit., p. 49.

4 T.E.S. Mins., 13 Apr. 1897.

The adoption of preaching as the evangelistic tool was open to other disadvantages, which were laboriously pointed out to the novice evangelists. Wood was afraid that enquiry meetings could trivialize the issues of eternity. He was concerned lest converts were made too easily and lest the number of converts should be made a subject of foolish boasting. He further warned his missionaries to be aware of the social context in which they were working. What could be done in a city could not be done in a village. Flexibility of style was demanded.¹

Wood's predecessor in An Address to Evangelists had also expounded the difficulties of the task. Preaching to the same audience on the subject of the gospel night after night with freshness and interest was no easy matter. The dangers were to preach 'delightfully' to Christians instead of evangelistically to sinners; to mistake human persuasiveness for divine influence; to preach over the heads of the audience; to become self-complacent, boastful and disparaging of others; to depend on one's gifts instead of God; to allow music to have too prominent a place and to close the door for oneself or others in the future.²

In style The Evangelisation Society was circumspect and sober. The cautious sobriety amounted almost to a fear of over-enthusiasm or of causing offence - either to the Almighty or the respectable. Sensationalism was shunned and music kept strictly in its place. Novelties were rarely tried.³ The most extraordinary venture they ever seemed to support was to give William Morgan 5/- a month, 'he having expressed a wish to perambulate the street carrying a Board with Scripture texts and at the same time to read aloud the Word of God'. But even that investment was made on

1 Wood, op. cit., pp. 41-44.

2 Cited ibid., pp. 256-259.

3 ibid., p. 40 & p. 155 and T.E.S. Mins., 13 Mar. 1867.

the recommendation of Charles Spurgeon and Mr. Kirkham.¹ Otherwise, a lack of initiative pervaded all the Society's affairs.

The evangelists came from all walks of life and included ex-navvies and farmers, as well as gentlemen.² Yet great caution was exercised in their selection and those who had formerly been alcoholics or were considered too young were declined.³ Wood commented that some of the applicants bordered on the 'grotesque'. At most, he felt, one would only expect to find good raw material which could then be moulded to the Society's own ends.⁴ Once a member of the Society, the evangelists were subject to strict discipline and were recipients of an abundance of advice. But the manner of the relationship was paternalistic rather than autocratic.⁵

The attitude of The Evangelisation Society towards women in evangelism was much more relaxed than that of the London City Mission. They both provided financial support for them as evangelists in their own right⁶ and provided for those ladies who wished to sponsor others to engage in evangelism.⁷ The annual visit to Epsom Downs for Derby Day for the purpose of engaging in open air preaching, which is still a highlight of the Society's work, was first initiated by a woman.⁸

Opposition was almost entirely unknown to The Evangelisation Society staff and on the one occasion when Wood could recall an evangelist being

1 T.E.S.Mins., 22 Jan 1868.

2 Wood, op. cit., e.g. p. 58 & p.108.

3 ibid., p 36 & p. 251. Wood claimed to have rejected 95% of applicants; p. 33.

4 ibid., pp. 33-35.

5 ibid., p. 215f. & 77.

6 E.g. T.E.S.Mins., 1 Apr. 1868; 3 Feb. 1869; 22 Apr. 1868 & 29 Apr. 1868.

7 ibid., e.g. 11 Sept. 1867; 8 Jan. 1868.

8 ibid., 19 May 1865.

roughly handled, he was said to have adopted a conciliatory approach and quickly won the respect and confidence of his attackers.¹ Such a response was entirely in keeping with the gentle, non-aggressive approach of the Society. The days had long since gone when evangelicals or Nonconformists were a persecuted minority who would resort to the use of the law to defend themselves if attacked. They were now an accepted part of the Victorian scene and evangelists took their place quite naturally in the music halls, on the fair grounds and at other places of recreation as a strand in the many-threaded rope of Victorian entertainment. In the long run it was because they so inoffensively merged with their surroundings that they contributed so little to the growth of the church, whilst apparently providing an immediate response in terms of gaining converts wherever they went.

The significance of The Evangelisation Society lies in the fact that it typified the newer evangelistic societies of its day in style and organisation. Unlike its precursors it was unconcerned to win the support of the major denominations in any real way and was quite happy to work outside the mainline church structures. It made no concession to them. If they were to support The Evangelisation Society, it was on the doctrinal and methodological grounds laid down by The Evangelisation Society itself. It was also typical in not having really thought through the implications of its limited aim. What was to happen to the converts it sought to win? Within four years of their foundation, they recognised that the making of individual converts was an inadequate goal and they resolved that

wherever the work has commenced it should be the object of the committee to continue it until by God's blessing a body of Believers is gathered who will meet together regularly for prayer and mutual edification and so become a centre from which the Lord's work of evangelisation may take fresh development.²

1 Wood, op. cit., p. 88.

2 T.E.S.Mins., 29 July 1868.

This shift towards the recognition that an ecclesiastical goal was necessary involved implications which were never investigated. At the heart then of the undenominational society there lay ambiguities which went unresolved to the detriment of the society.

The Evangelisation Society expanded its work throughout the nineteenth century, forming alliances with similar work in Scotland and Liverpool.¹ In 1907 it had as many as two hundred and forty evangelists on its register. And yet its greatest contribution was in the work it spawned, rather than in that which it retained within its own ranks. For several years The Evangelisation Society gave William Booth handsome support for his work in the East End of London. The first grant was made in February 1867 and involved the ambiguous comment, '£3 to each of Wm. Booth's (5) stations where no church formed for two years'.² There can be no doubt that William Booth received more from The Evangelisation Society than any other evangelist. On 25 September 1867 they provided him with £100 for three months of theatre services. In November they gave him, in addition to his regular support, £67 to help him out of difficulties. By January 1868 they were granting him a regular £32 per month.

The relationship between The Evangelisation Society and Booth came to an end in April 1869 when the committee of The Evangelisation Society 'felt compelled to relinquish the pecuniary grant hitherto made to him'.³ The reasons are unrecorded but a number of reasons emerge in the reading of the Minutes. Firstly, Booth's requests to the committee were substantial and persistent. It was not consistent with their policy to invest so much in one evangelist's work, even though they recognised its importance. They had calculated that there were twenty eight different

1 ibid., 13 Jan. 1891 & 22 Jan. 1901.

2 ibid., 13 Feb. 1867.

3 ibid., 7 Apr. 1869.

missions operating in the East End of which Booth's was but one.¹ Secondly, Booth was obviously not easy to work with. He found it difficult to keep the committee accurately informed about developments and expenditure, nor did he always warn them in advance as to what he would require. At one stage his published circulars did not tally with the agreements made with the committee and they feared 'that he was involving himself so that their connection with him would bring them into discredit'.² The Evangelisation Society also saw their role as providing for temporary assistance only and they feared that Booth was becoming over-dependent on them. Even after The Evangelisation Society had made it clear that they no longer intended to support him, Booth still requested their help, which was declined.³

Although Booth was probably unaware of it at the time, the severing of relationships was a good step forward as far as he was concerned. Had he remained working with The Evangelisation Society's support, he would never been able to weld his followers into the Salvation Army since the rules of The Evangelisation Society would have forbidden such a sectarian move. But Booth became aware of the inadequacy of making converts alone and of the ambiguity involved in The Evangelisation Society's position as expressed in the July 1868 resolution and he decided to overcome the inadequacy and the ambiguity by forming his own Army.⁴

1 ibid., 16 Oct. 1867.

2 ibid., 16 Oct. 1867 & 3 Apr. 1867.

3 ibid., 5 May 1867.

4 See Appendix B.5.

5.5 Concluding Comments-

John Garwood, who served for some time as the secretary of the London City Mission, firmly believed that evangelistic missions and societies which were associated with one denomination were destined to be short-lived. He claimed that he could not remember one denominational mission which had lasted more than a dozen years. To him a home missionary society which was based on a catholic foundation was infinitely preferable.¹

There were certainly some advantages in this method of evangelism. Firstly, the missionary who represented a society rather than a church overcame, at least to some extent, the barrier which existed in the minds of many that the missionary was only interested in getting people to attend church. Usually the interdenominational missionary was not recommending a particular church although he may well have been associated with a mission hall. Secondly, the missionary from an interdenominational or undenominational society was set free from the traditions and restrictions of any particular denomination and could afford to be much more flexible in his pattern of operation. Given time the societies themselves formed their own traditions and developed inflexible expectations of their converts. Even so, for the most part the evangelistic societies were able to work unhindered by social conventions and religious traditions which were inappropriate in their mission field. A third advantage was that such societies were supported and staffed by people whose commitment to the work and aims of the society was high. Enthusiasm characterized their workers whether they were paid agents or voluntary helpers.

Charles Booth recognised that enthusiasm was 'the active virtue'

1 Garwood, Catholic Character, op. cit., p. 9.

of such missions. But such a recognition did not hinder him from presenting a detailed list of criticisms of their work in his review of the Life and Labours of the People in London in 1902. Booth's comments applied both to mission halls run by individual churches or denominations and to the work of societies like the London City Mission. Although he only made a passing reference to societies such as The Evangelisation Society it is clear that he was equally critical of their work.

Booth willingly acknowledged the amount of work done by missions; he fully appreciated the difficulties under which they operated and admitted that they achieved some success.¹ Yet his negative criticisms outweigh his positive evaluation.

In the case of a society or church which used a mission hall he deplored the fact that the mission hall was often the most miserable building in an already poor and disreputable street. Consequently the building set a bad example and did not encourage respect to be shown to the mission.²

The chief criticism offered by Booth, however, was much deeper. He argued that such missions only continued to operate because those who worked for them were engaged in an elaborate act of self-delusion. It was, he argued, only because they made exaggerated claims for their significance and success that they kept going. He explained that,

So far as it goes the success is real. It consists in the finding and binding together of kindred spirits in the service of God, and in maintaining a never-ending fight against the ungodliness and indifference around them. In this struggle they sustain high hopes in spite of continual disappointment; for though real as far as it goes the success is absolutely limited and very far from what they set out to achieve. Some may appear to succeed in a wider sense and may even be firmly assured of it themselves, but the seeming success lacks solidity, and is due to some form of inflation. Those who claim it are self-deceived. Perhaps they wish to be so.

1 C. Booth, Life and Labours of the People in London (London, 1902), Third Series, vii, pp. 270, 272 & 282.

2 ibid., p. 272.

In other cases the apparent failure is admitted, and the results are humbly left in God's hands.¹

This self-deception expressed itself in a number of forms according to the particular nature of the mission. When evangelism took the form of itinerant mission services Booth claimed that they boasted of apparent success but the success was only due to their drawing in a roving religious population who were happy to attend night after night because, as in a theatre, the performers maintained their interest by a frequent change of performance.² When pure evangelism was mingled with social relief it achieved apparent success but brought with it the problem of mixed motives on the part of the recipients of relief.³ When mission halls were small individual affairs much honest and devoted work was evident and there seemed little room for self-delusion. Yet even here Booth claimed that deception was evident in the way in which reports of the work were given in the glowing terms expected by its supporters.⁴ In the case of those societies which had grown large 'due to business-like management and mastery in the arts of advertising and appeal' Booth claimed that the exaggerated language was more deliberate and calculated.⁵

An impartial reading of the evidence confirms Booth's comments on their self-deception. It was only by believing that they were successful or by believing that a breakthrough would come or by redefining how success was to be measured that they were able to maintain the enormous commitment and expenditure of effort which they did.

When due recognition is given to the fact that some converts were made and some existing churches grew and yet other new churches were formed it has to be said that the effort expended was out of all proportion

1 ibid., p. 274.

2 ibid., p. 275f.

3 ibid., p. 278.

4 ibid., p. 282.

5 ibid., p. 284.

to the result achieved. "It was a heathen world which they sought to transform but it was a heathen world it remained.

Whilst Booth's analysis accounts for the inner dynamic which enabled missionary society workers to continue their efforts whilst achieving so little fruit other factors need to be considered to account for their failure. Much research has already been undertaken into the nature and extent of secularisation which eventually limited missionary success.¹ But two additional factors, one sociological and the other theological, may be noted regarding the strategy employed by the societies which made their partial failure inevitable.

Sociologically, the concern of most missions was to convert individuals. Occasionally they might aim to convert a whole family but they were rarely successful in doing so.² To see an individual converted whilst remaining in the environment of pagan working class London meant either that he would develop out of his social context because of his new found faith or be sucked back into his social context at the expense of his faith. It was a rare person indeed who could remain a part of his old social network whilst holding on at the same time to such a strong religious reference point that lay outside of it. The conversion of individuals was therefore, from a sociological perspective, a naive aim which failed to take into sufficient consideration the reality of the social network of which he was a part.

Theologically, the approach of the societies also raised a number of problems which were rarely faced with honesty. In particular there was the issue of the relationship between conversion and church membership. Most societies were interested in the former but totally uninterested in the latter. For reasons of ecclesiastical diplomacy they shunned the idea

1 E.g., McLeod, op. cit.; and Chadwick, op. cit..

2 Booth, op. cit., p. 274.

that they were out to form churches or they would have lost the support of church bodies and church members on which they relied so heavily. Yet to emphasise the experience of conversion as the climax of spiritual experience without relating it to the ongoing experience of a Christian community was to court a high spiritual infant mortality rate. The response of some societies was to ignore the issue with the result that they recorded numerous conversions but were unable to demonstrate any lasting growth. The response of others, such as the London City Mission, was to pretend not to form churches whilst, in practice, forming second class churches in their mission halls. The fact, however, that these halls were not recognised as churches and were prevented in certain respects from functioning as churches in that they were not, for example, permitted to administer either baptism or communion, carried with it additional problems. It was only, as for example in the case of the Salvation Army, when full sectarian development was permitted that the gains of conversion were preserved. Even here the sacraments were not practiced, for pragmatic rather than theological reasons, but other means of differentiating members from the surrounding neighbourhood were incorporated, thus serving a similar psychological function to the sacraments. The Salvation Army as a whole became a genuine church whose culture was appropriate to the context in which it was working and not inferior to what others might have considered proper churches which lay outside its social context.

Any evaluation of the work of the evangelical societies therefore must be ambivalent. On the one hand they engaged in work, at great personal cost, which the denominations would have been both unwilling and unsuitable to do. Their activity and limited success deserves admiration. On the other hand there were a number of important weaknesses implicit in their approach which prevented them from achieving the long-term results for which they longed.

Chapter 6

UNITY AND DIVERSITY IN THE HOME MISSIONARY MOVEMENT

6.1 United in Action - The Free Church Simultaneous Mission of 1901

When the home missionary movement began at the end of the eighteenth century, it was the concern of a few isolated individuals. They adopted the strategy, at once both suitable to their day and determined by the rural nature of England, of encouraging itinerant preaching within a limited area. With the growing confidence and effectiveness of the movement home missions became an important aspect of the emerging nonconformist denominations though they failed ever to realise their supporters' hopes for the movement. The denominationalising of home missions was constantly counter-balanced by the spawning of new non-denominational evangelistic societies.

It was while the denominational efforts were finding success difficult to achieve at the end of the nineteenth century that a new development in the history of home missions took place - that of the Simultaneous Mission of 1901, organised by the National Council of Evangelical Free Churches. This mission was the prototype of many united church campaigns which were to be nationally orchestrated in order to win the nation back to God in the twentieth century. It was also probably the most effective mission there was ever to be in securing the widespread enthusiasm and co-operation of the churches.

The alliance took place in the face of difficulty. Alan Gilbert has recently written, 'Historically the correlation is clear. Movements towards unity have coincided with mounting evidence of secular apathy outside the Churches and institutional difficulties within.'¹ This

¹ A. D. Gilbert, The Making of Post-Christian Britain (London & New York, 1980), p.127.

phenomenon, well researched by R. Currie in relation to the amalgamations within Methodism,¹ is equally evident here.

By the turn of the century the Congregational Church Aid Society was in serious difficulty, having failed to gain any widespread support in the Congregational Churches and was facing the shame and pain of retreat.² They welcomed the proposed united mission in the firm belief that only as hearty co-operation was substituted for suicidal competition would 'self-preservation in the villages and aggressive work in the larger towns' be achieved.³

On the surface Methodism was in a healthier state. The 1890s had been for them years of steady, if not uninterrupted, growth and the spirit of the Forward Movement was spreading rapidly. But here, too, things were not altogether well. The Methodist Times had expressed great concern in 1897 at the leakage of members from Methodist Churches, which between 1881 and 1897 was never less than 8.2% of members per annum and never more than 10.6% per annum. A total of 645,853 people had been lost to their cause during those years.⁴ The modern craze for amusement; the growing practice of converts going from one denomination to another and the failure to maintain high standards of membership at their reception point were all blamed for the losses. But there was even more concern for those who never came near the church. The Annual Address of the Conference for 1898 confessed that the conference mourned 'because the mass of irreligion and indifference at our doors shows little sign of disintegration and abatement,

1 R. Currie, Methodism Divided (London, 1966).

2 Church Aid Society Report, (1899-1900), 16f.

3 ibid., p. 19.

4 Methodist Times, 24 Mar. 1897. Other Methodist groups recorded approximately the same proportions of losses except the Primitive Methodists who experienced a staggering 17.6% per annum.

although aggressive unbelief is for the moment discredited'.¹

The Baptists, who were perhaps the most active of all in home missionary work, were also experiencing modest growth. But their Home Missionary Society, which celebrated its centenary in 1897, was in a poor state and they were very aware of the obstacles they faced outside the churches in the race against secularism. E. G. Gange, President of the Baptist Union in 1898, reviewed the century with mixed emotions. As Baptists, he said, they could rejoice that their numbers, wealth, influence and opportunities had increased. But they also had to face the fact that there were many intellectual issues which caused people to doubt. It was an educated and luxurious age when 'subtle unbelief' was at work. Sacerdotalism was also rampant. The way ahead was not going to be easy and a new spirit of passionate aggression was needed to convert the masses.²

In a major address setting out the objectives of the Simultaneous Mission, the Rev. J. Tolfree Parr, who was later to become an evangelist with the National Council of Evangelical Free Churches, explained to their Fifth National Council that the new century would provide them with unparalleled opportunities for evangelism. No one, he claimed, would dispute the need for a new effort on a scale never to have been tried before. Intemperance, gambling, Romanism and the expansion of the cities made the demand for such a move imperative. Using Sheffield as an example, he stated that 250,000 out of a population of 350,000 never entered a place of worship.³ The growing threat of secularism was therefore explicitly recognised as an incentive to unity.

1 Minutes of the Methodist Conference, (1898), 427.

2 Baptist Union Handbook, (1898), 91-106.

3 Free Church Year Book and Official Report, (1900), 28.

Barry Till has suggested that the modern ecumenical movement was born because of a desire to fulfil the worldwide missionary mandate at a time when the churches were characterised by optimism in prosperity.¹ Be that, as it may, in regard to the Edinburgh Conference of 1910, on which Till bases his claim, it is not entirely true to the context of the Simultaneous Mission of 1901. The missionary motive is apparent. Superficially, too, there was prosperity. There was also a certain confidence, if not optimism, about their hopes for the mission. F. W. Bourne saw no reason why one million Londoners should not be converted if all the Free Churches threw in their weight behind it.² Others were less specific but equally confident.³ For all that, it is evident that many knew just how great was the adversary of secularism with which they had to deal. Tolfree Parr refused to believe that the great masses outside of the church would be permanently reached by this one mission. Some might be converted but its real value would, he believed, lie elsewhere. He hoped that 100,000 new members taken from the churches' outer fringe would be added to the churches in London alone, and so create a great new force to evangelise the masses.⁴ It is wiser, therefore, to see this ecumenical adventure as springing from 'hope in adversity' rather than 'optimism in prosperity'.

The National Council of Evangelical Free Churches had already made significant contributions to home missions before the 1901 mission was envisaged. Although the constitution adopted in 1896 made no explicit reference to evangelism it was believed that the united endeavours of local Free Church Councils and the absence of friction would inevitably lead to

1 B. Till, The Churches Search for Unity (Harmondsworth, 1972), p. 29-31.

2 Cited in the Leader, M.T., 16 Nov. 1899.

3 B.U. Handbook, (1901), 109 & 128.

4 F.C.Y.B., (1900), 30.

the strengthening and increasing effectiveness of the Free Churches.¹ Furthermore, the absence of a specific evangelistic mandate did not inhibit the local Free Church Councils, several of whom engaged in united evangelistic missions from the beginning. In Birmingham, under the inspiration of George Cadbury, they had adopted a scheme for evangelism put forward by the Rev. Thomas Law which involved the systematic visitation of the whole city by over four thousand visitors, organised on a Free Church variation of the parochial system. The parochial idea was one which the council was to pursue for several years.²

Thomas Law, who had been a Methodist Free Church Minister for twenty three years, became the organising secretary of the Free Church Council in 1895. Throughout his office, as before it, he maintained an impressive commitment to the cause of home missions. It was he who persuaded the Council to employ missionaries in 1897, of whom Gipsy Smith was the first.³ Smith's association with the Free Churches, which lasted until 1912, was 'greatly blessed'. During the last mission he conducted under their auspices in the nineteenth century, at Luton, he saw one thousand and eighty people, one in forty of the town's population, enter the enquiry room.⁴ By 1900 he could assert that half the local Free Church Councils had held united missions and even John Clifford, a man who differed from Gipsy Smith in so many ways, had become one of his enthusiastic supporters, using him for a mission at Westbourne Park, Paddington, and lauding his clear message, heart-searching methods, reasonable presentation and ethical content.⁵

1 D. P. Hughes, The Life of Hugh Price Hughes (London, 1907), p. 447.

2 For details see E. K. H. Jordan, Free Church Unity. History of the Church Council Movement, 1896-1941 (London, 1956), pp. 35-37, 56-67.

3 Gipsy Smith, Gipsy Smith, His Life and Work (Rev. Edn., London, n.d.), p. 293.

4 ibid., p. 296.

5 F.C.Y.B., (1900), 107.

As well as Gipsy Smith, the Free Church Council employed Mr. W. R. Lane, who had a special ability to reach young men. Following the Simultaneous Mission the Rev. J. Tolfree Parr, too, was to be employed as a missionary.

The idea of the Simultaneous Mission of 1901 also originated with Thomas Law. Many, R. W. Dale among them, had feared that the new organisation would be a political body, even a branch of the Liberation Society. Law hoped that the priority they had given to evangelism would dispel that fear and prove that it was a spiritual not political movement. He hoped that the Simultaneous Mission would silence any remaining critics.¹ Law's inspiration had come from D. L. Moody who, it was said, had taught them 'the infinite strategic importance of the cities', especially the University cities.² Moody had died in 1897, otherwise he would have been given a prominent part in the campaign.³ As it was, the lot was to fall totally on a British team of evangelists. Moody's success had also been an encouragement to them to attempt this particular kind of mission. The Methodist Times put his success down, not to the evangelists themselves, but to the fact that their campaigns were united. The 1901 Mission would be even more effective, it was believed, precisely because it would extend the unity principle and be organised not, as in Moody's case, by scratch committees of individuals but officially by the churches themselves.⁴

The mission was to be held in three phases. Firstly, London would be evangelised between 27 January and 5 February. Secondly, the provinces would receive the missionaries from 17 January to 24 February. Thirdly, the villages would be the focus of attention from 2 to 10 March. Each major

1 F.C.Y.B., (1900), 106.

2 ibid., p. 29.

3 ibid., p. 32.

4 M.T., 13 Sept. 1900.

town or city was to be divided into an appropriate number of districts and one church or hall chosen as the centre of the mission in each district. London alone had approximately two hundred centres; Birmingham was divided into one hundred and fifty parishes for visitation purposes; Leeds had twenty seven centres; Liverpool twenty nine and so on. It was estimated that in the provinces some three thousand missions were to be held simultaneously.¹ As appropriate, each centre would hold, after extensive visitation and saturation of the district with evangelistic invitations, lunchtime meetings; special meetings at various times to reach the various classes; afternoon Bible readings and great evangelistic rallies in the evenings. Following the mission, it was anticipated that a number of meetings would be held for the new converts.

It was recommended that plans should begin almost ten months in advance so that prayer meetings could be held, visitors sent out and counsellors and choirs trained. Missioners were recommended by a central organising committee who provided short lists of suitable names on request. The committee, which was appointed on 30 March 1900, consisted of Hugh Price Hughes (Wesleyan Methodist); J. Tolfree Parr (Primitive Methodist); Dr. W. J. Townsend (Methodist New Connexion); Silvester Horne (Congregationalist); C. F. Aked (Baptist); Dr. R. F. Horton (Congregationalist); F. B. Meyer (Baptist); W. Cuff (Baptist); P. W. Bunting (Wesleyan Methodist); Dr. John Clifford (Baptist); J. Bamford Slack;² J. C. Rickett M.P.. (Congregationalist); F. W. Bourne (United Methodist, the former leader of the Bible Christians); Robert Whyte (denomination unknown) and Prof. Rendel Harris (Quaker).³

The proposals were greeted everywhere among the Free Churches with

1 F.C.Y.B., (1901), 213.

2 J. Bamford Slack, denomination unknown, was briefly Liberal M.P. for Mid-Herts 1904-06 both gaining and losing his seat against national trends.

3 Minutes of the General Committee of the Free Church Council, 30 Mar. 1900.

enthusiasm. The Methodist Conference heard of the idea 'with satisfaction', wished it to be eminently successful and commended it to the sympathy of the people.¹ The Baptists greeted it as 'a work so rich in promise for the country and the world' and prayed that it would be 'crowned' with the blessing of God'.² And all the other Nonconformist bodies followed suit. Even many evangelical Anglicans supported the mission which was, for example, inaugurated at Ripon by the Dean of the Anglican Cathedral.³ The Church Times alone appears to have been suspicious. This paper deplored it as a campaign 'to sow dissension in every parish in the land ... a campaign of wholesale proselytism'.⁴

The mission seems, as it has survived in various reports at least, to have been uniquely successful in the quality of interdenominational co-operation which it achieved. The Methodist Times, parodying the words of Jesus, had warned not to let the mission be killed by the denominational devil for 'whoever will save his denomination for my sake will lose it and whosoever will lose his denomination for my sake and the sinners' sake, the same will gain it'.⁵ When it was over, the Baptist Times was able to say,

Differences in doctrine, church government, worship have been lost in the blessed impulse of a Christ-like love for the souls of men. No one has remembered whether he belonged to the right or the left wing of the army, to the van or the rear guard, but only that he with his brethren was fighting under the banner of Christ.⁶

1 Minutes of the Methodist Conference, (1900), 341.

2 B. U. Handbook, (1901), 95.

3 The Christian, 21 Feb. 1901.

4 ibid., 31 Jan. 1901. The Christian in turn dismissed the Church Times as a 'prejudiced organ' making untrue charges.

5 M.T., 21 June 1900.

6 Baptist Times, 12 April 1901.

From now on, the Baptist Times prophesied, the opponants of the truth would have to fight, not with scattered units, but with one great united army.

Only one slight disturbance to the calm unity of the Simultaneous Missions survives in the records. On 11 October 1900 The Christian, an evangelical newspaper founded after the 1859 Revival, which was dedicated to recording news of home missionary work, questioned the role of Charles Frederick Aked, of Liverpool, in the mission. Mr. Aked, a member of the organising committee, had published his theological views in a book entitled Changing Creeds and Social Struggles, whose second edition, published in 1894, contained an essay on 'The Gospel for the Day' the orthodoxy of which The Christian found to be very suspect.

Mr. Aked had written that the divinity of Christ did not differ in its nature from the divinity which was in all men. He viewed the idea of Christ's death as a penal substitute for men to be 'modified savagery' and nonsensical. Christ's death was not a sacrifice in the Jewish sense but 'as a wife is a sacrifice who endures agony in the degradation of lifelong partnership with the slave of drink and lust'. The atonement was not to restrain the anger of God but an outpouring of the life of God in self-sacrifice.¹ The Christian, not unreasonably, suggested,

It is a question of foremost and vital importance whether the Gospel to be preached is according to the "old Evangelicalism" of the "New Evangel" of Mr. Aked; or whether they₂ are both to be preached simultaneously or alternately.

1 C. F. Aked, Changing Creeds and Social Struggles (2nd. edn. London, 1894).

2 The Christian, 11 Oct. 1900.

Curiously, it seemed to admit that both the old and new gospels were intelligible and defensible, but the question as to which gospel was to be preached at the Simultaneous Mission still needed to be put and the defence of the old gospel still needed to be made.

Two other details were added to The Christian's report. Archibald Brown, a stout defender of evangelical orthodoxy, it said, had declined to be the missionary at Leicester because Mr. Aked was on the committee there. It also said that The Christian had been informed that Mr. Aked had, since publishing the suspect book, changed his views. In that, if it was true, they rejoiced. They knew him to be a commendable man, especially in relation to his temperance work, and only called him into question in regard to his views on the gospel. If he had changed his mind they hoped he would withdraw the book from circulation as evidence of his repentance.

Undaunted by this last point, the Council of the Evangelical Alliance took up the issue when they met on 8 October. They adjourned the meeting as soon as the issue was raised so that two of their number could draft a letter to the Free Church Council expressing disquiet about Mr. Aked's views. While this was being done the rest of the council engaged in prayer.¹

For their part the Free Church Council held a 'special officers meeting' early in December to consider its reply to the Evangelical Alliance with the result that they published a manifesto which received wide circulation in the religious press and the churches. It read, in part,

Pre-eminently the mission must be a preaching of the gospel. The doctrine of the deity of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, involves both His divine authority to forgive sins and His divine grace in saving; and the faith of this will make the efforts of the Churches powerful and tender.

1 Minutes of the Evangelical Alliance Council, 8 Nov. 1900.

The greatness of Christ's sacrifice, and the reality of His atonement for the sins of the whole world, will prove an appeal to which the hearts and consciences of quickened sinners will respond.¹

Thus, without answering the specific issues in detail, the Free Church Council were able to pacify The Christian, who welcomed the Manifesto and claimed that it 'emphasised the truths which must lie at the foundation of Gospel preaching' and had indicated a 'sincere loyalty to the Lord Jesus Christ on the part of the Free Church Council'.²

The Council of the Evangelical Alliance were not to be quite so easily pacified. They resolved that,

... while thankfully recognising the truth of the statements made by the National Free Church Council on the positive side, (the Council of the Evangelical Alliance) cannot but regret that the Free Church Council have not spoken with greater clearness in disclaiming the opinions of the writer of the book referred to in a letter of the Evangelical Alliance dated November 9th. ...³

To what extent Mr. Aked had changed his views was never discussed. Archibald Brown clearly believed that he had not and protested strongly against the decision to appoint him as missionary to Swindon. The next issue of the Evangelical Alliance Quarterly contained the full details of the correspondence between the two bodies. It also contained two strongly orthodox articles on the gospel, namely, 'Apostolic Preaching' by the Rev. Dr. McEwan and 'The Unchangeable Gospel compared with the New Evangel' by C. H. Spurgeon.⁴

After that the mission had commenced and no more was heard of the matter. The significance of the dispute lies in how minor it was.

1 F. C. C. Mins., 3 Dec. 1900.

2 The Christian, 13 Dec. 1900.

3 E. A. Mins., 13 Dec. 1900.

4 Evangelical Christendom, (1901), 104-111.

No one really seemed to want to create controversy over the meaning of the gospel with the result that the success of the mission might be threatened. The Evangelical Alliance, having made their protest and having satisfied the narrower part of their constituency by doing so, were now content to support what was to be a generally evangelical mission both in its theology and its methodology. They realised that divisions between Christians and the world were so much greater than any divisions between Christians alone and the internal differences needed to be sunk in order to rescue the nation.

It is remarkable that in the event there appears to have been a general consensus about the nature of the gospel which was preached and about the type of methods to be used. All the missionaries seem to have been more or less of an evangelical persuasion. It was not an obscurantist evangelicalism which was propagated but neither was it a humanitarian liberalism. John Clifford could happily work with Gipsy Smith. It was sufficiently evangelical for the Particular Baptists of Cambridgeshire to co-operate there for the first time with other Free Churches.¹ It was an evangelicalism of the centre, of Meyer, of Silvester Horne, of P. T. Forsyth, of Hughes, of Horton and of Campbell Morgan. And it was also remarkable that it was typically evangelical methods to which all else became subservient for the duration of the mission.

The organising committee for London was chaired by F. B. Meyer who proved himself to be as enthusiastic a worker for its success as anyone could have been.² This central committee provided the missionaries and the general advertising for the two hundred centres involved. It launched the mission with an All Day Prayer Meeting at the Queen's Hall, London, on

1 F. C. Y. B., (1901), 108.

2 M. Jennie Street, F. B. Meyer, His Life and Work (London, 1902), pp. 113-115.

21 January. This was followed by the official Inauguration at the Guildhall a week later in the presence of the Lord Mayor and Sheriffs of London; an unprecedented honour for the Nonconformists. At this meeting Dr. Joseph Parker was the preacher and a galaxy of other Free Church leaders took part.¹ Many hundreds were turned away from the meeting, unable to find seats.

On 22 January Queen Victoria had died. Her death added a dimension of seriousness to the mission, which its organisers had prayed for but could not plan. The mortality of their Sovereign and Empress reminded men and women of their own mortality. The ending of her era made her subjects turn to God in hope and trust for an unknown future. The missionaries exploited the tolling of her mourning bells to the full and their addresses everywhere had an added persuasiveness about them.²

In inner London the main centres were the City Temple, Bishopsgate Chapel, Exeter Hall and the Metropolitan Tabernacle. John McNeill was the missionary at the City Temple and it was an experience he did not relish. The organisation was poor; there was little chance of following up any converts; the suburbs, he feared, would prove more attractive centres and the apathy of Londoners was well known. Yet he successfully conducted ten lunch time meetings and six evening meetings for audiences who were mainly composed of city gentlemen. The apathy he anticipated did not materialise and on the final Sunday of the mission the road was entirely blocked by the crowd waiting to get into the City Temple and the police were quite overwhelmed.³

1 William Adamson, The Life of the Rev. Joseph Parker, DD, (Glasgow & London, 1902), pp.329-331.

2 F.B.Meyer proposed that members of the Christian Endeavour should exploit even Queen Victoria's funeral evangelistically by distributing tracts along her funeral route. The Christian, 31 Jan. 1901. Cf. FCYB (1901), 212.

3 FCYB, (1901), 109-196.

Others felt that Dr. Clifford had, in fact, 'the most difficult mission centre in London' at Bishopsgate Chapel. He preached there every day of the mission at noon on the theme of 'Be reconciled to God'. In such a situation it was impossible to hold Enquirers' Meetings and so response cards were placed in the pews and people were invited to return them to their local minister.¹

Other lunch time meetings were held by F.B.Meyer at Exeter Hall, these being of a devotional kind, and H.P.Hughes at the Metropolitan Tabernacle.²

The most successful centre was undoubtedly the Metropolitan Tabernacle where Gipsy Smith was the main missionary. In relation to this centre alone, three hundred and fifty thousand invitations were printed and distributed. Smith's nightly preaching, which was usually attended by his father and Pastor Thomas Spurgeon and sometimes, too, by F.B.Meyer, was only the hub of a whole variety of activity. Assisted by the Revs. W. Stott and J.B.Anderson they held sectional meetings for young men and women; had seven centres for children and special meetings for bus and train men and policemen. Thirty six churches and sixty three Sunday Schools invested their energies in this one centre.³ One thousand two hundred people passed through the Enquiry Room at the Metropolitan Tabernacle and subsequently crowded meetings were held for the instruction of converts. As late as October, Thomas Spurgeon commented that, 'converts resulting from Gipsy Smith's mission are still appearing and asking to be united with God's people'.⁴

1 ibid., p.192.

2 ibid., p.193.

3 ibid., p.193f.

4 Smith, op.cit., pp. 301-303 and The Christian, 14 Feb. 1901.

Meetings in other centres were less spectacular in their results and perhaps even relatively less successful in producing converts. At Wesley's Chapel the congregation was chiefly composed of young men from the warehouses.¹ At Union Chapel, where Silvester Horne was the missionary, proceedings got off to a slow start but eventually the chapel was filled, sadly, however, by mainly church-going people.²

In the suburbs numerous conversions were recorded. At Kingston eighty professed conversion³ and at Peckham Park Road Chapel fifty-five entered the Enquiry Room.⁴ The chief feature of the mission at South West Ham was the conversion of children and young people and one Sunday School teacher could rejoice that every member of her class had decided for Christ.⁵ All in all, F.B.Meyer estimated, probably accurately, that some two hundred thousand were reached each day of the mission in London⁶ but Charles Williams was almost certainly over-estimating when he claimed that one hundred thousand new disciples of Christ were won.⁷

Once the mission to London had finished, the same energetic evangelists turned their attention to the Provinces, in which it was expected that three thousand missions would be held simultaneously.⁸ In this phase of the mission the most spectacular events were those in Birmingham. The Lord Mayor launched the mission and even changed the date of the Mayoral Banquet in order to do so. The city had been divided into one hundred and fifty 'parishes' and each home had been visited three times prior to the mission and once during it. Sixty thousand invitations were

1 FCYB (1901), p.197.

2 ibid., p.198.

3 ibid., p.209.

4 ibid., p.209.

5 ibid., p.207.

6 ibid., p.204.

7 Jordan, op.cit., p.68.

8 FCYB.,(1901), p.213.

issued to Sunday School scholars. And a choir of two hundred and fifty voices had been trained.¹

The most remarkable feature of the Birmingham mission was the combination of Dr. John Clifford and Gipsy Smith as the missionaries. Dr. Clifford addressed the lunch time meetings, again on the theme of 'Reconciliation with God', which were attended by between one thousand two hundred and one thousand five hundred ministers, professional and business men daily. Gipsy Smith addressed the evening meetings which were attended by five thousand nightly, the hall being full one and a half hours before the service was due to commence.² Gipsy Smith's verdict on the partnership was that no missionary had had a better colleague than he. As he told the National Council of Free Churches at their Sixth Annual meetings,

They tell a story of a coloured man going to preach to his people. He said, "In the first place I shall explain. In the second place I shall argue. In the third place, I shall come to the rousification". Dr. Clifford, in the afternoon, did the explanation and the arguing, and at night I worked up the rousifications and I rejoice to have been allowed that part of the work. It is not
3
everybody can do that.

Although, as the Baptist Times put it, they were 'strikingly dissimilar in many respects' and worked on individual lines, they were one in purpose and 'admirably supplemented the work of each other'.⁴ It was a combination that worked and one thousand five hundred passed through the Enquiry Room, almost four hundred of these on the last Sunday alone.⁵ The only disappointment about Birmingham was that the Press made remarkably little of the mission in contrast to the enthusiastic support given by the Press in

1 ibid., p.213f.

2 ibid., p.214f.

3 ibid., p.114.

4 The full report of 15 Mar. 1901 is preserved in C.T.Bateman, John Clifford, Free Church Leader and Preacher (London, 1904), pp.235-237.

5 FCYB.,(1901), 214.

most other places.¹

At Blackburn, where F.C. Spurr was the missionary, they secured the co-operation of many Anglicans.² At Bradford, where the team was composed of twenty-four missionaries, it was estimated that, owing to the inclusion of services at the mills, twenty thousand people heard the gospel daily.³ At Brighton the mission was held in the Dome. The chief missionary was the Rev. J. Odell, a Primitive Methodist, and one thousand five hundred attended his afternoon Bible Readings. But the most outstanding feature was the late night meeting held on 21 February. During that evening one hundred workers were sent to visit the public houses and then at closing time a procession, led by the Salvation Army Band, wound its way through the streets to the Dome to a service attended by one thousand five hundred, held between 11.00 p.m. and midnight, most of whom were not churchgoers. But no results of this meeting are recorded.⁴ The visitation of the public houses was also a feature of the work in Cardiff where forty ladies engaged in the practice. The Rev. J. McNeill, who had gone from the City Temple to be the chief missionary at Cardiff, said that, 'the experiment was as novel as it was daring'. But he was glad to report that there was no shortage of volunteers for it.⁵

At Cambridge the strategy was different again. The two was divided into six sections and in each of these a week of evangelistic meetings was held before the week of united meetings at which Silvester Horne preached. Being Cambridge a more apologetic approach was adopted and on one night they refrained from preaching in order to answer questions, previously submitted, about the difficulties faced by the audience concerning the

1 B.T., 15 Mar. 1901.

2 FCYB, p.215.

3 ibid., p.216,

4 ibid., p.217f,

5 ibid., p.220.

Christian faith.¹ Each night the mission hall was packed out, in spite of appalling weather and many enquiries regarding salvation took place. Furthermore, despite the fact that no previous arrangements had been made, a 'hastily got-up' Bible Study was arranged and by the end of the week four hundred were attending it.²

Dr. R. F. Horton went to Halifax for the mission and received the wholehearted support of every Free Church minister in the town.³ Judging from his Autobiography and later comments, it may not altogether have been a success. The former only records an earlier week of preaching at Nottingham in connection with the Simultaneous Mission, at which 'no striking results appeared'.⁴ It is silent about his visit to Halifax. The later comments suggest that another strategy was needed than that which had been adopted, if the nation really was to be won to Christ, with evangelism being conducted in neutral halls and being conducted by those with the distinct office of evangelist.⁵

The missionary at Hull was Mr. W. R. Lane, the Free Church Council's evangelist. Two thousand four hundred attended Albion Chapel to hear him and on the second Saturday of the mission a procession of between two and three thousand went through the streets as an act of witness.⁶

In Leeds there were twenty-seven centres. The most impressive features of this mission were F.B.Meyer's lunch time meetings for business men; his meetings for students at Yorkshire College⁷ and the visits of Samuel Chadwick to the Midland Engine Works where he addressed four hundred engineers and commented that no congregation had ever listened better.⁸

1 ibid., p.219.

2 ibid., p.244.

3 ibid., p.221.

4 R.F.Horton, An Autobiography (2nd edn. London, 1918), p.208.

5 FCYB.,(1901), p.245.

6 ibid., p.222.

7 M.J.Street, op.cit., p.115.

8 FCYB.,(1901), p.223-5.

It was estimated that thirty thousand people attended the various centres in Liverpool on the opening Sunday evening of the mission, where it was 'emphatically a mission to everybody, rich and poor'. The Enquiry Rooms were filled. Other special features in Liverpool included regular supper meetings held as the public houses closed and children's meetings attended by nine hundred.¹

Problems were encountered in Manchester when Hugh Price Hughes, who was the appointed missionary, fell ill after launching the mission. Nonetheless, the mission and its six hundred meetings went well, and Samuel Chadwick, Drs. McLaren and Clifford, the Rev. J. H. Jowett, among others, stepped in to Hughes' shoes.²

Campbell Morgan, a rising star on the evangelical scene, who had written a book especially for converts of the mission, led the mission at Portsmouth, where the three thousand seater Town Hall was filled to capacity each night an hour before the start of the meeting. Overflow meetings had to be held by other missionaries in nearby churches. As it was Portsmouth, special services were held in the Dockyards. There were also special services for shop assistants between 9.30 p.m. and 11.00 p.m. each night. This was another centre where Anglican clergy were happy to assist in the mission and to appear on its platform.³

Not every mission centre had a well known minister as the Evangelist. Although Plymouth had a visit from Pastor Thomas Spurgeon, nearby Torquay held a mission conducted entirely by resident ministers. Much of the mission there was taken up with visits to the police, the railway stations, the post office workers and the cab stands. But great rallies were also held, filling the largest churches in Torquay and on some nights the Royal Public Hall as well.⁴

1 ibid., p.226f.

2 ibid., p.228.

3 ibid., p.230f.

4 ibid., pp.230 and 237.

Reports of spiritual success came to the Free Church Council and were reported in the religious press from all over the country for many weeks. On 14 March, The Christian reported that Gipsy Smith had just been to Cheltenham under the auspices of the Simultaneous Mission, where seven hundred and thirty-two had responded to his invitations to seek Christ in one week. The following edition of The Christian reported the response of one hundred and fifty at Bacup under Mr. G.Fear's preaching and nearly fifty at Hayle under P.Russell Hurditch.¹ Not until the middle of April did these gratifying estimates of the success of the Simultaneous Mission disappear from the religious press. It seemed that the whole nation was interested in Christ, but it was not so.

It is impossible to calculate the numbers of those who passed through the Enquiry Rooms of the thousands of meetings which were held. The Free Church Council enthusiastically agreed with Thomas Law's opinion that it was 'a decided success' and 'a great success'. Not only was he pleased by the response in terms of conversions, but gratified by its reception generally. Churches had co-operated well and the press had given it good publicity. 'There had scarcely been any criticism as to the work,' Law reported.²

They were, however, not without discernment in estimating its success. All agreed that the Simultaneous Mission had been a failure in reaching those outside the church. The Baptist Times lamented that the public houses had not been emptied, the theatres had not closed and the majority of England had been left undisturbed in their indifference.³ The Christian declared that the masses had revealed a deep prejudice of going into church buildings, although it could not explain why this should be so. New and

1 The Christian, 21 Mar. 1901.

2 FCC Mins. 11 Feb. 1901 and 11 Mar. 1901.

3 B.T., 12 Apr. 1901.

more popular measures would have to be adopted to reach the masses, but only experience would tell whether these would be any more successful.¹ The verdict was that, 'The people we wanted to reach were not there. The man outside has refused to be drawn into our chapels by the bait of a special mission.'²

To the Baptist Magazine there was no mystery about this failure. 'If,' it explained, 'our ordinary methods of ministry have any rightness in them we should expect to reap our harvests in fields which we have carefully tilled, and not amongst those beyond the hearing of the message.'³ But there was no disguising the fact that the failure to experience a more general revival was a disappointment.

In the light of that failure those involved in the mission discovered other ways of pronouncing it a success and of enumerating its achievements. The work had brought many young people and many previously on the fringe of the church to a position of firm commitment and thus it had created a new force which would now be available to evangelize the masses, just as Tolfree Parr had predicted. The converts that had been made were not to be despised. It was but the first battle in a long campaign. The church would be strengthened by their addition to its membership and the awakened church would go on to win the war.⁴

An examination of Table 7.1, however, shows that the effect of the mission on overall church growth was marginal. All the Nonconformist denominations experienced growth in 1901 and 1902. But in percentage terms it was not much more noticeable than in the surrounding years. The Baptist experienced a much greater growth in 1900 and the Congregationalists

1 The Christian, 7 Mar. 1901.

2 B.T., 29 Mar. 1901. Cf. FCYB.,(1901), 211.

3 Baptist Magazine, Mar. 1901.

4 FCYB.,(1901), 246f.

in both 1899 and 1900 than in 1901. The Methodist figures conform to their normal fluctuating patterns for these years. Only the Presbyterians show an abnormal number of additions in 1901 and certainly that year reversed the trend of decline they had been experiencing, but it is unclear if this can be attributed to the Simultaneous Mission.

Table 7.1¹

Percentage Growth Rates, per annum, for Nonconformist Churches, 1899-1903

	1899	1900	1901	1902	1903
Wesleyan Methodist Church	1.06	1.25	0.44	1.81	1.11
Primitive Methodist Church	0.75	0.19	1.18	1.66	1.35
United Free Methodist Churches	1.06	0.29	0.67	3.27	1.74
Baptists	0.23	2.95	1.84	0.85	2.86
Congregationalists	4.73	3.88	0.38	3.95	1.20
Presbyterian Church of England	-0.45	-0.81	11.34	1.70	4.17

The long-term effect was certainly not to create a great new resource of evangelists who would from that time on generate more growth for, by the end of the decade, every Nonconformist denomination was experiencing absolute, not just relative, decline.² All that can be said, therefore, is that the Simultaneous Mission was a temporary stay of execution rather than the great revitalizing force that had been predicted.

1 Source, R. Currie, A. Gilbert & L. Horsley, Churches and Churchgoers. Patterns of Church Growth in the British Isles since 1700 (Oxford, 1977), pp.142f, 149f and 175.

2 The years in which the first absolute decline took place were as follows: Wesleyan Methodists, 1907; Primitive Methodists, 1908; United Free Methodists, 1909; Baptists, 1908; Congregationalists, 1909 and Presbyterians, 1906.

The mission was claimed to have four other effects which were positive for the Free Churches. Firstly, it had demonstrated how easy it was to be united whilst engaging in spiritual work.¹ But other controversial issues of war and education were soon to prove how difficult it was to maintain this unity when their vision was deflected away from the task of evangelism.²

Secondly, it had made the churches much more aware of the need to evangelize real people rather than vague generalised abstractions who had no real existence. For example, it was noted that there was a growing awareness of intellectual issues among women, whilst the men, on the whole, were not interested in such questions. The women needed an appeal to the mind whereas the men, being more sensuous, needed an appeal to the conscience.³ The method and style of evangelism needed to be shaped to the particular sex and subculture it was hoped to reach. The experience of the mission also had the effect of persuading the churches to aim for the sectors of society most responsive to their gospel which, in their case, were the young people in their ancillary organisations in the hope that, by strengthening these, the conversion of others would indirectly follow.⁴

Thirdly, it was believed that the mission would have a great effect on preaching, especially by ministers. The change in Hugh Price Hughes when preaching as an evangelist rather than denouncing an evil as a social reformer and of Dr. P.T.Forsyth when preaching for conversion rather than lecturing as a theologian had been a matter of open and favourable comment.⁵

- 1 F.C.Y.B. (1901), 245. Charles Booth, Life and Labour of the People in London (London, 1902), Third Series, vii, 150.
- 2 See E.K.H.Jordan, op.cit., pp.72-112.
- 3 The Christian, 7 Feb. 1901. Cf. Booth, op.cit., p.119.
- 4 B.T., 12 Apr. 1901.
5. F.C.Y.B., (1901), 199 & 205.

Dr. Meyer had commented on the way in which well-known ministers had thrown dignity to the wind and paraded at the head of singing processions for the sake of the mission. More significantly, many had been given a much greater sympathy for the task of the missionary and, he hoped, had been persuaded of the effectiveness of the simple statement of the gospel coupled with an appeal to the heart.¹ He expressed the longing that this would revitalize regular preaching. It was hoped that once the mission was over, mission-type services would be introduced to churches as a regular part of their programme.²

Fourthly, the mission encouraged the Free Church Council to commit itself to continuous evangelism and to adopt other strategies for evangelism immediately. In London, Theatre Services were organised on Sunday evenings after regular worship was over, at 8.30 p.m. and a special effort was made to induce promenaders to attend them.³ Various vans, currently operated by individual denominations, were taken over by the Free Church Council for use in rural areas and new village work was inaugurated on 6 July 1902.⁴ Active consideration was given to the holding of another national mission in 1902, but it was later decided that 1904 would be more appropriate.⁵ A Simultaneous Mission to children, sponsored by the Sunday School Union, was however held in 1902 with the support of the Free Church Council.⁶

The lessons of the Simultaneous Mission were distilled in an address given by F.B.Meyer to the Free Church Council in 1902 on the subject of 'Twentieth Century Evangelism'.⁷ The address demonstrates how much the world had changed since the start of the home missionary movement. Meyer believed that they were facing a new set of problems which their

1 ibid., pp.210ff.

2 ibid., p.212 and FCYB (1902), p.93f.

3 FCYB.,(1901), 178.

4 ibid., 179 and FCYB.,(1902), 197f.

5 FCC Mins, 7 Oct. 1901.

6 FCYB.,(1902), 189.

7 FCYB.,(1902), 90-96.

fathers never knew. In particular there was the problem of the urban society that had so dislocated the old order of things that, for the first time in English history, since the conversion of Britain, the great mass of folk were entirely unaffected by the church. Meyer's biggest fear was that the Free Churches would become a ghetto, cut off from mainstream society, content to pay off its chapel debts and 'to perpetuate what has been called "a comfortable pew-rent Evangelical religion".'¹

Meyer's address shows too just how far the churches had travelled during the century. In some directions, for Meyer, it had not travelled far enough. It was still too inward looking, demanding that its pastors should cater exclusively for the needs of its own members, rather than be involved, as a friend and missionary, in the wider community.² In its services it had not proved elastic enough with the result that for many they remained unattractive.³ In its evangelism it had been content to perpetuate class distinctions by creating Mission Halls for the working classes and permitting the employers to worship undisturbed at church. Meyer wished to see such distinctions overcome.⁴

In other respects, for Meyer, the churches had gone too far. His address ended with a rousing appeal for the churches to keep all that would grieve the Holy Spirit, by which he meant such entertainments as dancing, out of the church, and for churches to separate themselves afresh from the filthiness of the world. In these areas, Meyer believed, the church at the end of the nineteenth century had compromised.⁵ And yet, without realising it Meyer's own advocacy of new evangelistic methods in an attempt to defeat secularism, such as popular services and the use of neutral halls, was in itself giving in to secularism and was to make

1 ibid., p.91f.

2 ibid., p.92f.

3 ibid., p.93f.

4 ibid., p.94.

5 ibid., p.95f.

separation from the world even more difficult.¹

A further point of significance in Meyer's address is its demonstration of the development in thought of a perceptive evangelical when compared with that of his late eighteenth century forerunner. Gone is the glib assumption that all they had to do was to preach a simple gospel and the multitudes would willingly respond to it. Present is a new awareness of how much secular thinking had not only infiltrated the minds of individuals but of society as well. New measures were called for, therefore, to overcome an enemy so deeply entrenched in society. The churches, Meyer advocated, must embody the idea of Settlement and be open every night of the week 'for the service of the neighbourhood in which they were placed'. The pulpit alone was insufficient. It must be accompanied by a host of societies, clubs and recreational activities. The preacher alone was insufficient. He must become a trainer and inspirer of others and exploit to the full the talents of his members, not just to teach in the Sunday School and engage in visitation but to meet the down-to-earth needs of the people.²

The advocacy of these new methods, which was a consistent development of Meyer's earlier ministry, did not spring from an awareness of the process of secularisation alone but from a fresh theological understanding of the task. Whether the theology was deduced to justify, ex post facto, what was new evangelistic methodology for evangelicals, or whether it was a pure creative force is unclear. It is probably impossible to separate the two. But theological justification there was. Replying to the accusation that the preaching of the simple gospel was enough, Meyer explained that he knew well 'the power of God to salvation'. 'But', he countered, 'I submit the gospel has to be lived as well as preached, and

1 Cf. Gilbert, Post-Christian Britain, op. cit., ch. 5.

2 ibid., p. 93f.

must be incarnated again in our self-sacrificing efforts for the good of the communities in which we dwell'.¹

Evangelical thought concerning mission had, therefore, ended the century by beginning to take seriously the ideas of the proponents of a more humanitarian approach to mission; although it was always to shrink from its more radical forms. Traditional evangelicals, embodied in the interdenominational evangelistic societies still existed and champions of orthodoxy, like A. G. Brown and others closely connected with C. H. Spurgeon, still defied the forces of liberalism. But, for the most part, the battle lines were down and there was a greater coherence about Nonconformist views of mission than for most of the previous century.

6.2 United in Experience

Each denomination stamped its own character on its home missionary endeavours. In this respect the present work has suggested that the profiles of each denomination drawn up by Charles Booth at the turn of the century in reference to London still prove to be a realistic guide.

The distinctiveness of the Wesleyan Methodists was to be found in three aspects of their work. Firstly, their system of itinerancy and circuits made it difficult to build up churches over a prolonged period, although not to create them initially, and to build up the loyalty of their people. They were subject therefore to a greater turnover of membership than others. As Booth pointed out, it was a system admirably suited to rural England but strongly in need of adaptation for the great cities. Methodism did, however, recognise this defect itself and in a small degree adapt its rules accordingly.²

1 ibid., p. 94.

2 C. Booth, op. cit., pp. 129-131.

Secondly, Methodist evangelism, true to its revivalist origins, was characterized by emotional fervour which marked all its activities with an enthusiasm and zest for life. The struggles of the first half of the century did not succeed in repressing this tendency. It only succeeded in temporarily expelling some of its most enthusiastic exponents who formed revivalist sects, but it was constantly to resurface within Wesleyanism itself as evangelists from Bramwell to Cook demonstrate.¹

Thirdly, Methodism was to do more for the poor than any other Nonconformist denomination. Having rendered its administrative system more flexible, Booth could rightly comment that in regard to the poor, 'the scope of that work is great, and for perfection of organisation it is unrivalled'.² The great mission and central halls used an army of enthusiastic volunteers to run their activities, whose dominant characteristic was, through joyous emotion, to lift the poor out of their sinful condition to God.³

The distinctiveness of the Baptists lay in two factors; their inability to establish a satisfactory central organisation for home missions and the concern for doctrine in their evangelistic endeavours. Charles Booth was impressed by the way in which 'a Baptist congregation is no fortuitous concourse of individuals, but a strongly constituted church ...'.⁴ Religious life, for Baptists, centred around the local congregation and wider denominational life, whilst not exactly an irrelevance, was secondary in importance. There was almost an absence of system in comparison with Methodism. Evangelism was chiefly conducted by local churches and organised according to their wishes. At times it was undertaken by enthusiastic members of local churches rather than the

1 ibid., p. 132.

2 ibid., p. 136.

3 ibid., p. 138.

4 ibid., p. 125f.

churches themselves and was marked by too much independence from the parent congregation.¹ Home missionary work was inevitably, therefore, uneven and sporadic in character centring on personalities and devoid of any central planning.

The second distinctive feature of Baptist home missionary work was its doctrinal temperament, which maybe arose from the nature of the issues which had divided them in the mid-nineteenth century² and from their distinctive belief in Believers' Baptism. Baptist life was characterized by doctrinal intensity and austerity,³ which had numerous consequences for home missionary work. After a brief flirtation with revivalism under Thomas Pulsford, the settled character of Baptist home missions became evangelical rather than revivalistic. It emphasised the priority of preaching as an evangelistic method and the importance of the role of truth in a sinner's conversion. Perhaps, the austerity ultimately meant that, despite a good following among the lower middle and upper working classes, they did not display sufficient sympathy with their lot to become a really popular movement in the big cities.⁴ C. H. Spurgeon's role in the Downgrade controversy was such as to prevent Baptist life from moving away too much from its traditional doctrinal and evangelical character.

The Congregationalists were firmly middle class and produced a much less intense religious experience.⁵ 'The result is,' Booth concluded, 'that with the Congregationalist Churches the development of the social side of religious activity attains its highest point.'⁶ Missionary advance took the form of the creation of a range of social and educational activities, all of which were well supported and managed by the local church. The atmosphere was epitomised in the mid-century by John Campbell's

1 ibid., p. 127.

2 ibid., p. 121.

3 ibid., p. 124.

4 ibid., p. 123f.

5 ibid., pp. 112 & 119.

6 ibid., p. 113.

Jethro and exhibited later in the century by the work of the Church Aid Society. Missions to the poor smacked of the same self-satisfied spirit and organisation as the rest of Congregational life.¹ Booth's verdict was that their influence was more social than spiritual but that it was good and wholesome and, because it lacked intensity, unlikely to produce any reaction against itself.² Growth, then for the most part was growth through the socialization of its own children and young people.

The difference between the major Nonconformist denominations in their approach to converting others was neatly summarized by Charles Booth as follows,

... while the religious influence of the Congregationalists turns largely on social and educational methods, and finds in full and healthy occupation the balance wheel of life; and while the Baptists, filled with conviction of sin, cling to the anchorage of faith; the Wesleyans trust to the heightening of emotion to life them out of sin and raise their hearts to God.³

Notwithstanding the possibility of drawing distinct denominational profiles, it is also true that the Nonconformist denominations were subject to common trends and unified experience in relation to home missions. These shared experiences, due both to internal policy and external circumstances, have already been extensively and convincingly researched in relation to the statistics of recruitment by Alan Gilbert.⁴ The inner history of the Nonconformist home missionary movement confirms that there is a common historical pattern to the home missionary movement and that the unity of the Nonconformist experience is more impressive than the diversity.

1 ibid., p. 118.

2 ibid., p. 121.

3 ibid., p. 138f.

4 A. Gilbert, 'The Growth and Decline of Nonconformity in England and Wales; with special reference to the period before 1850: an historical interpretation of the statistics of religion.' (Oxford Univ. D. Phil. thesis, 1973).

Each denomination began to exhibit an interest in home missions at the end of the eighteenth century when the social transition from the old order to the new order was in full spate. This social transition provided the Dissenters, newly revived by Evangelicalism, with unparalleled opportunities in recruitment and these opportunities were fully exploited at first in an ad hoc, even disorganised way. Not even Methodism, whose evangelical legacy was presumed to be secure, allowed these years to pass without attempting, under Dr. Coke, new efforts in aggression. The multitudinous local itinerant societies were eventually put in the shade by the Baptist and Congregational Home Missionary societies, the former being an early representative of denominational concern during this period of social ferment. The social transitions of these decades which provided Dissent with new opportunities were supplemented by the international uncertainties of events in Europe and war with Napoleon. These tumultuous affairs were seen by the Dissenters as sufficient incentive to spread the fear of God in the land and by the establishment as sufficient incentive to attempt to suppress the Dissenters.¹

The economic recession following the victory of 1815 had an adverse effect on the fortunes of Nonconformity, whose growth rate began to slow dramatically in 1816, and, in the case of Methodism at least, caused a decline in absolute numbers in 1819.² Alarm caused by the decline gave way to the adoption of new measures. In Methodism the Liverpool Conference formulated its historic minutes in 1820. In Congregationalism the Home Missionary Society was formed in 1819 and, at the same time, several new measures were adopted by the already well-established Baptist

1 W. R. Ward, Religion and Society in England 1790-1850 (London, 1972). Ch. 1.

2 Gilbert, Growth and Decline, op. cit., p. 124. Accurate Congregational and Baptist statistics are unavailable.

Home Missionary Society, including the employment of full-time itinerants in 1820 and the encouragement of local auxiliaries.

Following these new incentives, growth rates improved until the middle of the decade. But the improvement was only temporary. Within a few years the enthusiastic optimism of Methodism following the 1820 Conference had given way to laments about how much was yet to be accomplished and how little had yet been achieved. The growth rate of Wesleyan Methodism once again slowed down. Both the Baptist and Congregational Home Missionary Societies face severe economic difficulties which were partly, at least, attributed to the economic slump. The Baptists were rescued from their immediate financial problems more quickly than the Congregationalists, but both endured a period of recession which was to see them well into the next decade. Both societies had experienced rapid expansion until 1826 but both reduced their activity from 1827 onwards.

The next main phase, from the mid 1830s to the early 1840s, was a period of confidence and growth. Among the Baptists and the Methodists it expressed itself in enthusiastic revivalism. Among the Congregationalists who, whilst not uninterested in revivalism, did not support them as enthusiastically as their Nonconformist brethren, there was equal optimism. Financially, the Home Missionary Society prospered and the number of agents it employed expanded. The success of the Home Missionary Society attracted the attention of the Congregational body as a whole, who from 1837 onwards began to make overtures to the Home Missionary Society about incorporating its work within the boundaries of the Congregational Union. The approach met with some resistance on the part of the Home Missionary Society but they, nonetheless, capitulated in the hope that union would enable them to discover greater success. This phase of prosperity for the churches and the home missionary movement had revived powerful initial impetus from the cholera epidemic of 1832 but had been carried along by the growing

prosperity of the country as symbolised in the development of railways and steamships during the period.¹

The mid-1840s to mid-1850s was a period of unprecedented inactivity in home missionary work in all the major denominations. Reports of revival, among the Wesleyans, died out and Methodism became almost wholly preoccupied with internal disputes culminating in the Wesleyan Reform Movement of 1849. The Baptists had become increasingly sceptical about the benefits of revivalism but offered no real alternative recruitment policy. Although evidencing some concern for their state of affairs, no practical steps were taken to correct it and they experienced a period of prolonged stagnation until 1856. The new arrangement for home missions among the Congregationalists bred optimism and they experienced expansion until 1844. But from that year on, until 1858, the affairs of the society went into a steady decline.

To be sure, the period of rapid growth and expansion was over and although Nonconformists were to enjoy growth again in Victoria's time, it was not to be on the same scale as that up to 1840,² nor was it to occur through the same aggressive onslaught on the non-religious population. Exogenous growth was to be replaced by endogenous growth.

Except in the case of Methodism, it is not easy to explain such a prolonged marking of time in home missionary activity. It is more than likely that churches had over-extended themselves in their home missionary endeavours in the earlier part of the century and now simply had to lessen the momentum of their work in order to regain strength and regroup for the

1 This analysis confirms Gilbert's view that in the early part of the century periods of political unrest and economic depression were unfavourable to Nonconformist recruitment. Growth and Decline, op. cit., p. 417.

2 ibid., ch. 2. Kitson Clark under-estimated the slowing down of growth which occurred several years before he placed it. G. Kitson Clark, The Making of Victorian England (London, 1962), p. 192f.

3 Gilbert, Growth and Decline, op. cit., pp. 375 & 451ff.

next phase of the battle. Thomas Binney's comment at the Congregational Union of 1848 may be interpreted in this light. 'Most denominations,' he commented, 'seem almost to have done their work - to have tired through their laborious manhood, and as bodies, to be getting old ...'¹ Binney's statement hints, too, at a second reason for the pause. The Nonconformist churches had been enormously successful in gaining adherents and could boast 'a very remarkable achievement'.² But prosperity is dangerous in that it breeds contentment and with contentment, indolence. With their growing prosperity had come a growing respectability and an increasing appetite for fine preaching, fine services and fine architecture. In 1847 John Blackburn had confessed that he hoped that 'the religion of the barns' was passing away and that the money invested in the service of God was to be used with 'taste and judgment so as to attract, rather than repel persons of intelligence and respectability'.³ These diversions were not suitable raw materials for the making of aggressive evangelism.

Adverse economic conditions which eventually led to the repeal of the Corn Law would also have been unfavourable to evangelistic success in the late 1840s. In the years immediately after that the growing prosperity of the nation as a whole, and of most Nonconformists in particular, kept them from appreciating the dimensions of the problem of 'the condition of England'.⁴ Nonconformists were already making their contribution to the cities through organisations like the London City Mission and until the immensity of the problems of rapid urbanisation and its implications for religion began to dawn in the 1860s, most denominations considered their

1 Congregational Year Book, (1848), 13.

2 Clark, op. cit., p. 172.

3 C.Y. B., (1847), p. 150. For much other supporting evidence see Gilbert, Growth and Decline, op. cit., pp. 390-416.

4 Cf. J. F. C. Harrison, The Early Victorians 1832-51 (London, 1971), ch. 3.

contribution adequate. They thus fell behind in their efforts to convert an increasing proportion of the country.

It is sometimes suggested that the Crimean War, and disagreements respecting it, were responsible for the decline experienced by some Nonconformists at this time.¹ But the depression in recruitment preceded the War and cannot really be held to account for it.

The middle years of the century, which saw the pinnacle of Victorianism reached, with its belief in progress and liberalism, correspond, with only some minor exceptions, to years of prosperity in home missions.

From 1856 until the early 1860s each major Nonconformist denomination was to demonstrate renewed zeal for home missions. The results of the 1851 Census, for all that it showed of the advance of Nonconformity, equally provided a cold shower with which to arouse the complacent churches from their lethargy by demonstrating how sizeable a proportion of the population never attended worship. In 1856 the Methodists reorganised their entire home missionary work under Charles Prest and began to exhibit a growth unrivalled for sixteen years, with the exception of 1848-9. It was, however, to be 1876, another twenty years, before the Wesleyans were to have recouped the same numbers as they had had prior to the divisions caused by the Wesleyan Reformers.

From 1856, the Baptists too began to grow; a growth which was to continue until 1865, although it was to diminish in rate from 1861. At the same time they demonstrated a determination to win men in the big cities for Christ and an efflorescence of theatre services took place. A new generation of preachers, epitomised most handsomely by C.H. Spurgeon, was arising. The Baptist Home Missionary Society also caught the spirit of the times and attempted to expand its operations unsuccessfully in the towns. The

¹ Clark, op. cit., p. 187 & A. Mearns, England for Christ (London, 1886), p. 107f.

same resurgence of the evangelistic spirit was evident within Congregationalism by the separation of the Home Missionary Society from the denominational structures and its revival under the leadership of Samuel Morley.

It is in this context that the 1859 Revival must be seen. As Kitson Clark has observed, it was neither sudden nor unexpected, nor did it disappear in a flash.¹ Its effect was to be seen not only with the denominations but in the development of many new home missionary societies of an interdenominational nature to which it gave rise.

The effect of the Revival, both within and without the denominations, was long felt, causing the Baptists to see 1860-1870 as the Revival Decade.² At first sight it seemed to produce evangelistic initiatives which lasted well into the 1870s. But a more careful examination shows that towards the end of the 'Revival Decade' the churches again slackened the pace of their evangelism and experienced too, a deceleration in their rate of growth.

The Methodists had greatly reduced growth rates for the years 1863-66 and 1869-74. By 1868 Charles Prest was complaining of a lack of support for the new evangelistic Contingent Fund and in 1870 the loss of the idea of aggression was, he claimed, a serious threat to the future of Methodism.³ The difficulties of the Baptist home missionary work had reached such serious proportions by 1865 that in that year they were persuaded to amalgamate with the British Irish Society. The diminishing growth rates of the Baptists did, however, admit some glorious exceptions of which the London Baptist Association, formed in 1865, was one.

1 Clark, op. cit., p. 188f.

2 E. A. Payne, The Baptist Union, A Short History (London, 1959), p. 79.

3 Methodist Magazine (1871), 565f.

The next wave of Nonconformist and aggressive recruitment was also associated with revivalism; this time the revivalism of Moody and Sankey. Thomas Champness symbolized the growing confidence of revivalist evangelicals within Methodism and, among others, encouraged them to co-operated fully with D. L. Moody. If Champness symbolized growing Methodist aggression in rural areas, Charles Garret, also a supporter of Moody, symbolized it for the large cities. Although he was not the first to engage in big city mission work, his emancipation from the three year rule witnessed to the significance of his work and the new determination with which the Methodists approached it.

Moody's visits probably received more support from the Baptists than from any other denomination, partly because there was a greater theological rapport between them and partly because Moody's missions matched their own mood in evangelism. The London Baptist Association had held a united campaign in 1872 and, therefore, had experienced of such events before Moody visited them in 1875. The Baptists were also beginning to recognise and widely use missionaries themselves during the same period.

The Congregationalists gave qualified recognition to the value of such missions but had by now become more church-centred in orientation and broader in theological sympathy, thus leading to a slight divergence from general Nonconformist experience at the time. The difference must not, however, be overemphasised as the support of R. W. Dale and others for Moody's work demonstrates.

In one respect the history of the Baptist and Congregational churches show a remarkable similarity just after Moody's visit. Both denominations came to initial agreements on an amalgamation of their home missionary societies in 1878. Throughout the 1870s it had been stated that there was need for a more systematic approach to home missions in order to overcome the present state of inefficiency which resulted in evangelism

being overplayed in some areas and grossly neglected in others and which produced a great disparity between the number of converts and the number of additions to church membership. The concern for the inefficient state of evangelism may well have been no more than an attempt to justify the submission of the Home Missionary Societies to the growing trend of centralization which is evident in the denominations in any case.

Hanny's attempt to centralize the resources and direction of Congregationalism was explicit. Whilst it may have been less explicit in the Baptist Union, it was still present as R. Glover's paper to the 1874 assembly, and the response to it, made evident. In both denominations, executives had been growing in confidence and were ready to desire to take more aspects of the life of their churches under their control.

The battle for control had been fought much earlier in the century in Methodism and had been won by Bunting's party, only at the expense of heavy losses to Wesleyan membership. Among the Baptists and Congregationalists the process of centralization was a much more gentlemanly affair, simply because of the greater independence accorded to each local church. Whereas in Methodism the system formed the churches, in these other Nonconformist groups the reverse was true. Consequently, those local churches which objected to the centralizing trends needed only to disregard them and persevere in their own chosen course. There is ample evidence that, as far as evangelism is concerned, that is exactly what many churches did for the remainder of the nineteenth century.

The Congregational Church Aid Society, from the first, proved unable to command widespread support among the Congregational churches and the century closed with the objectives of those who had sponsored it unfulfilled. The Baptists, too, had begun this more unified approach to home missions with high hopes. But the achievements of the new centralized work were mediocre and it did not call forth any new financial resources. The

President of the Baptist Union ended the century with the wistful longing for a return to the old days when the churches of the denomination had been more aggressive.¹

In reality the churches in these final years of the century were engaged in a great deal of apparently evangelistic work, but it did not find expression through these centralized channels. They shared a common methodology. The mission to the poor was conducted through mission halls and a variety of clubs and activities organised by the middle classes for their benefit. In the villages the work was undertaken by colporteurs and missions and gradually the introduction of gospel vans. The holding of mission services was the usual way in which it was hoped to reap the harvest of seed sown by these activities. In the towns and suburbs missions too were the chief means by which it was hoped that people would be converted. In addition to these missions, the main agency of recruitment was seen as the Sunday School.

The most remarkable feature of these final years of the century, common to all Nonconformist denominations, was just how ineffective all this activity was. Producing church growth from 1883 was remarkably hard going in comparison with earlier periods. Apart from changes in the context in which churches were working, the deceleration of growth must be attributable to the policy of the churches themselves. By their chosen methods they had transferred, maybe unwittingly, their attentions from those outside the church's boundaries to those already within its walls. Growth opportunities were, therefore, limited to the closer commitment of the church's members or to the socialization of its children.

The very last years of the century saw a new spirit of confidence spreading in the Nonconformist Churches and a new determination to tackle

1 B. U. Handbook, (1898), 91-106.

the masses outside the churches through the vague movement labelled 'The Forward Movement'. J. Guinness Rogers feared that it was not much more than a reflection of the spirit of the times. 'The age is progressive,' he said, 'the air is full of ideas of change, men everywhere are bent on advance ...' There was a general impatience with stagnation and lack of success.¹ The connection between the secular idea of progress and the renewed spiritual confidence is indeed probably. David Thomson speaks of the new imperialism in international affairs as an expression of the consciousness of the fact that the nation was in decline.² The same disturbing consciousness applied to the churches. With increasing ineffectiveness a new spirit of energy and confidence was found to carry them, not as a dispirited club, but as a crusading army into the new century. This renewed confidence married the well-worn methodology of missions to produce the Simultaneous Mission of 1901 in which all the Nonconformists shared.

The coincidence of experience in the home missionary movements of the various denominations is further confirmation for the view put forward most recently by R. Currie, A. D. Gilbert and L. Horsley that,

... while each church is itself a factor determining its own growth by its specific recruitment policies, standards of discipline and so on, the environment in which it operates is a still more influential factor.³

The experience of being a Methodist, Baptist or Congregationalist was different. The denominations were not all mere imitations of each other in their spiritual cultures. And the style of their home missionary work was inevitably a reflection of their individual spirituality. And yet the trends of advance and retreat, of aggression and of passivity are the same, suggesting the conclusion that either they shaped their denominational affairs as a result of perceiving themselves to be in a competitive

1 J. Guinness Rogers, The Forward Movement of the Christian Church (London, 1893), p. 8.

2 D. Thomson, England in the Nineteenth Century (Harmondsworth, 1950), p. 203.

3 R. Currie, A. D. Gilbert & L. Horsley, op. cit., p. 37.

relationship with each other or as a result of being subject to the same environmental forces. The evidence of their relationship to each other, of the feeling of their common identity vis à vis the established religion or Roman Catholicism would suggest that the latter is on the whole more significant.

A number of other conclusions may be drawn. No denomination succeeded in having a consistent and steady development in its home missionary programme throughout the century. The same cyclical development is to be observed in the pattern of home missionary endeavours as is evident in the statistics relating to church growth. The cycle, in relation to growth, is considered to have five phases, namely, depression, activation, revival, deactivation and declension.¹ The complete cycle is estimated to last between six and eight years with peaks and troughs alternating every three or four years.² In relation to the multifarious home missionary activities it is difficult to be so precise and factors other than purely statistical factors need to be taken into account. The cycles tend to be longer; of a ten year duration at least, and gentler. Nonetheless a cyclical pattern is evident. The Congregational Home Missionary Society, as measured by the number of its agents, hearers or income, illustrates this. Beginning in 1819 it reached its first peak, on each of the three dimensions of measurement, in 1826, whereupon it went into a decline reaching its trough in 1833. Strenuous efforts were then applied to inject new life into the movement and the new high points were reached between 1837 and 1842, whereafter a second decline in the size and scope of its activities set in.

As the foregoing description of developments in home missionary activity has shown, the denominations were regularly taking new initiatives

1 ibid., p. 44f.

2 Gilbert, Growth and Decline, op. cit., p. 124.

to evangelize the nation, entering them with enthusiasm, seeing them develop for up to five years and afterwards being frustrated by stagnation and decline until a new initiative was taken.

The phases of the cycle as far as home missionary organisation are concerned are inactivity, activation, prosperity, stagnation and indifference. During the phase of inactivity little home missionary work was undertaken and that which was engaged in was undertaken in a purely routine way. Little growth resulted. In the second stage a number of individuals began to articulate a more general concern at the state of the church and began to plan some new initiative, in the confident belief that activity would lead to success. In the third stage the new initiative enjoyed a fairly rapid development and was announced to be the herald of greater things. The development did not, however, continue as hoped and the movement then marked time, pleading unsuccessfully for greater support, before this particular development in home missions became relegated to a low position in the list of priorities adopted by the church. Few movements altogether disappeared, although some like Dr. Coke's did. Others were transformed beyond recognition, often by an alliance with another body. Many continued to exist supported by a loyal band of a few supporters but subjected to the indifference of most within the church.

It is also true that the periods of greatest activation within the home missionary movement coincided with the periods of greatest growth in the church as the final years of the eighteenth century, the immediate years after 1820, 1830-40, 1856-63, the mid 1870s and the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries demonstrate. It is difficult to prove a causal relationship between activity and growth and it must be acknowledged that the tremendous activity at the end of the century produced decreasing returns. It is true that the rejuvenation of home missionary activity was, to some extent, as much a reflection of renewed

life within the church as a cause of it. Even so, those involved in the home missionary movement certainly believed that they were causally responsible for the growth of the church, even if they did not achieve as much as they thought. The coincidence of activity and growth would be remarkable if there were no causal connection.

Another conclusion which may be justifiably drawn from the history of home missions is that the denominations were not the most suitable agencies for forwarding the cause of evangelism on a national scale. In theory the claims that there was strength in unity and that greater efficiency would result from centralization seemed logical. In experience no home missionary society did well once it became a department of a denomination, whether its previous history had been prosperous or poor, nor did any major denominational initiative thrive for long.

Among the Methodists the point is illustrated by Coke's brief excursion into home missions between 1806 and 1815, when it was discontinued, and by Prest's failure to sustain enthusiasm for his new initiatives, started in 1856, beyond the mid 1860s. The Primitive Methodist centralized schemes of both 1825 and 1843 were discouraging. The Baptist Home Missionary Society had always been a sickly child but the various attempts to make it more central to the denomination as a whole, which culminated in its becoming a full department of the Baptist Union in 1882, did nothing to improve its health as it had been predicted it would. The Congregationalists provide the most startling evidence of all. The union of the Home Missionary Society with the Congregational Union between 1840-1858 and again in 1878 proved disastrous as far as home missions were concerned. The anticipated increase in support and strengthening of influence simply did not materialise. The years proved to be embarrassing for the denominational executives who had so confidently predicted them.

The problems which resulted from evangelism being conducted purely by the ad hoc decisions of individuals or of individual churches, namely that it tended to an uneven distribution of the preaching of the gospel and to produce a great disparity between converts and church members, were equally real. Yet, on balance, it may have been in the interests of the conversion of England if they had suffered them and if the individual and local initiatives had been encouraged rather than the false assumption, as it proved to be, that central direction would prove more fruitful.

It could be argued that central organisation could not inhibit local or personal initiatives but that is only partially true. It could not and did not inhibit individual initiatives completely, but it did inhibit them to some extent. When respected church leaders preached strongly that centralized channels were the correct ones through which to engage in home missions, only the spiritually independent would be happy to continue their own endeavours. The rules and regulations of, say, the Home Mission department of the Baptist Union, were understandably framed to prevent unwise local initiative from floundering and then turning to the Baptist Union for help. But, in the course of executing those rules, local initiatives, which might otherwise have been riskily undertaken and flourished, were not undertaken at all. Centralization removed people's feeling of personal responsibility for the achievement of the missionary mandate and, consequently, financial giving to the centralized societies did not increase. It also dimmed people's vision. It was easier to be moved by the needs of people who could be seen and known in one's neighbourhood than by the plight of a village or district some distance away.

There is one final respect in which the experience of the home missionary movement was common to all its participants, both in the denominations and the societies. In spite of mammoth and admirable

effort¹ they were, at the end of the century, defeated in the race against secularization. The profound dimensions of the secularization of society have at last been recognised. Although both Susan Budd and Owen Chadwick² still give great space to its intellectual dimensions, they both acknowledge that intellectual factors were relatively insignificant in comparison with the profound moral and social changes taking place which had produced new forms of community which, in Chadwick's imagery, was bounded by a magic circle which left religion on the outside.³ Secularization can only be explained by multiple and complex causality.⁴ Ironically, the Free Churches, in their pursuit of liberty, must be held to be a part of that complex causality, thus helping to create the very forces which were eventually to lead to their decline.

The growth of secularization at the end of the nineteenth century was somewhat obscured to active Free Churchmen by the apparent continuing growth and importance of their churches.⁵ They were not aware, or at least they were not prepared to admit to being aware, of how severely they were losing ground. Concern was voiced for the unchurched masses, but growth was still continuing, and the fact that growth rates had considerably slowed down did not strike them with the impact it deserved. They still believed, or said they believed, that the adaptation of the church's machinery, the redeployment of resources and the redoubling of effort would

1 The effort has too often received unnecessarily negative evaluations as, e.g., in K. S. Inglis, Churches and the Working Classes in Victorian England (London & Toronto, 1963). Kitson Clark's more favourable treatment is more warranted on the grounds of effort, op. cit., ch. 6.

2 S. Budd, Varieties of Unbelief (London, 1977) & O. Chadwick, The Secularization of the European Mind (Cambridge, 1975).

3 Chadwick, op. cit., p. 101.

4 For which see Gilbert, Post-Christian Britain, op. cit., chs. 3 & 4.

5 ibid., p. 76.

be enough to Christianize the nation.¹ The issues were no longer seen in the simplistic terms of the need to supply more church accommodation. It was now, or so they said, a question of the church going to where the people were and evangelizing them in their own contexts. Yet it was considered that the loss of faith could be still arrested and even reversed by energetic church extension. The mistake was that they saw only part of the picture. They were aware, to some extent, of the inroads of unbelief as it was reflected in the decline of the institutional expression of religion but they were not sufficiently aware of secularization as it gripped the consciousness of the people.² The old methods, however much stepped up or adapted, were insufficient to meet this new challenge. Maybe their efforts were redoubled, along traditional lines, in the great missions at the end of the century and in the Simultaneous Mission of 1901 precisely because they had the nagging, but unconfessed, feeling that the secularization of consciousness was upon them but they did not know how to tackle it. If that were so, the results of the 1901 Mission confirmed that they were facing new challenges which traditional methods were unable to meet.

If they can be accused of lacking in perception, they cannot be accused of lacking in effort. But they knew from experience what the Red Queen meant when she said to Alice, 'It takes all the running you can do to keep in the same place.'³

1 Chadwick, op. cit., p. 97.

2 For a theoretical discussion of the varied meanings of secularization see L. Shiner, 'The Concept of Secularization in Empirical Research', Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, vi (1967), 207-220 & P. L. Berger, A Rumour of Angels (Harmondsworth, 1970), ch. 1. For a historical discussion see Chadwick, op. cit., ch. 4, which, however, tends to view the phenomenon from the viewpoint of established religion.

3 Aptly cited by Kitson Clark, op. cit., p. 192."

Chapter 7THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON HOME MISSIONS

The advent of the missionary era at the end of the eighteenth century took place in the context of vigorous theological discussion. It is injudicious to claim that it was the new understanding of Calvinism which was sufficient of itself to mobilize the forces for missionary work but it is true that the relationship between theological insight and missionary activity was close. Once initiated the missionary movement gave rise to a whole new field of discussion, the theory of missions, which interacted with the practice of missions throughout the century. Theory and activity, in this area, had a mutually creative effect. Theology set out propositions as to what was the goal of mission, what was to be expected and what was legitimate, all of which had strong implications for the methodology of missions. The practice of missions was often different from that which theology had dictated and it, in turn, therefore led to the amendment of theological understanding.

It is evident that there was no unified view of the theory¹ of home missions in the nineteenth century. A tremendous diversity is apparent in the writings and sermons of those actively involved in the movement. Their views range on a continuum which stretches from a very other-worldly orientation at one end to a this-worldly orientation at the other. No watertight compartments exist on this continuum and those involved often demonstrate an inconsistency within their views or between their views and their actions. But none of those under review were pure theoreticians; they were actively engaged in the home missionary movement and could not afford the luxury of consistency.

1 'Theory' is used to refer to both theological and methodological views.

Nonetheless, it is possible to distinguish a number of specific positions on this continuum. Each position is distinguishable from each other position because of its answers to a number of questions. Perhaps the primary issue concerns the purpose of home missionary activity. Closely following that question was how the holders of one or other of these positions viewed man, why they saw he needed to be saved and what was the future destiny of the lost. The understanding of salvation varied across the spectrum of views, as did the attitude to the organised church and the motivation for involvement in the home missionary movement. The answers to these questions had vital implications for the methods employed for the fulfilment of the task. Within each of these positions a range of views existed, yet each position had a certain coherence about it and a general profile for each may be drawn. To some extent these profiles relate to the descriptions given by Charles Booth of the doctrinal emphasis of the major nonconformist denominations. The Methodists were, he claimed, emotional, or revivalist in spirituality, the Baptists doctrinal or evangelical and the Congregationalists social or humanitarian. However, his three-fold distinction is incomplete and over simplistic and the theoretical perspectives cannot be held to relate exclusively to any single denomination.¹

The revivalist perspective, the most other-worldly, was concerned to produce an encounter with the transcendent God. The encounter, which usually took place in a group context and may well have been highly charged emotionally, led the participant to feel convicted of sin, to cry out for mercy and to believe that the experience would produce life changing effects. The revivalist sought to re-enact a particular pattern of events or behaviour. He was often indifferent both to the regular ecclesiastical channels and to the normal modes of behaviour.

1 Charles Booth, Life and Labour of the People in London (London, 1902) Third Series, vii, 112-138.

The evangelical perspective was closely related to the revivalist perspective but can be distinguished from it by its concern for the moral reformation of individuals and through them of their families. Centring upon the conversion experience, the evangelicals dwelt less on the non-rational elements in a man's encounter with his God and were suspicious of emotionalism. Whilst many of the doctrinal beliefs would have been common to revivalists and evangelicals, their manner of presentation was different.

The third perspective, the ecclesiastical perspective, had the growth of the church as its goal rather than the conversion of an individual. In doctrine its exponents were often fairly evangelical but the importance they gave to the church led to a difference in methodology and temper. The effect of this position was often to result in a bureaucratic or chapel-building approach to home evangelisation.

The final approach became more common as the century progressed. This humanitarian approach emerged from distinctive theological presuppositions about God, man and the world but often ended in being the least specifically 'religious' in its orientation to home mission.

7.1. The Revivalist Perspective

The revivalist perspective has been subject to more thorough research than any other approach to home missions¹ but it has suffered because it has been seen in isolation from these other perspectives. Calvin Colton, an early historian of American revivals defined them as 'the multiplied power of religion over a community of minds, when the Spirit of God

1 The seminal work is W.G. McLoughlin, Modern Revivalism (New York, 1959), G.B. Weisberger, The Gathered at the River (Boston & Toronto, 1958), R. Carwardine, Transatlantic Revivalism (Westport, 1978) and J. Kent, Holding the Fort (London, 1978). Carwardine is concerned with the early part of the century and Kent the latter. Both agree that McLoughlin has over-exaggerated the importance of Finney and trace a more steady progression in revivalism than McLoughlin did. They are also both sceptical about the scope and value of its long-term achievements.

awakens Christians to special faith and effort and brings sinners to repentance'.¹ Proponents of revivalism believed that revivals were absolutely necessary if the church was to make any headway in bringing the world to God. The ordinary means by which the church advanced, that is, through the making of individual converts, was not to be despised but it was inadequate if any real impression was to be made on the world for God.²

Revivalism was a diverse phenomenon but Colton's definition holds true throughout the century for all its manifest forms. A revival was distinguished by feelings of special religious intensity and some manifestations of that intensity caused much controversy. Even Joseph Barker, at home though he was in the Methodist revivalist tradition, felt a repugnance in the services of revivalists, Burrows and Lynn, who shouted and raved to gain the required result.

Their manner of proceeding was truly dreadful. They jumped over the forms, climbed over the pews, kneeled down and prayed beside such as they supposed to be penitents, whispered in their ears, urged them to believe, talked in sterner ways to such as they supposed to be awakened, thundered in their ears the horrors of damnation and eternal wrath, scores of them joining together to raise the wild excitement to its highest pitch.³

Others shared the deep suspicion and unease at the animal or hysterical manifestations which took place.⁴ But none would have dissented from the view that an intensifying of religious interest was an essential, if not the defining characteristic of revival. Many would have readily

- 1 C. Colton, History and Character of American Revivals of Religion (London, 1832), p.1.
- 2 ibid., pp. 26-34; C. Finney, Lectures on Revival of Religion (ed. W. McLoughlin, Cambridge, Mass., 1960, original edn. 1835), pp. 10f, 27 and 272; J. Fletcher, On the Prosperity of Christian Church and the Revival of Religion (London, 1829); W. Sprague, Lectures on Revival (New York, 1832), pp. 3, 258 and 284 and Weisberger, op.cit., p. 37.
- 3 J. Barker, The Life of Joseph Barker (London, 1880), p. 186f.
- 4 Colton, op.cit., pp. 128-135; Sprague, op.cit., p. 13; Andrew Reed, The Revival of Religion (London, 1839), pp. iii, 20, 37-40; J. O. Dykes, Apostolic Times Revived, A Lecture on the present progress of Christ's Kingdom in the North of Ireland (Edinburgh & London, 1859), pp. 14-17; E. Smith, An Evangelist's Notebook (London, 1880), p. 14 and Evangelical Magazine, NS ix (1831), 388.

accepted Colton's view that the intensity often expressed itself in awe-filled silence and the rapt attention of the soul rather than in noise.¹

The intensity above all provoked a deep sense of sin, guilt and unworthiness, of 'conviction' as it was termed, before being followed by an equally deep sense of joy and liberty.² The intensity arose out of a sense of the holy and overwhelming presence of God, at or as a result of, the revivalist meeting,³ and it led to instantaneous conversions. Despite the influence of Wesley and Whitfield, many Dissenters were still doubtful about the legitimacy of sudden conversions and thought that revivalists often made exaggerated claims about the number of their converts. Some were even prepared to criticize Whitfield in his early days as being 'far too hasty and pre-emptory in deciding a conversion'.⁴ In justifying their belief in sudden conversions, revivalists usually pointed to Scripture. Finney not only believed that all conversions of the Bible were sudden conversions, but argued that the belief that conversion was gradual was one of the greatest ploys of Satan to prevent men from obeying God.⁵ The more cautious apologists for sudden conversions emphasised that it was the subsequent life which emphasised whether a conversion was genuine or not.

Sudden conversions and religious intensity were attributable, in the revivalist eyes, to the inbreaking of the power of God. It was 'power' which differentiated revivalism from mainstream religion which more often had to do with mere words than effective action. The Methodist charismatic, William Arthur, complained that,

1 Colton, op.cit., p.133.

2 Finney, op.cit., pp.142, 164, 305-207; Sprague, op.cit., Ch.6; Reed, Revival, op.cit., pp.37-40; Weisberger, op.cit., p.28; J.Fleming, Remarkable Conversions (London, 1861) p.31f; J.Macpherson, Revival and Revival Work (London, 1875), p.12ff.

3 W.Arthur, The Tongue of Fire (London, 1956, 1st edn. 1856), pp. 12 & 24.

4 E.M., xix (1811), 135-139 and 167-70.

5 Finney, op.cit., pp.379 and 338; Arthur, op.cit., p.64; Fleming op.cit., Ch.10; Cf. Sprague, op.cit., pp.12 and 52-54.

Nothing is more common than to find the whole system of Christianity as an organisation for recovering mankind from their sinful condition, spoken of, treated and trusted in, as if it had been clearly ascertained that it was neither more nor less than a deposit of divine doctrine cast upon the earth, forsaken by divine power and left to make such way among men as it might by inherent force of truth and the permission of auspicious circumstances. ¹

Every revivalist sought instead for this manifestation of power, although there might be little agreement as to how to judge whether or not it was present. The leader of the Bible Christians, James Thorne, detected the power of God on 3 November 1816 when at 'Tossbury the fire broke' and at Bucks 'there was a shaking; many wet eyes'. At Putford there was a shaking among dry bones; many were crying for pardon.² Yet he did not accept that the working of miracles or the extraordinary gifts of the spirit were for his day. For many, especially in the Methodist stream of revivalism, however, it was the presence of such miracles that were the test of the presence of God.³ In early Primitive Methodism the power was manifest through dreams, telepathy, exorcisms, healings, trances and visions.⁴ The Catholic Apostolic Church and the Peculiar People equally believed in the manifestation of such spiritual gifts.⁵

Yet by the time of the well organised revivals of the late century such a spontaneous inbreaking of power or an exercise of charismatic gifts was rare. D.L.Moody was once subject to an outbreak of glossalalia after addressing a YMCA meeting in 1873 but he usually kept a tight rein

1 W.Arthur, op.cit., p.75.

2 F.W.Bourne, The Centenary Life of James Thorne (London, 1895), p.38 Cf., A.Wesleyan Minister, A Brief Memoir ... of the Rev. James Caughey (London, 1847), p.12; E.Smith, op.cit., p.16 and S.Coley, The Life of the Rev. Thomas Collins (London, 1896), p.35. The employment of fire terminology was common.

3 Arthur, op.cit., passim.

4 H.B.Kendall, The Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church (London, 1905), i, ch.6.

5 See Appendix B.3 & B.4.

on the expression of emotions in his meetings.¹ Even those who followed in Wesley's shoes, like Thomas Cook, were, by late in the century, wishing to control the response of the people to the inbreaking of God.² The power of God was, however, still sought in these revivalist meetings. The yardstick by which it was now measured was the yardstick of decisions recorded in the enquiry room.

The revivalists emphasis on experience had three consequences for the style of home evangelism they employed. Firstly, evangelism was eminently a collective work. Personal or conversational evangelism was subordinated to the mass meeting, whether it was a camp meeting, a protracted meeting or a well-orchestrated mission service. The group dynamic was an essential feature of its effectiveness.³ As the evangelist, Edward Smith, put it,

In large movements of this kind, too, men have the opportunity of seeking the Lord in company. The soul is never so lonely as when it is seeking God. It feels alone in the universe; its solitude is horrible to it. Man is gregarious. His solitude in the day of conviction is relieved by the presence⁴ of other enquirers after rest.

The value probably lay more in the contagious effect of the mass meeting than in the comfort brought to a lonely soul by his being in company at the moment of his conversion.

Edward Smith also illustrates in his Evangelist's Notebook, the second effect of the emphasis on experience which was that it produced a certain anti-intellectualism. Whilst Smith professed to believe in the value of some intellectual work, he lamented that those who were willing to work in

1 Cited by J.W. White, 'The Influence of North American Evangelism in Great Britain between 1830 and 1914 on the origin and development of the Ecumenical Movement' (Oxford University D.Phil. thesis, 1963). Book 2, p.23. Moody can hardly be described as 'the harbinger of the Pentecostal Movement' as a result of this incident. Cf. G.A. Smith, The Life of Henry Drummond (London, 1899), p.90f.

2 H.T. Smart, The Life of Thomas Cook (London, 1913), p.245.

3 Colton, op.cit., p.15f.

4 E. Smith, op.cit., p.12.

evangelism were 'in danger of being swamped by the intellectual and the pseudo-intellectual in the Wesleyan societies'.¹ It was feeling not learning that was needed, both by converts and preachers alike.

The third implication on the importance of experience was to make most revivalists indifferent to the regular procedures of church discipline and order. The knowledge of God was considered to be of far more worth than conformity to the ways of men. The tensions created between revivalism and good order were most to be seen in Methodism. The Primitive Methodists were expelled because the authorities 'deemed that the time had come to purge the church of the virus of Revivalism before the whole body should be affected with the distemper ...'² The Methodist Conference decided that camp meetings were 'highly improper in England and likely to be productive of considerable mischief ...'³ William O'Bryan was also expelled for refusing to submit to the authority of his superintendent.⁴ Later the main complaint of Bunting against James Caughey was that he ought to have been accredited by the Conference. It was to him a matter of ecclesiastical order.⁵

The more Calvinistic Nonconformists usually dealt with lack of discipline and order produced by revivals by so hedging potential revivals around with qualifications and regulations that revivals were seldom experienced in any real sense among them.⁶

1 ibid., p.54. E.Irving, The Oracles of God (London, 1824), p.13f.

2 Kendall, op.cit., i, p.100.

3 ibid., p.77. Equal horror would have been expressed at the revival experienced at King's Ferry, where 'There was a swing and go to it. Everybody was at liberty to sing or pray. The confusion was divine.' Flanagan, The Romance of Evangelism (London, 1903), p.52.

4 T.Shaw, The Bible Christians 1815-1907 (London, 1965), p.5f

5 B.Gregory, Sidelights on the Conflict in Methodism 1827-1852 (London, 1899), p.394 and A. Wesleyan Minister, op.cit., passim.

6 See below pp. 341-346.

Once revivalism became an organised business, the indifference to the regular means of grace and to the established churches was expressed in new ways. These later revivalists sought the support of the churches but sought it very much on their own terms and often failed to gain any really meaningful support at all. The opposition to Moody or the host of English revivalists who were active after 1859¹ was not as severe as the Methodist opposition to the early revivalists had been. It was an opposition to his unsophisticated style and language; to the simplicity of his faith and his naivety concerning theology. But since the revivalists were no longer so extravagant in style and the churches were aware of the increasing inroads of secularism, there was a greater openness on the part of some regular ministers and churchmen to welcome the revivalists.

Within this overall framework of revivalism there were several constituent strands. The dominant strand in the first half of the century was Methodist Revivalism. Its roots reached back to Wesley, with the result that many believed revivalism and Methodism were almost synonymous. 'Revivals and Methodism,' said Edward Smith, 'are as closely united as salt and water in the ocean.'² The early fathers of Methodism were believed to have 'lived amid a constant succession of revivals' and it was revival which gave birth and growth to the whole movement.³ This native element was supplemented by contact with America in the early 1800s, thus further establishing the revivalist character of Methodism. In style it was popular, even vulgar, and allowed for the free expression of emotion. In part, at least, it was revivalism which accounted for the widespread appeal of Methodism to the lower classes.

1 For which see Kent, op.cit., chs. 3 and 4.

2 Smith, op.cit., p.9.

3 Shaw, op.cit., p.76.

Yet revivalism was never fully accepted within Methodism and never taken completely into the Wesleyan system. The history of nineteenth century Methodism is to a considerable degree shaped by the attempts of the Wesleyan hierarchy to discipline the untamed spirit of revivalism.. Their attempts were often counter-productive and resulted in divisibly weakening rather than unitedly strengthening their ranks. The results of these attempts have already been the subject of study.¹ But revivalism within Wesleyanism, although restrained, refused to be suppressed and its continual expression within Wesleyanism has been too long neglected.²

In addition to Wesleyanism's revivalist phase, there is a classic and much neglected expression of revivalism within Wesleyanism Methodism to be found in William Arthur's The Tongue of Fire. Arthur had served in India as a missionary for some years before returning to the United Kingdom to become the Secretary of the Methodist Missionary Society and the first President of the Irish Methodist College, as well as being concerned with the revival of Wesleyan home missionary interest in the late 1850s. His book was a product of the era of the 'second evangelical awakening', being originally published in 1856 and going through eighteen editions within the first three years of its existence.

The overall theme of Arthur's work is that a lack of power was evident in the churches; the chief symptom of which was her lack of conversions. By comparison, the early church had few agencies or facilities and yet had many conversions. Arthur held that it was the early church which should provide the standards for which the church of his own day should aim. The difference in the availability of power was due to

1 Carwardine, op.cit., ch.4 and Ward, op.cit., ch.2.

2 See above pp. 83 & 95.

3 Arthur, op.cit., pp.135, 111 and 64.

unbelief and lack of prayer. 'In this age of faith in the natural and disinclination to the supernatural, we want,' he reasoned, 'especially to meet the whole world with this credo: "I believe in the Holy Ghost...".'¹

God's intention had been, since the Day of Pentecost, to immerse the church in power symbolized by a 'tongue of fire.'

The symbol is a tongue, the only instrument of the grandest war ever waged; a tongue - man's speech to his fellow man; a message in human words to human faculties, from understanding to understanding, from the heart to the heart. A tongue of fire - man's voice, God's truth; man's speech, the Holy Spirit's inspiration; a human organ, a superhuman power.'²

It was this power which enabled the early church to face the world as a new religion and to gain success, in spite of its poverty. In those days the church had been 'without a history, without a priesthood, without a college, without a people and without a patron', yet it had known a success unmatched in Arthur's own day.³

The recovery of power was not to be equated, in Arthur's view with the recovery of the miraculous. The miraculous, including the gift of tongues, had been used by God to rouse curiosity and amazement, to bring together a crowd and finally to awe them into silence so that they could hear the message preached. The miraculous attested the divine origin of the message but it did not convert people.⁴

Furthermore, Arthur rejected the distinction between the reception of the Holy Ghost and the filling of the Holy Ghost. They were one and the same and only differed in degree. He thus significantly altered the course of Methodist belief in a second blessing experience.⁵

1 ibid., p.122f.

2 ibid., p.24.

3 ibid., p.51.

4 ibid., pp.55f and 94. Arthur believed that speaking in unknown tongues had originated at Irving's church and was not to be identified with glossalalia in the New Testament, although he believed it to be divine in origin and showed a great deal of sympathy for those who expected the extraordinary gifts to be for their own day, p.115.

5 ibid., pp.29-31.

Nothing, he believed, was more urgent than that the church should rediscover its belief in the superhuman power of the Holy Ghost and he provided practical steps by which the rediscovery could be made.¹ But in several respects Arthur's apology for revivalism differed from earlier views of revivalism. It emphasised the human elements more, it spoke more about 'the understanding', it rejected the distinction between baptism and fulness of the Holy Ghost and it qualified belief in the miraculous. In so doing, Arthur wrote an apology for revivalism which was commendable to mid-century mainline Wesleyanism.

The second strand of revivalism was to be found among those Nonconformists whose roots were as much to be found in puritanism as in the Wesleyan Revival. All the older Nonconformist denominations expressed interest in revival during the early 1830s when news of revival in America reached the shores of England.² Numerous sermons were preached on the topic and numerous congregations were encouraged to pray for revival.³

True to their puritan roots, these Nonconformists looked back to the revivals experienced through the ministry of Jonathan Edwards and longed that God would repeat history for their benefit.⁴ Modifying the hyper-Calvinism of the earlier generation, they now, with one voice, proclaimed that man did have a part to play in the conversion of the world. Andrew Reed thought their fathers had been,

1 ibid., p.117ff.

2 The earliest report of revival in the USA would in fact seem to be in E.M., xxviii (1820), 385. Interest grew greatly around 1828-32.

3 E.g., H.F.Burder, Pastoral Discourses on Revivals in Religion (London, 1829); J.M.Cramp, An Address to British Christians on the importance and necessity of a revival of Religion (London, 1832); F.A.Cox, Suggestions designed to promote the revival and extension of religion ... (London, 1836); J.Fletcher, op.cit., J.Hinton, The Means of a Religious Revival (London, 1829) and A.Reed, Revival, op.cit..

4 Burder, op.cit., pp.16-23; Sprague, op.cit., xiv and Cramp, op.cit., p.10.

too much disposed to regard the conversion of the world and the more rapid advance of religion as the act of God, for which they were patiently to wait, not as a gracious event which they were to expect and seek in the diligent use of prescribed means. ¹

Yet all were anxious to stress the priority of the sovereign power of God in revival² and would have recoiled from Finney's suggestion that revival was not a miracle, merely the sure result of the right use of means, as sure as any other connection between cause and effect.³

Another feature of the thought of these revivalists was their concern that the excesses of revivalism should be controlled and that the revival should have a pastoral base and be productive of good order within the church. It was for this reason that J.A. James, who was a close friend of Dr. William Sprague and had been influential in introducing his Lectures on Revivals into Britain was wary about Charles Finney. James was anxious that revival should come to Britain.⁴ He was glad of the increased interest in revival and welcomed Dr. Redford's protracted meetings at Worcester. He also welcomed Finney's Lectures on Revivals of Religion, although not without qualification.⁵ Yet, when Finney came to Britain, James was wary of welcoming him and wrote to persuade Sprague that Finney was really needed back in the USA.⁶ And, although he rejoiced in the 1859 Revival, he regretted that some of it might lead to spiritual incredulity rather than faith.⁷

- 1 Reed, Revival, op.cit., iii-iv; Fletcher, op.cit., pp.74 & 88f.; Cramp, op.cit., p.7.; Hinton, op.cit., pp. 13 & 36 and Sprague, op.cit., p.116f.
- 2 Cramp, op.cit.; p.7; Fletcher, op.cit.; pp.84-88 and Sprague, op.cit., ch.4.
- 3 Finney, op.cit., p.12f.
- 4 The Life and Letters of John Angell James, ed. R.W.Dale (London, 1899), p.257, Letter to Dr. Sprague dated 14 September 1829.
- 5 ibid., p.355. James said it was 'a most extraordinary book - perfectly unique - rough, coarse, full of exceptional passages and containing many questionable sentiments; and yet withal, a heart stirring book'.
- 6 ibid., p.546.
- 7 ibid., p.566.

Puritan revivalists greeted the signs of the awakening in the church as a sign that the Millennium was approaching. In the days before the rise of pre-millennial adventism, those holding millennial views were vigorously engaged in missionary activity¹ and the blessing they witnessed in the revivals was seen as a further incentive to such work. J.M.Cramp wrote,

Now we are anticipating the glory of the latter days, when the Lord Jesus shall reign from one end of the world to the other, and the bulk of mankind shall belong to the true church. We feel assured that the glowing descriptions of prophecy will be realized, and the earth "be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea". If, however, this work is to be not accomplished by a direct interference of miraculous agency ... it is obvious that the number of labourers must be amazingly increased and that a blessing hitherto unheard of must rest upon their efforts otherwise the regeneration of all things will be² postponed to an indefinitely future period.

The classic nineteenth century statement on revivals by a Presbyterian who took his puritan roots seriously was that of William Sprague.

Carwardine questions how influential Sprague's Lectures on Revival were in Britain and, since the work was written as a balance to the teaching of Finney, questions whether revival does not suffer death by a thousand qualifications in Sprague's hands.³ The influence does indeed seem slight, despite James's recommending it widely. Nonetheless, its sentiments were those which were felt by many English Dissenters.

Sprague's view of revival was certainly cautious and it is easy to understand why some would argue that he so qualifies and reduces the phenomenon that, when he has finished, there is not really any concept of revival left. According to Sprague, conversions came in a very wide

1 For the connection between puritan millennialism and missionary activity see I.Murray, The Puritan Hope (London, 1971). Murray claims that pre-millennialism was destructive to missionary endeavour.

2 Cramp, op.cit., p.6.; Cf. Burder, op.cit., p.77; Colton, op.cit., pp.157-165; Sprague, op.cit., p.32 and A.Reed, The Advancement of Religion (London, 1843), p.203.

3 Carwardine, op.cit., p.67f.

variety of ways and were not necessarily sudden.¹ Great excitement was not essential,² neither were great numbers of conversions.³ Where it was a genuine revival, it was marked by good order. Those who expressed 'indecorous familiarity' in prayer were strongly condemned.⁴ Preaching and ordinary means of evangelism were recommended.⁵ And throughout the work, great concern was expressed about safeguarding the purity of the revival so that it should reflect the holiness of God.⁶

Yet that is to emphasise but one side of Sprague's work. He was concerned to meet the objections of those Dissenters who questioned whether revivals were the work of God or the work of men. He adopted his defensive approach, therefore, out of necessity and examined each objection in detail in order to set out the grounds of genuine revivals.⁷ In dealing with the objections to revivals, he sometimes rejected the allegation altogether and sometimes partly accepted it. That some subjects of revival fell into a state of mental derangement was, he said, an irrelevant objection because that happened to people in all walks of life. As for the discord introduced into families, Sprague claimed that that was no more than Jesus led his followers to expect. Some conversions were too sudden, although sudden conversions were Biblical. Even the existence of some enthusiasm in revivals did not nullify them. On balance, he reserves his strongest statements for the support of revivals. 'The cause of revivals is emphatically the Saviour's cause'⁸ and, since they are admitted to be God's work, 'you surely will not dare to say that this way of accomplishing his purpose is

1 ibid., p.12.

2 ibid., p.13.

3 ibid., p.14.

4 ibid., p.122.

5 ibid., pp.129-148.

6 ibid., p.258.

7 ibid., pp.17-59.

8 ibid., p.59.

not the best'.¹ In Sprague's opinion, the results of revivals were positive and he anticipated that their future would be 'a glorious triumph'.²

The only extensive evidence of a church, adopting Sprague's viewpoint, actually experiencing a revival comes from Wycliffe Chapel, London, 1838. Andrew Reed, the pastor, a former pupil of Matthew Wilks, was much influenced by his reading of Calvin Colton's History and Character of American Revivals of Religion, but believed that such revivals were more suited to Wales than to England.³ Even so, at the age of fifty, he wrote in his journal, 'I want a more decided revival of religion in my congregation ... Most of all I want to see the power of God in His sanctuary and feel it on my own spirit. When shall it once be ?'⁴ In the course of preparing a series of lectures on The Advancement of Religion, the Claim of the Times, to aid the spirit of revival, he himself was personally renewed in his experience of God and his deacons exhibited a new spirit of prayer.⁵

Visits were arranged to the heads of families of a 'short, official and strictly religious' nature. Special services were then conducted - a sort of protracted meeting - which lasted for several weeks and were addressed to different sections of the people. All was conducted with due caution and the use of follow-up meetings in the sanctuary, or anxious seats for penitents were resisted in order that people should be discouraged from responding unless genuine. Despite this, on one occasion two hundred crowded into the vestry for further instruction. During the preaching of one sermon, a funeral sermon for Margaret Keith, 'a few wept and had to be carried out'.⁶ The greatest effect of the revival was to be seen among the young

1 ibid., p.37.

2 ibid., pp.258-286.

3 A. & C. Reed, The Life and Philanthropic Labours of Andrew Reed DD (London, 1866, 3rd. edn.), p.168.

4 ibid., p.311.

5 ibid., p.317 and Reed, Revival, op.cit., p.7.

6 Reed, Revival, op.cit., pp.8-20.

people, especially those connected with the Bible Class, and its immediate result was that seventy-one were added to the church.¹

Reed, in his account of the revival, stresses that the methods used were ordinary or mere extensions of the ordinary means of evangelism. The chief method was that of preaching and the chief revivalist was the pastor. Specialist revivalists would have been detrimental. It was seen to be part of the ongoing work of Wycliffe Chapel, even though physical exhaustion dictated that the pace of the revival work could not be maintained at its highest pitch for long.² Within his theological framework, it was as near to a revival as any who shared his theological stance would experience, for although the Calvinists had a theology of revival, the practices of revival really belonged to the Arminians.

The third strand in the revivalist perspective was the non-denominational revivalism which became the norm from Charles Finney onwards. Finney did not visit Britain until 1849 but, when he came, he already had an established reputation as a revivalist and had already published his extensive views on the subject. Following his visit, a plethora of American Revivalists visited the UK and a multitude of English revivalists imitated them. Revivalism had now become an urban phenomenon and was forsaking its rural origins: it had also become a human activity to be organised rather than an act of divine grace to be received.

Finney was the most articulate and the most extreme of the new revivalists. His view that men were the active moral agents of God in his world who could, by the right application of means produce a revival, had been anticipated by Colton³ and was to a large extent assumed, if not admitted, by Moody.

1 ibid., pp.22-27.

2 ibid., pp.30-35.

3 Colton, op.cit., pp.63-79.

Finney's work has often been caricatured; a response for which Finney may well have been partly responsible because of his simplistic opening statements on the ease with which revivals could be produced and the indifference which a belief in the sovereignty of God produced. He several times referred to the necessity of God's agency in revival and had no wish to remove all the mystery from revivals as some would suggest. 'Prayer is an essential link in the chain of causes that lead to a revival...'¹ and must be in accord with the will of God. Furthermore, the Bible laid down no specific course of measures to promote revivals and there were no particular measures to be adhered to,² only principles within which blessing might come. Men were expected to act responsibly, adopting methods and adapting them as might suit their situation. But, for all that, however much one searches for signs of Calvinistic orthodoxy in Finney's writing, it is true that he is much more anthropocentric than an orthodox Calvinist could ever be. He altered the terms on which revivals were to be conducted from then on and provided revivalists with a theological rationale for their work which, though they would qualify or amend it in part, was largely to serve them for the rest of the century. It was a rationale that gave man his place in the divine economy as seen through the spectacles of burgeoning Victorian confidence.³

For all the expressed optimism of the revivalists, they failed to convince the Nonconformists as a whole that it was by means of revival that God intended to convert the world. Most would have agreed with the

1 ibid., p.53. The topic of prayer occupies pp.53-152.

2 ibid., pp. 182 & 250.

3 In view of the extensive literature on the subject, it is not proposed to treat the issue further here. See, inter alia, Carwardine, op.cit., and P.B.Morgan, 'A Study of the work of revivalist movements in Great Britain & Ireland from 1870-1914' (Oxford University, B.Litt thesis, 1960).

resolution of Presbyterian Assembly held in Connecticut in 1821 that,

Whilst the Assembly unfeignedly rejoice in these and other signal revivals of religion and earnestly prays for still more manifestations of divine grace to all the churches, they are convinced that the principal hopes of the church of God must rest on the ordinary operations of the divine spirit accompanying the appointed means of grace.

1

7.2. The Evangelical Perspective

Revivalism and evangelicalism had much in common. In both perspectives the need for a personal relationship with God which begins through a conversion experience, was central to their whole understanding of religion. The demarcation between the converted and the unconverted was sharply drawn. Sin and its consequences are painted in dark terms, whilst to experience salvation was seen as entering a life of perpetual joy and bliss. Both perspectives led to active missionary involvement. Both perspectives believed in the primacy and adequacy of the Bible as the source of revelation and maintained an uncritical approach to it as critical scholarship developed late in the century.

There were, however, equally important differences between the Revivalist and evangelical perspectives which have often been obfuscated for lack of an adequate conceptual framework. The essential difference lay in the fact that evangelicalism was much more concerned with understanding than with experience. It was much more concerned than ever revivalism was, to be rational and has a deep suspicion of the irrational. The point is illustrated in a number of ways.

Firstly, the gospel was essentially seen as 'truth' and its dissemination as a matter of overcoming ignorance. David Bogue, in addressing the Religious Tract Society spoke of the missionary task as diffusing the truth through the two great instruments which God had given

1 Cited in E.M., xxix (1821), 388-391.

men, 'the voice and the hand, that is, through preaching and writing. 'Is it not,' he asked, 'a singular circumstance, that when God had but one Son, he should make that Son a teacher of truth...'¹ Faithfulness to the truth was held to be the key to understanding why churches grew or declined.²

Conversion was viewed as overcoming ignorance and being led into the truth.³ It occurs through 'the preaching of the Word', that is preaching from the Bible, and was closely associated with correct doctrine.⁴ A knowledge of the scheme of salvation was considered essential before someone could be truly converted. John Angell James believed that neither faith nor feeling could be produced except on the grounds of knowledge and proceeded to list, for the benefit of 'anxious inquirers' a host of doctrines which it was necessary to know, including the moral character of God, the law, the evil of sin, the depravity of men, the design of Christ's mediatorial work and so on.⁵ This emphasis on doctrine demanded that a convert should have a fairly highly developed ability to engage in abstract thought. The Baptist, John Foster, expressed the view in its most extreme form but not in a way which would have been repudiated by the main body of evangelicals, in his work On the Evils of Popular Ignorance. He argued that some intellectual ability was a prerequisite of conversion since the uneducated were governed solely by sense impressions and responded only to the immediate and the palpable. Without education it would not be possible for them to grasp the meaning of

1 David Bogue, The Diffusion of Divine Truth (London, 1800), p. 19.

2 D. Bogue and J. Bennett, History of Dissenters (London, 1808), iii, pp. 339 & 377.

3 E.g. R. Gribble, Recollections of an Evangelist (London, 1858), pp. 16, 48 & 72f. E.M., xxi (1813), 522.

4 H. Allan, Memoir of the Rev. James Sherman (3rd edn., London, 1864), pp. 89 & 147f. J. Eyre, The True Convert (Northampton, 1823), pp. 52-59.

5 J. A. James, The Anxious Inquirer after Salvation Directed and Encouraged (London, 1838), pp. 36-64.

the atonement.¹

The consequences of this view of the gospel was that there was no real expectation of the supernatural, at least not as understood by revivalists, in the act of conversion. Conversion became an act of the will, a matter of obeying the truth, rather than an overpowering breaking-in of God.

R.F.Horton speaks of the way in which his eyes were opened 'to the fact that the decision for Christ is an act of the will. I had supposed that conversion was due to the operation of the Holy Spirit, a change wrought without the co-operation, almost without the knowledge, of the subject of it'. But instead he found it to be a matter of responding to a constant love of God.²

Evangelicals feared irrationality and therefore were generally speaking opposed to charismatic manifestations. Developments at Edward Irving's church in Regent Square, London, caused a flurry of pamphlets to be issued, mostly arguing that miraculous powers were for the first age of the church alone. Even when it was conceded that such supernatural gifts could possibly be a manifestation of the Holy Spirit's power, it was customary to conclude that in Irving's case they were nothing of the sort. Joseph Fletcher spoke of the miraculous signs as 'an extravagance of pretension and a high and arrogant assumption of authority, which are as effectively

1 J.Foster, On the Evils of Popular Ignorance (London, 1820). I owe this point to D.Rosman, 'Evangelicals and Culture 1790-1833' (Keele University Ph.D thesis, 1979) who traces the origin of this position to the evangelical's belief in man being created as a rational character. Atheism was essentially irrationality. She makes the point that this meant that evangelicalism rejected anti-intellectualism and encouraged intellectual pursuits and emphasised the human agencies involved in spreading the gospel, pp.116-130.

2 R.Horton, An Autobiography (London, 1917), p.37. For the most thorough exposition of this point see T.W.Jenkyn, On the Union of the Holy Spirit and the Church in the Conversion of the World (London, 1837).

serving the cause of irreligion, as the direct attacks of scepticism'.¹ Baptist W. Noel did not consider miraculous signs either to be 'proofs of conversion nor the means of it'.² James Douglas, in his pessimistic view of missions, held that reliance on the supernatural manifestations of the Spirit was not only an anachronism in the nineteenth century but could be a positive hindrance to the cause of missions. He pointed out that those who relied on 'Angel's food' in the Old Testament died in unbelief. 'Moral influence,' he declared, 'has always prevailed more than supernatural influence'.³

Evangelicals argued explicitly against a 'charismatic' world view and took steps to ensure that the perspective did not spread. When Mr. Wright, an agent of the London City Mission, confessed to the committee his belief 'that the gifts of healing and the expulsion of demons may still exist now as in the apostolic age', it was unanimously agreed that he should be dismissed.⁴ More usually the charismatic dimension simply did not enter into the world view of an evangelical. John Campbell records an illuminating example from the Life of David Nasmith, of Nasmith's visit to a tormented young man who had sold his soul to Satan and eventually committed suicide. Nasmith's counsel to him was to trust the promises of God regarding forgiveness. The thought of exorcism did not apparently enter Nasmith's mind.⁵

1 J. Fletcher, On the Miraculous Gifts of the Primitive Church and Modern Pretensions to the Exercise (London, 1832), p. 5. Cf. B. Noel, Remarks on the Revival of Miraculous Powers in the Church (London, 1831); W. Goode, The Modern Claims to the Possession of the Extraordinary Gifts of the Spirit Stated and Examined (London, 1833); D. Pitcairn, Pentecostal Blessings (London, 1862); C. Prest, The Witness of the Holy Spirit (London, 1867) and E.M., NS x (1832), 476f.

2 B. W. Noel, op. cit., p. 6.

3 J. Douglas, Hints on Missions (Edinburgh & London, 1822), p. 25f.

4 Minutes of the London City Mission, 22 Jan. 1844. See also Rosman, op. cit., pp. 427-429.

5 J. Campbell, Memoirs of David Nasmith (London, 1844), p. 34f.

Conversion, therefore, was essentially a moral issue, The test of the true conversion was whether or not a moral change had taken place in a person's life. The unconverted were described as failing to attend church, failing to pray and failing to read the Bible. Among them, swearing was common and so was drink with its offsprings, drunkenness and poverty. The unconverted husband would often be painted as forsaking his wife and children who would therefore have to beg in order to subsist. The unconverted were a source of thieves and robbers. They could not die well. All in all, the unconverted father was 'rushing headlong to the flame and dragging his little ones thither too.'¹

To be converted was to be happy and to have a secure and well-provided for family life without swearing or drinking and where all its members lived in ethical respectability.² Conversion replaced insensibility by serious conviction; intemperance with moderation; profaneness with a change of conversation; avarice with discreet liberality; discontent with patience and impiety with 'a religious regard for divine appointments'.³

The style of the evangelical approach to mission was aggressive without being offensive. It usually worked within the bounds of social and ecclesiastical propriety and lacked the impertinence of revivalism. Its aim was the conversion of individuals, whether the conversion was sudden or gradual and whether it was effected in a group or private context. It magnified the soul winner and affirmed the belief that every Christian should become one.

1 Home Missionary Society Magazine, viii (1827), 252f.

2 H.Fowler, Travels in the Wilderness, or My Life (London, 1839), pp.85-89 contains the classic evangelical conversion story of Jonas.

3 H.M.S. Mag., xii (1831), 273-6.

J. Howard Hinton, who was secretary to the Baptist Union 1841-1866, wrote a number of works which directly related to the task of the mission of the church. In his book on The Work of the Holy Spirit in Conversion, he set out to justify his orthodoxy and claim that he was putting forward views no different from those of Andrew Fuller.¹ In it he rejected traditional Calvinism but held on firmly to the 'decisive, various and uniform' evidence of scripture that no man could be converted without the effectual work of the Holy Spirit.² The contentious issue was the part man played in his own conversion. Hinton argued that man had the power, that is, possessed the means, to turn to God but did not do so because he lacked the disposition to do so. All three prerequisites for a man to repent, namely the opportunity of being acquainted with the truth, a state of understanding and a proper connection between the understanding and the heart, were already possessed by man. What man needed to do, claimed Hinton, was to employ the power he already had in a different way.³ To argue that he did not have that power was to permit man to abdicate his moral responsibility. The evidence that God considered man responsible lay in the fact that God had not only issued a host of commands which he expected to be obeyed but also a variety of means so that men could comply with his commands.⁴ The scriptures, he concluded, 'uniformly represent a sinner's impenitence as resulting not from a want of power but from a want of disposition alone.'⁵ The fall changed man's disposition but not his power.

1 J.H.Hinton, The Work of the Holy Spirit in Conversion (London, 1830), pp. ix f., 286-288.

2 ibid., pp.2-18.

3 ibid., pp.63-86.

4 ibid., pp.95-133.

5 ibid., p.197.

The work of the Holy Spirit which was a work of mercy not of justice and came individually not universally in his sovereign freedom, was necessary because man's natural disposition was opposed to God.¹

Once the truth was grasped of man's responsibility for his own conversion, Hinton set about the task of convincing the church of its responsibility for the conversion of others. The church should no more require a warrant to attempt the conversion of sinners than it required a warrant to relieve distress.² Nevertheless, he employed extensive argument to convince every Christian to see the work of converting others as 'a direct and imperative obligation'.³

The cold arguments were supplemented by more emotive reasons for being involved in the missionary task. Christians ought to feel the compassion Jesus felt for the lost whose danger was as imminent as it was dreadful.

Think of those who have died ! Many of these also have died in sin and are gone - alas ! whither ? To meet an angry God, to appear before a righteous tribunal, to hear an awful doom, to suffer an eternal vengeance. They are now lifting up their eyes in torments of unutterable intensity and endless duration.⁴

Hinton taught that engagement in evangelism would not only bring glory to God but true happiness to a believer.⁵ It was vital that the new liberties of the day be exploited for good before they could become instruments of mischief.⁶

1 ibid., pp.308-334.

2 J.H.Hinton, Individual Effort and the Active Christian (London, 1859), p.27.

3 ibid., pp. 31-53.

4 ibid., pp.63f and 184. Belief in the theory of annihilation was to become more acceptable to some evangelicals later in the century but the eternity of punishment was throughout the century the main evangelical theory of Hell. See G.Rowell, Hell and the Victorians (Oxford, 1974).

5 ibid., pp.97-112.

6 ibid., pp.121-126.

The best method to be used was that of individual witnessing. Hinton was sceptical about the vast machinery being erected for home missions and predicted that it would ultimately fail for lack of money, only to be succeeded by the comparatively inexpensive, but far more effective method of every man saying to his neighbour, "Know the Lord".¹ Nothing was more natural nor so versatile as personal evangelism which built upon the silent but powerful influence of example. Private conversation, letters and recommended reading were all to be brought into service of the home missionary.² His subsequent work on The Active Christian gave detailed attention to where the task might be prosecuted, how a Christian might prepare for it, what was to be said in witnessing and how various people were to be answered.

Throughout his works Hinton exhibits a confident spirit which was calculated to encourage Christians to become involved. Success was to be expected, even if it was going to be neither universal nor sure. But success was related to the labour expended and with the further help of God's Spirit it was sure.³

The evangelical perspective reached its zenith in Charles Spurgeon. Although he confessed not to have found personal evangelism easy himself,⁴ he clearly believed in the importance of 'soul-winning'. It was, he declared, 'a joy worth worlds to win souls' and ought always to be the Christian's aim.⁵ Spurgeon cannot be confined to the evangelical perspective of mission. He looked back often, with longing, to the great puritan revivalists like Whitfield and Edwards and his concerns were wide

1 ibid., p.156.

2 ibid., pp.193-224.

3 ibid., pp.241-149, 476ff and 513-529.

4 C.H.Spurgeon, Autobiography (London, 1898), ii, 131.

5 C.H.Spurgeon, The Soul-Winner (London, 1897), pp. 250 & 221.

and philanthropic, as his orphanages demonstrate. Furthermore, he was a great chapel builder and expected churches to grow under his ministry.¹ But at heart his perspective was evangelical.²

The essence of his approach was distilled in the lectures he gave to his college students and some other addresses given at the Metropolitan Tabernacle which were published, posthumously, in The Soul-Winner.

Soul-winning was, first and foremost, a matter of 'instructing a man that he may know the truth of God'. 'Teaching begins the work and crowns it too.'³ The popular mistake, Spurgeon thought, was not to proclaim the doctrines of grace, enough, or even worse, to proclaim only partial truth.

To listen to some preachers, you would imagine that the gospel was a pinch of sacred snuff to make them wake up, or a bottle of ardent spirits to excite their brains. It is nothing of the kind, it is news, there is information in it, there is instruction in it concerning matters which men need to know, and statements in it calculated to bless those who hear it. It is not a magical incantation, or a charm, whose force consists in a collection of sounds; it is a revelation of facts and truths which require knowledge and belief. The gospel is a reasonable system, and it appeals to men's understanding; it is a matter for thought and consideration and it appeals to the conscience and the reflecting powers. Hence, if we do not teach men something, we may shout, "Believe ! Believe !" but what are they to believe ?⁴

To keep a soul in ignorance was contrary to the mind of the Spirit. Truth, fully expounded, was the weapon with which men were conquered by the Lord.⁵ Ignorance, on the other hand, was one of the greatest obstacles to the proclamation of the gospel.⁶

1 Spurgeon, Autobiography, op.cit., ii, 136f. There are extant 30 volumes of reports by the elders of the Metropolitan Tabernacle containing the testimonies of 12,000 who applied for church membership under Spurgeon's ministry. Yet he warned against the over-hurried inscription of names on church rolls, Soul-Winner, op.cit., pp.13 & 37.

2 For a broader exposition of Spurgeon's theology see J.F.Thornton, 'The Soteriology of C.H.Spurgeon: Its Biblical and Historical Roots and its place in his preaching' (Cambridge Univ. Ph.D. thesis, 1975).

3 Spurgeon, Soul-Winner, op.cit., p.117. The truth, of course, in Spurgeon's view was to be found in the infallible Bible. For his attitude to this see W.B.Glover, Evangelical Nonconformists and Higher Criticism in the Nineteenth Century (London, 1954), pp.163-176.

4 ibid., p.17f.

5 ibid., p.20.

6 Spurgeon, Autobiography, op.cit., ii, 133.

In Spurgeon's hands this emphasis on truth did not degenerate into an arid intellectualism. There was a right and proper place for emotion. The truth was to be impressed on men so that they could feel it. The appeal needed to be to the heart as well as the head and so the emotions needed to be stirred. Yet the emotions needed watching carefully lest feelings were excited which were not spiritual.¹ It was all too easy to aim at sensation or effect but Spurgeon warned 'it very often happens that the converts that are born in excitement die when the excitement is over'.²

The issue of conversion was so serious that Spurgeon was not adverse to plain speaking or shock tactics in convincing a person of their need to Christ. The aim was not merely to influence people but to convert them. 'The production of faith is the very centre of the target at which you aim.'³ If that necessitated an occasional abruptness on the part of the soul-winner, so be it. Spurgeon justified it by arguing that 'sometimes a desperate case requires a desperate remedy'.⁴

The reason for this serious application to the task of soul winning was three-fold. Without conversions great dishonour was done to a holy God. Only the gospel could sweep away the social evils which abounded, causing extreme misery to the human race. Above all, people were to be saved because without salvation they face the terrible future of impenitent souls.

1 Spurgeon, Soul-Winner, op.cit., p.21f.

2 ibid., p.16.

3 ibid., p.29.

4 ibid., p.33 and Spurgeon, Autobiography, op.cit., p.139.

Unsaved, unregenerate, unwashed in precious blood, we see them go to the solemn bar whence in silence the sentence comes forth, and they are banished from the presence of the gospel, banished to the horrors which are not to be described nor even to be imagined. This alone is enough to cause us distress day and night. This decision of destiny has about it a terrible solemnity.¹

This 'dark side of the gospel' emphasised the law of God, the death of man and the damnation of the impenitent. Converts were expected to show a conviction that they had broken God's law, grief at having done so, hatred of the sins and a turning away from that sinful behaviour.² The fear of death was frequently used as an incentive for man to consider his eternal condition. It is significant that the one example of personal evangelism that Spurgeon records in his Autobiography began with him asking a Waterman, 'Have you, my friend, a good hope of Heaven if you should die?'³ Death was omnipresent in Victorian society and some of the greatest periods of revival were related to the spread of cholera. The high infant mortality rate meant that the conversion of young children was seen to be as vital as the conversion of adults and that it was legitimate to publicize death bed conversions.⁴

Spurgeon saved the missionary task from being too anthropocentric by his emphasis on the absolute necessity for the Holy Spirit to work regeneration in those who were on the receiving end of truth. He maintained a perfect balance between human instrumentality and divine agency in a way which was fitting to liberated Calvinism.⁵ His understanding of what the Holy Spirit accomplished in regeneration was more idiosyncratically phrased;

1 Spurgeon, Soul-Winner, op.cit., pp.279-282.

2 ibid., p.31.

3 Spurgeon, Autobiography, op.cit., p.132.

4 See G.Rowell, op.cit., Ch.1; G.Best, 'Evangelicalism and the Victorians', The Victorian Crisis of Faith, ed. A.Symondson (London, 1970), pp.54-55. On death rates see Best's Mid-Victorian Britain 1851-75 (London, 1971), pp.55-59. Perhaps the whole theme should be related to the wider topic of anxiety, for which see, Walter E. Houghton, The Victorian Frame of Mind (New Haven & London, 1957), pp.54-89.

5 Spurgeon, The Soul-Winner, op.cit., p.25.

but then Spurgeon, without traditional theological education himself, was never backwards in expressing idiosyncratic opinions. 'Regeneration', he claimed,

on the new birth works a change in the whole nature of man, and, as far as we can judge, its essence is in the implantation and creation of a new principle within man. The Holy Ghost creates in us a new, heavenly and immortal nature, which is known in Scripture as "the spirit", by way of distinction from the soul. Our theory of regeneration is that man in his fallen nature consists only of body and soul, and that when he is regenerated there is created in him a new and higher nature - "the spirit" - which is a spark from the everlasting fire of God's life and love; this falls into the heart, and abides there and makes its receiver "a partaker of divine nature". Thence-forward the man consists of three parts, body, soul and spirit, and the spirit is the reigning power of the three. 1

Thus a strong distinction between saved and unsaved was drawn. The effect of this regeneration was to be seen in the production of faith and repentance. The moral test of conversion is equally evident in Spurgeon's writings. Holy living was not to be a standard for a convert to reach in some undefined future but a present experience from the beginning. Hatred of sin was to be so deep that not only a man's action and language but his spirit and temper were to be changed too. There was to be a new willingness to obey God's commandments.²

These views had certain implications for the method to be used in the evangelistic task. Firstly, the emphasis on doctrinal truth inevitably led to the exaltation of the sermon as the key instrument of conversion. The importance of preaching was everywhere assumed.³ Secondly, the evangelistic task was so serious and urgent that every Christian was encouraged to become a soul-winner and to use every opportunity to that end. Individual conversations were only secondary in importance to preaching. People were to be spoken to after sermons; acquaintances and relatives.

1 ibid., p.26.

2 ibid., pp.29-35.

3 ibid., pp.260f and 285-287.

were to be buttonholed; letters were to be written and visits to be made. If a Christian could do little else he could take someone along to hear a sermon.¹ In every conceivable way it was vital that the individual Christian should commend his Saviour.

Two works illustrate the evangelical perspective at the end of the century when revivalism and evangelicalism had converged. Revivalism had lost its excessive supernaturalism and evangelicalism was less orthodoxly rigid. A.T. Pierson, one of Spurgeon's successors at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, dedicated his work, Evangelistic Work in Principle and Practice, to D.L. Moody. He began by pointing out the immensity of the task that remained to be done. Each Christian in the world, in terms of statistical averages, was responsible for the care of twenty-five thousand non-Christian souls and, with each generation, the task of evangelism had to begin afresh.² The church, he said, needed a new baptism of prayer and piety in order to achieve its task.

Superficially Pierson stands exactly where Spurgeon stood. There is the same emphasis on preaching and the same demand that the message be simply that of Christ crucified.³ He was scathing about modern methods which had tried to make the gospel attractive. All that splendid architecture, pulpit oratory and musical display and the host of other entertaining techniques had succeeded in doing was to secularize the Church not to evangelize the world. The gospel needed no such advertisement as it had its own power of attraction.⁴

1 ibid., pp. 260-264.

2 A.T. Pierson, Evangelistic Work in Principle and Practice (London, 1888), pp. 1-4.

3 ibid., pp. 15; 40-50.

4 ibid., pp. 55-64.

On close examination, however, Pierson represents a generation removed from Spurgeon. Pierson's definition of evangelism reflected a less confident spirit than Spurgeon would have exhibited.

Evangelisation is simply this - rolling away the stone, and giving the dead a chance to hear the word of life. It is bringing the evangel, or gospel, into contact with the unsaved and it is for contact, not conversion, that the church is responsible. We are ¹ to do our part and leave God to do His.

By Pierson's time great eternal issues had been reduced to slogans.

Quoting Canon Wilberforce he claimed that the whole law of Christ could be reduced to four words - 'admit, submit, commit and transmit'.² For all his protestations about modern methods of making the gospel attractive, he had nothing else to offer himself. Evangelistic services and services of song were highly commended as having the ability to reach those who would not normally go to church.³ Even preaching was, in fact, now seen in a different light. It was only preparatory, spreading the truth over a great breadth of surface.⁴ The real work was to be done in the after-meeting which carried it to greater depths and was 'simply a device suggested by common sense and experience to prevent truth from losing its grip upon souls'.⁵ It was not only that the gospel had been reduced to slogans but evangelism had been reduced to a few simple techniques to produce 'decisions'.⁶

Writing just a few years later, F.C. Spurr, the Baptist Union evangelist, could speak of evangelism as a 'science'. His object was to write a manual on the conduct of special missions which were increasingly

1 ibid., p.21.

2 ibid., p.26.

3 ibid., pp.73-87.

4 ibid., p.97.

5 ibid., pp.94f.

6 ibid., p.93.

in vogue.¹ Spurr was writing at a time when the churches had become socially respectable and there is an awareness that the mission might well be directed to the 'outer ring of hearers' in the congregation as much as to 'the non-religious part of the immediate neighbourhood'.² Many churches needed people within their own ranks to be converted and that might well happen if the monotony of the routine work could be broken. But Spurr taught that nothing could be taken for granted and everything depended on how careful the preparation was. It was an almost inflexible law that the success of a mission bore a direct relationship to the care of the preparation.³

Spurr's manual is almost entirely concerned with this matter of preparation. He offered criteria for deciding when it would be right to hold a mission. He advised care in choosing the right person to be the missionary;⁴ encouraging churches to avoid choosing one just because his name was well-known. A careful count-down schedule was then outlined. Preparation should begin three months before the proposed mission by calling the church to prayer. Immediately a committee should be formed; finance should be privately raised; a team of visitors organised and music should be rehearsed. Workers for the Inquiry Room should be carefully trained so as to prevent them forcing people into make decisions.⁵

Two months prior to the mission advanced handbills should be distributed in order that interest might be aroused. Missions, no longer being novelties, could not be assumed to arouse curiosity automatically. Six weeks beforehand the pastor should preach a special series of sermons and issue a letter and carefully selected tracts. This should be followed

1 F.C.Spurr, Special Missions and How to Make them Successful (London, 1893), p.9f.

2 ibid., pp.11-13, 26.

3 ibid., p.30. Cf. F.B.Meyer's Preface, p.vii.

4 ibid., pp.26-29.

5 ibid., pp.31-41.

by further visitation of the districts ready for the placarding of notices two weeks before the mission's launch.¹

Once the mission was underway, open-air services were advised to advertize that it had commenced. During the mission itself the behaviour of the Christians was also regulated. They should stay to the after-meetings because it would encourage others to do so. They should behave with reverence in the church. They should also plan a Thanksgiving Service at the conclusion of the mission for what God had done. After that no time was to be lost in meeting those who had professed conversion.²

Spurr's manual was symbolic of the fact that both the spirit and the techniques of the well-known late nineteenth century revivalists had been brought within the grasp of every local church. Home missions had now almost become synonymous with planned 'missions'.

Writing several decades later, Spurr revealed that he had cause to regret this simplisitic approach to evangelism, for it had done nothing to stem the tide of secularism. Although he believed the tide would turn, because there seemed to be 'a law of the ebb and the flow of the spiritual tide',³ the plight of the church was serious. Internal and external factors had contributed to the church's poverty, which was not seen now as being overcome by the holding of conventional missions which had had their day. In Hay Aitkin's words, Spurr wrote, 'The word "Mission" is now threadbare'.⁴ There needed to be much more serious engagement with the secular culture which would necessitate dialogue sermons, services without hymns, evangelism that was both specialized and continuous and the forsaking of the assumption that people knew the truth of the gospel and that all they

1 ibid., pp.42-56.

2 ibid., pp.58-61.

3 F.C.Spurr, The Evangelism of our Time (London, 1937), p.21.

4 ibid., p.52f.

lacked was the will to accept it.¹

7.3. The Ecclesiastical Perspective

The development of the missionary enterprise inevitably led to a review of the theology of the church. In 1797 J. Fawcett had been able to set out a clear and confident apology for congregational church order. The church was to be composed of those who had been subject to divine change and who were growing in grace. Each local church was strictly independent and no-one else had the right of jurisdiction over them.² With reference to the mission of the church, Fawcett was confident of two issues. The early office of evangelist had ceased along with the miraculous gifts. They were for the foundation period of the church only.³ He was also convinced that the addition of new members was very desirable and ought to be paid special attention. But he believed that sinners would come in under 'the ministry of the word' and that no special aggressive measures were required.⁴

With the growth of the missionary movement, however, Fawcett's portrait of the church in its missionary role was subject to question. David Douglas, in particular, proposed that the office of evangelist had not passed away with the apostolic era. Douglas defined evangelists as those who preached the gospel as itinerants and who planted and watered the Christian Churches.⁵ Summarizing the New Testament picture of the evangelist, he stated that they had their origin in the appointment of the seventy by the Lord (Luke 10:1-20).⁶ Subsequently they were recognized

1 ibid., pp.50, 59-67 & 87.

2 J.Fawcett, The Constitution and Order of a Gospel Church Considered (Halifax, 1797), p.26.

3 ibid., p.29.

4 ibid., p.41.

5 D.Douglas, Essay on the Nature and Perpetuity of the Office of the Primitive Evangelist (London, 1838), p.8.

6 ibid., p.29.

and appointed by the church and sent out two by two.¹ Their chief usefulness was to the world rather than the church, although as apostolic messengers they had the function of uniting scattered independent churches.² They derived their spiritual authority from the apostles although they could not exercise the signs of an apostle, 'but as far as missionary work proper was concerned they stood on the same footing!'.³

Douglas then proceeded to marshal numerous arguments to justify his view that the office was intended to be permanent. The office, he said, was just as needful in his day as in the first century; it had no more objections against it than the continuance of the office of pastor and, in fact, was held to continue after the apostolic period by the early church.⁴ It was not until the third century that the office was held to be in abeyance.⁵ Unfortunately, the Reformation failed to rescue the office from oblivion and Douglas accused Calvin of being confused on the point and Owen of contradicting himself. Both men, however, had believed the office had ceased and it was due to the prevalence of Calvinistic theology in the churches that most believed the office of an evangelist was a modern invention.⁶

In Douglas's view, however, the Scripture was clear. The office was a perpetual one. The contemporary rise of missions which, as prophecy predicted, was covering the earth with the knowledge of the Lord was, he held, a confirmation of that view.⁷ The church, he pleaded, needed to give much more recognition to the office than it was and consequently to adjust its view of the pastoral office. Pastors, he claimed had magnified their office in an unwarranted way and, as a result, had set aside the gift of an

1 ibid., pp.30-32.

2 ibid., pp.37-51.

3 ibid., pp.37 & 53.

4 ibid., p.57-98.

5 ibid., pp.105-115.

6 ibid., pp.120-123.

7 ibid., p.137.

evangelist.¹ The conversion of the world was the great business of Christians but it was a task which could only be fulfilled if the office of the evangelist was once again distinguished from that of pastor and the church began to function with respect to its offices, as God had intended.²

The plea for the revival of the office of evangelist was not a matter of merely adding another department to the church's organisation. It was symptomatic of a fundamental shift of perception. The church was now seen as a missionary army instead of being exclusively a pastoral community. This new perception gave rise to a number of theologies and manuals which adopted an ecclesiastical perspective on mission in the sense that they emphasised the collective and corporate aspect of the church in the missionary task. In other respects their theology was that of evangelicalism. They differed from evangelicalism, however, in divesting themselves of its individualism. The evangelicals believed that every member of the church should be a missionary but viewed the church as a collection of individual 'soul-winners'. The ecclesiastical perspective spoke of the 'missionary church' rather than 'the soul-winner'. The church was not, to these missiologists, a collection of individuals but a coherent body. The witness in which they engaged was, therefore, collective and organised on behalf of the whole.

W.H.Stowell, the President of Rotherham College, was one of the earliest to see the implications of the belief that the church was God's agent in evangelism. Although he rejoiced in the revival of missionary spirit, he discerned, in 1832, that the revival had only been a partial one.³ The revival, he asserted, would not be complete until the whole

1 ibid., p.151f.

2 ibid., p.166.

3 W.H.Stowell, The Missionary Church (2nd edn., London, 1840. Original edn. 1832), p.135.

church adopted a thorough missionary character.¹ The emergence of separate missionary societies was laudable but only a partial reformation. The complete reformation of the church would render them unnecessary for the church itself would be thoroughly missionary in character. The church would no longer view the support of the societies in the same way as they viewed the need to aid a charity working on its behalf. Instead every member of the church would be personally involved and every convert would automatically become a missionary.²

The ecclesiastical perspective was more thoroughly expounded by Thomas Jenkyn, an independent minister, and John Harris. Thomas Jenkyn's work On the Union of the Holy Spirit and the Church in the Conversion of the World is a polemic against shallow revivalism. Jenkyn feared that much of the teaching of his day regarding the Holy Spirit was erroneous and detrimental to the cause of missions, because it implied that the Holy Spirit was not an abiding presence in the church but came and went and in the coming overrode the natural faculties of men.³ The church consequently was unaware of the power at its disposal and indifferent to the instrumentality God had given it to convert the world.⁴

In several respects Jenkyn provided a classic evangelical exposition of conversion and the means by which it is achieved. 'Conversion', he wrote, 'is a moral phenomenon in an intelligent spirit, developing itself by a change in the dispositions and by an improvement in the character.'⁵ The plight of the world under the judgment of God is drawn in dark terms and is seen as a motive for missionary endeavour.⁶ But that missionary endeavour is not to be fulfilled through the fitful and miraculous operation

1 ibid., p.151f.

2 ibid., pp.157-162.

3 T.W.Jenkyn, On the Union of the Holy Spirit and the Church in the Conversion of the World (London, 1837), pp.72-74.

4 ibid., pp.57f, 220 & 441-459.

5 ibid., p.20. Cf. pp.437-442 & 482.

6 ibid., p.367.

of the Holy Spirit. The miraculous was merely the means given in the first age by which the validity of the truth was established.¹ The means to be used instead were the publication of the truth, 'the word', so that a man's reason could be directed towards God.²

Jenkyn diagnosed the root of the erroneous views as being the belief that the Holy Spirit was a possession of the individual believer rather than a settled possession, distributed for all time, in the church.³ He was prepared to admit that there were times when the Holy Spirit manifested himself in the production of piety in the church in special ways and that there were times when the church, lacking in holiness, prevented a manifestation of the Holy Spirit's influences. But God did not send his Spirit on the church erratically and never sovereignly withdrew his Holy Spirit from the church.⁴ The Holy Spirit was the settled possession of the church, never arbitrarily withdrawn by God, and his power was always available to be exploited by the church's obedience to the commands to holiness and evangelization. The church, therefore, could be confident of God's blessing on their missionary labours.

With these presuppositions it was logical that the church should assume a place of importance in Jenkyn's understanding of how the missionary task was to be completed. The church existed to co-operate with the Holy Spirit whose 'grand object is the salvation of the world'.⁵ The aim of the church needed to be in exact agreement with this aim and not to rest content with the lesser aim of promoting the refinements of civilisation.⁶

1 ibid., pp.123-126.

2 ibid., pp. 84, 97, 103, 117f, 220, 225, 318, 447.

3 ibid., pp.64-71.

4 ibid., pp.142, 167-184.

5 ibid., p.363.

6 ibid., p.380.

There were two ways in particular, noted by Jenkyn, in which the church fulfilled its missionary potential. Firstly, it did so by its regular activities. The Holy Spirit used its routine preaching as a means for the conversion of sinners since the day of Pentecost. But in addition to that Jenkyn added that the regular sacraments also served as a testimony to Christ.¹ Secondly, the church was to fulfill its potential by releasing gifted men to serve as itinerant missionaries. In many cases Jenkyn believed that a church should release its own ministers to fulfil the task. A missionary pastor would achieve far more than the giving of a missionary collection. But, even if churches were not to go that far, they were encouraged to revive the apostolic habit of praying for a supply of evangelists and looking out for missionaries and evangelists within their own ranks and then setting them apart for the express purpose of evangelism.²

The church then was to be God's agent in evangelism, corporately in its worship and teaching and collectively in its practice of recognising the gifts that God had given to his body and enabling those gifts to find expression.

John Harris first set out his grand views on the role of the church in the unfolding cosmic drama in a sermon delivered to the Wesleyan Missionary Society in 1837. It was, in the words of its reviewer in the Evangelical Magazine, 'one of the finest specimens of Christian argumentation in defence of evangelical enterprise that is fallen to our lot to examine'.³ Harris then amplified his views in a volume on The Great Commission which won a prize of two hundred guineas as the best essay on 'The Duty, Privilege and Encouragement of Christians to Send the Gospel of

1 ibid., p.393.

2 ibid., pp.413-417.

3 E.M., NS, xv (1837), 412.

Salvation to unenlightened Nations of the Earth' in 1842.

Harris's presupposition was that

There is one important respect in which all objects in the universe, from the atom to the arch-angel, unite: all are witnesses for God. He who made all things for himself, has so made them, that voluntarily or involuntarily according to their respective natures they distinctly attest the divine existence and character. 1

Since sin entered the world that witness had become marred and so God had to witness to himself through the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Since Christ, however, it was the church which has been 'expressly designed ... to be his witness in the world'.² Truth was to be found within the church but in contrast to the Jewish church, which was local and stationary and to whom the world came to receive its testimony, the Christian Church was to be mobile, taking the truth to the world. The great change post-Pentecost was that the people of God had ceased to be a centripetal force in the world and become a centrifugal force. Harris held that it was a firm law that the church prospered or declined in proportion as it had fulfilled or neglected the command to evangelize.³

Two motives for engaging in the missionary task are in evidence in Harris's writing. The primary motive was simply obedience to the command of Christ.⁴ The secondary motive was the need of man. The Gospel, Harris argued, was exactly suited to the needs of man. It brought in its wake the benefits of civilization. It made the savage man fit for civil society by making him a new creature in Christ Jesus and a member of the

1 J.Harris, The Witnessing Church. A Sermon for the Wesleyan Missionary Society (London, 1837), p.5.

2 ibid., p.9f. J.Harris, The Great Commission (London, 1842), p.73
The church's engagement in the missionary task was an imitation of the incarnation.

3 Harris, Witnessing Church, op.cit., pp.9f and 20.

4 Harris, Witnessing Church, op.cit., p.25 and Great Commission, op.cit., pp.78-81.

Christian Church.¹ Unlike Jenkyn, Harris was not afraid to propose mixed motives for mission. But Harris's secondary motive should not be misunderstood as a mere desire to build the British Empire on every continent of the world. The advance of civilization was part of God's overall strategy in history. The millennial dawn was one day to appear but Harris was no triumphalist, expecting the dawn to break at any moment. The way leading to the millenium was to be a path strewn with conflict between the church and the world. Nonetheless, the ultimate goal of the millenium would only be achieved once the gospel had been spread throughout the world and Scripture gave every reason to believe 'that the diffusion of the word of God would be attended with the most glorious success'.² Growth and progress were the natural states of the church.

In the light of the example of Christ, the command of Christ and the grand design of God the church dared not be idle in fulfilling the great commission. The current dispensation, then, was viewed by Harris as one in which the church played a crucial role in the ongoing plan of God to bring in the millenium. Apart from generally encouraging the church to witness, Harris only spelled out the implications of his views in one respect. The unity of the church was vital if it was to be faithful to its calling. Witnessing was the collective responsibility of the church, not the task of individual members.³ God had chosen and blessed individuals in the past but it was through the church as a whole that the conversion of the world was to take place.⁴ And Christ had commanded that the church should be bound in love if the world was to be converted through it.⁵ Harris,

1 Harris, Witnessing Church, op.cit., p.32.

2 Harris, Great Commission, op.cit., ch.3.

3 ibid., p. 37.

4 ibid., p. 70.

5 ibid., p. 76. In preaching on behalf of the Christian Instruction Society in 1838, he found it difficult to stress the claims of that society over others since he believed all were related in a common task and to advocate one at the expense of the other would be to inflict injury on them all, London (London, 1838), p.16.

therefore, exhorted the church to unity but did not amplify his views further.

The most thorough application of the ecclesiastical perspective in Nonconformity¹ is to be found in John Campbell's Jethro. Campbell sketched the outline of the book at the time he was engaged in litigation in the Chancery Court over the trusteeship of Whitfield's Chapel, of which he was pastor.² It was to win him the prize of one hundred guineas which had been offered by a Christian philanthropist for the best essay on the question of the employment of lay agency in the cause of the gospel. The judges of the competition were James Bennett, Joseph Fletcher and Joshua Wilson.

Campbell accepted the value of societies and city missions which were engaged in home evangelization but he believed them to be immensely inferior to the church acting congregationally, which ought to have been the chief instrument of home missions.³ The value of the societies was simply that they were actively engaged in mission, while the church had not awakened to its responsibilities. Campbell expressed the hope, however, that they would only be necessary for a limited period until the church awoke and took its rightful place.⁴ All Campbell's qualifications could not soften the harshness of his views on the societies. Their boast was that they owed allegiance to neither party nor sect, that they recognised neither church nor pastor and that their only concern was to diffuse 'common salvation'. Campbell, however, labelled them 'promiscuous and artificial'.

1 An even more thorough-going application from an Anglican perspective is to be found in J. Sandford, The Mission and Extension of the Church at Home (Bampton Lectures), (London, 1861).

2 R. Ferguson and A.M. Brown, Life and Labours of John Campbell DD (London, 1867), pp. 133-136.

3 J. Campbell, Jethro (London, 1839), p.180 & 182.

4 ibid., pp.181 & 184.

He believed their inherent weakness - the difficulty of maintaining union on such a narrow platform and the failure to establish their converts in true communions - would inevitably lead them to a quick dissolution. He called them 'feeble and impotent' because they lacked an ecclesiastical dimension to their thinking and he believed them to be utterly crippled because of their forced catholicity.¹ Such a mode of operation he concluded was,

merely an ecclesiastical fungus, not a spiritual organisation like a church of Christ, endowed with inherent, self-supporting vitality; it therefore necessarily depends for its very existence upon the uncertain zeal of two or three artificially connected individuals. But an institution which is to bring deliverance from spiritual thralldom to the millions of England, must partake of a more enduring nature ...

The church needed to render those societies redundant by awakening to their own responsibilities and exploiting the resources which were at their disposal. The need was urgent. The moral condition of the lower classes in London was appalling. The higher classes had 'conspired against the Lord.' The middle classes, although far from perfect, were the chief supporters of (London's) liberty and religion, the great depositories of its moral truth, commercial honour and Christian character'. They were not only the mainstay of the social fabric but the chosen instruments of God to deliver London from its corruption.²

Campbell estimated that only one sixth of the population attended worship. There was a great shortage of accommodation in the chapels and many chapels were in the wrong locations. But the major defect lay not in the accommodation but in its occupancy.³ Only the fullest use of the manpower resources of the church would overcome the problem. And Campbell

1 ibid., p.186. The only organisation to escape full censure in Campbell's view were the Christian Instruction Societies because they were based on local churches.

2 ibid., pp.8-16.

3 ibid., pp.17-23.

believed that every Congregational church was 'a voice which, if properly worked, would display a vast amount of unlooked for treasure'.¹

Through fifty or more weary pages Campbell sought to justify the use of lay agency by reference to Wesley, Whitfield and the Bishop of Calcutta and to defend it against its detractors. Yet even he recognized that it could be open to abuse and in their enthusiasm some who had employed it had merited criticism. The chief culprits were 'the empty, the vain and the forward who run unseated and can seldom be restrained' and the 'well-meaning but uninstructed and inexperienced who would benefit with training'.² The evil, Campbell claimed, did not lie in the agency but in the fact that it was not given sufficient recognition, not given proper support by the clergy and was carelessly prepared or regulated.³

If lay agency was to be used effectively it was to be introduced only after careful preparation by the pastor. Preparation time would not be wasted time. With an increased knowledge of the Scripture, of congregational principles and of each other a spiritually 'undisciplined populace' could be transformed into a body of veteran troops.⁴ Throughout his argument, Campbell stressed that it was the pastor as the properly appointed leader of the congregation who should take the initiative in such matters.

In his preparation for the use of lay agents, Campbell insisted that the pastor should not only concentrate on those who were to assist in the missionary task but on those who were going to be evangelized as well. Several schemes of analysis were offered for guidance. One scheme categorized people from those in an unbaptized state through to those who were full

1 ibid., p.148.

2 ibid., p.109f.

3 ibid., pp.118-131.

4 ibid., p.149.

membership.¹ Another scheme categorized people according to sex, age and marital status.² A third scheme categorized the church attenders according to the location of their residence, so that they could be integrated into small Bible study groups.³

Two special target areas were highlighted by Campbell as being of special importance. Firstly, the homes of church members where proper attention could be given to the evangelism of children.⁴ Secondly, the 'hearers' in the Congregational churches - those who were baptised but had never become members - who were now in a ratio of three hearers to one member.⁵ Preaching had proved an ineffective tool to reach these people and so Campbell recommended that lay-led drawing room meetings should be held.⁶

Beyond the boundaries of the church there lay the unchurched masses to be evangelized. Here Campbell cautioned against occupying too much territory. Intensive work where labourers were committed long-term to a district and so really had personal contact with the people, was likely to produce greater success than fleeting impersonal visits over a wide area.⁷ Given that, tract distribution, domestic expositions, moveable meetings and district preaching were all recommended.⁸ Beyond the immediate district of most Congregational churches there lay the villages. Again, the ecclesiastical emphasis of Campbell's work is clear. He complained that many people had wrongly engaged in village evangelism without being commissioned to do so by either church or pastor. The proper way forward, in his view, was for a letter from the pastor to be circulated in a village

1 ibid., p.161.

2 ibid., p.162.

3 ibid., pp.164f and 188f.

4 ibid., p.205.

5 ibid., p.228f. Dr. Redford put the ratio at 4:1.

6 ibid., p.246f.

7 ibid., pp.259-61.

8 ibid., pp.263-274.

first and only then for a Sunday School, of both parents and children, to be commenced, with the ultimate objective of forming a church.¹

Campbell's 'system', for that is what he was proud to call it, would have led, if fully applied, to a vast machinery of tract distributors, Sunday School teachers, catechists, domestic expositors and lay preachers, all of whom needed training. Had it been thoroughly applied, the shepherding role of pastors would have ceased and they would have become mere educators. The fellowship of the church would have given way to a vast activist business for extending the kingdom. In many cases, whether due to Campbell or not, that is almost what happened in the Victorian non-conformist churches. As Campbell pointed out a system may not help propagation but it certainly could hinder it, and it was the special glory of the Congregational system that, whilst it did not require it, at least it freely permitted 'every church to become a society of propagandists'.²

The second prize winner in the competition sponsored by the Christian philanthropist for essays on Lay Agency was James Matheson's Our Country. It lacked the vigour and sharpness of Campbell's prize winning contribution but otherwise has much in common with it. Matheson demonstrates the same concern that the home missionary enterprise should be church centred and protests strongly at village preachers who engage in preaching without seeking the prior sanction of their pastor and church. On his own admission he laboured the issue because it had been a difficult problem encountered by many of his ministerial brethren.³ He was aware that not all the blame lay on one side and he urged churches to take more initiative in recognizing, preparing and controlling such men.⁴

1 ibid., pp.275-80.

2 ibid., p.344.

3 James Matheson, Our Country (London, 1839), pp. 103-109.

4 ibid., p.102.

Reviewing the need for the Independent churches to use lay agents more effectively, Matheson calculated that, although two million of England's population came within the reach of city missions and other evangelistic societies, eight million, seven hundred thousand did not.¹ The Church of England, he believed, was a totally ineffective instrument for the spreading of the gospel but, even so, represented a threat to the Independents because of its newly awakened state and its adoption of a mammoth church building operation.² Among the other Nonconformist denominations, the Baptists used a great deal of lay agency but out of necessity rather than choice because of the number of feeble causes which belonged to them.³ The Methodists made the most effective use of lay agents but their weakness lay in being much better at gaining a congregation than at keeping one or building up one.⁴ In Matheson's view it was the Independent churches who were best in a position to exploit lay agency for the benefit of the whole country. They had a better geographical distribution than most; sufficient means of support; more regularly educated ministers than others; a spirit of energy and enterprise; a good deal of liberty and an increasing influence.⁵

How then were the lay resources of the church to be exploited? Part of the answer lay, in Matheson's view, in improving the existing machinery. Sunday Schools produced disappointing results with only ten per cent. of the pupils being savingly converted. But more teachers, and more teachers of a decidedly religious character and the closer integration of the Sunday School with the church could lead to a vast improvement in results.⁶ Like Campbell, Matheson argues for intensive rather than extensive evangelism.

1 ibid., p.57.

2 ibid., pp.24-31 & 152.

3 ibid., p.16.

4 ibid., pp.16f, 32-40 & 89-91.

5 ibid., pp.157-165.

6 ibid., pp.61-69.

Tract distribution and lay preaching would both be more profitable if more personal engagement with the people visited was involved.¹

Another part of the answer lay in the adoption of new measures to involve lay agents in the missionary cause. Matheson recommended to the churches the setting up of maternal associations, so that mothers could be awakened to their spiritual responsibilities.² He also recommended the formation of lay agency committees who, working with the pastor and deacons, could plan how to use the lay resources sensibly and to the benefit of the whole church.³ But Matheson's major concern was that the churches should mobilize their resources to evangelize the neglected and morally dark rural areas. It could be undertaken by each independent church without any great plan or system being needed and it could be done in a quiet, gentle and inoffensive way which would lead to conversions instead of resistance. The scheme would lead to the appointment of increased numbers of home missionaries as paid agents and to the founding of many new local churches.⁴

Lay agency was a weapon not yet used as effectively as it might be. To both Campbell and Matheson it needed to be systematized, corrected and strengthened,⁵ and those aims could only be accomplished as it was more thoroughly integrated and controlled by the church. Home missions should not be left to the initiative of individuals - it was the task of the regular church acting in a united way.

At best such views led the people to a high understanding of the doctrine of the church. At worst they could degenerate into mere bureaucracy or the question of how one could fill the church.⁶ An

1 ibid., pp.70-72 & 93.

2 ibid., pp.76 & 193-200.

3 ibid., pp.109-111.

4 ibid., pp.115-149.

5 ibid., p.64.

6 E.M., NS, 111 (1825), 47f & 508f.

unintended side effect of those who adopted the ecclesiastical perspective was to provide justification for the great chapel builders, who sincerely believed that the need of the country was to increase the number of seats available for worship.¹ But, as Jabez Bunting warned the Methodists, the need was not for more building but for more converts. 'Let it be known,' he said, 'that a big chapel builder is suspected of not being a good pastor. He is like a great church disbuilder.' In his view it was 'fewer chapels and more horses (that) would save souls'.² Such a weakness, however, was not an inherent weakness of the ecclesiastical perspective, whose strength lay in seeking to overcome the individualism of the evangelical perspective and to exploit the full resources of a united church for the missionary cause.

7.4 The Humanitarian Perspective

There were a number of theologies of home mission which were considered to be radical by the majority of the church, although as the century progressed they became increasingly more acceptable. The common thread between them was their great feeling for the human situation. They display a sympathy for the social and spiritual condition of the man outside the church which led them to reflect critically on the orthodox teaching of the church regarding God and salvation and the traditional practices of the church regarding evangelism. The implication of their views was that the church should collectively be involved in social and political action. The individual reformism of evangelicalism was not considered adequate. Until the churches in general adopted a less dogmatic approach to belief, the representatives of this humanitarian perspective were suspect or even ostracised men.

1 ibid., NS, xxxi (1853), 74-78.

2 B. Gregory, op.cit., pp.315, 346f and cf.223.

The earliest representative was Edward Miall, who is best known as a political man, championing the causes of freedom and disestablishment.¹ But Clyde Binfield has recently observed that his conversion experience, at the age of eighteen in 1827, was at the very core of his life and thought and has commented that 'however worldly the wing of Nonconformity which he represented, his own position was religious first and last'.² His political involvements have sometimes been allowed to overshadow the fact that the passionate concern for the mission of the church which he espoused was spiritual in origin and character.

Miall published a detailed exposition of his views on the mission of the church in his book The British Churches in relation to the British People in 1849. His intention was to investigate the British churches, 'as instruments of preserving and extending Christianity among the British people'.³ Although prepared to be destructively critical of the church of his day, Miall's real concern was to develop a new theology of mission. He was concerned first to establish a theological foundation on which his comments were to be constructed. Immediately the reader becomes aware that in comparison with most theologies of Nonconformity in his day, Miall's is pervaded with gentleness and lacks orthodox vigour. A church, he wrote,

is an organised association of men, whose principle design it is, so to commend God, as portrayed in the Gospel to those who are ignorant of, or mistake, his nature and his purposes, as to win them over to a willing subjection to him; or, in other words, to do all that human instrumentality is appointed, and competent, to do, to awaken in the hearts of their fellow-men a sympathising recognition of the Supreme. 4

1 Cf. E.Miall, The Nonconformist's Sketchbook (London, 1842).

2 Clyde Binfield, So Down to Prayers (London, 1977), p.123.

3 E.Miall, The British Churches in relation to the British People (London, 1849), p.2.

4 ibid., p.63.

Man, believed Miall, was out of harmony with both God and creation as a result of a calamity which befell him after creation. The end result of that calamity was that man puts his own will first and neither desires nor has the ability to submit to the creator.¹

The absence of the harsh note usually sounded regarding men's culpable wickedness and the vagueness of the church's task, which Miall saw only as 'commending God' instead of winning converts, is consistent with Miall's view of God's remedy for man's condition. God does not command men to repent but rather woos and wins him by gentle persuasion. God uses the method of condescension 'as that best adapted to encourage and entice our sympathies'. He invites man to 'an amicable parley'. He crushes resistance 'not in overwhelming the conscience but in gaining the heart'.²

The aim of winning back man's voluntary submission also determined the course of the incarnation. Christ lived a life of poverty and mixed with the humble. Whenever he displayed his deity he did so in deeds of kindness. In the cross God met his own claims, avenged his own judgments and justified his own sanctions. It was the grand peculiarity of the gospel that instead of the penalty for man's revolt being administered to man it was taken by God himself. Holiness, therefore, came among men as a friend.³ The dispensation of law had been replaced by the reign of love.

This gospel had now been committed to men whose task it was in organised associations called churches,

1 ibid., pp.67-73.

2 ibid., p.76.

3 ibid., pp.76-80.

To commend (the rule of Christ) to others, to place it under notice, to point out its attractions, to interpret the mind of which it is a representation, and in general to display it in such a setting of moral purity and disinterested benevolence, as to win for it, or rather for Him of whom it is a copy, trusting, loving, obedient hearts - this is the glorious object of Christian Churches - and this the moral power given them to wield. ¹

The gospel, therefore, in Miall's view, not only defined the content of the message to be delivered to man but the manner in which the delivery was to take place. It was good news and should therefore be delivered with positive joyfulness.

Judged by this theological position, the British churches were, in Miall's view, in a lamentable state. They were unlikely to win the sympathy of people for God and could not be regarded as an adequate testimony of the spiritual power of the gospel. The root cause of the problem was that they had failed to appreciate what Christianity really was.² Miall accused most church members of using religion for their own ends. The quest for salvation was anything but disinterested since it was a means, he claimed, by which they pursued 'the greatest happiness' for themselves. Consequently it left self paramount still.³ It also meant that for most religion had degenerated into a duty and an obligation to be fulfilled, in a selective way through a priest.⁴ The attendant failures of the church were to live as if still living in the dispensation of law rather than the dispensation of love and to emphasise the letter instead of the spirit of faith.⁵

1 ibid., p.103.

2 ibid., p.130.

3 ibid., p.138.

4 ibid., p.139ff.

5 ibid., p.139ff.

The church's sickness expressed itself in a number of symptoms. Most churches were aristocratic in spirit as both the architecture and preaching of the churches demonstrated. Preaching almost entirely lacked colloquialisms because of the sense of propriety which the aristocratic sentiment engendered. The result was that most sermons were polished performances which left the mass of people completely untouched.¹

Another symptom was the professional organisation of the church which chiefly manifested itself in the exaltation of the clergy beyond a status warranted by the New Testament and rendered their training too technical to be of value in helping them to reach the ordinary man. The ministry encouraged men to allow interested groups to grow up around them and they were far more concerned to gain supporters than to exhibit God's love in a purely disinterested way.²

A third symptom was the way in which Christians engaged in trade as if this world were the only world. Miall did not see the Christian faith as necessarily inimical to business. Indeed, it provided the Christian with one of the largest spheres in which his 'new and heaven-born character' could be developed. But his faith would prevent the Christian from engaging in certain occupations and it would mean that he would not pursue it for its own sake.³

Miall's greatest censure on the church was reserved, not surprisingly, for the social and political hindrances to the success of the church. The social sin of deep poverty to be found among a significant section of the population made these groups impervious to the normal methods of evangelism. Secondly, there was the excessive toil in which many were expected to engage. Thirdly, there was widespread popular ignorance.⁴ But more

1 ibid., p.212.

2 ibid., ch.5.

3 ibid., ch.6.

4 ibid., pp.347-362.

significant than any of these was the political involvement of religion in the form of the established church. Miall found it impossible to recognize the Church of England as an organisation for the extension of Christ's kingdom and claimed that three quarters of its clergy were practically ignorant of the gospel. Like Thomas Binney he was convinced that 'The Church of England destroyed more souls than she saved'.¹

The result of all these problems was that the church made no impression on the poorer classes at all who 'ordinarily pass(ed) through life, ..., almost without thought of spiritual existence'. If a tract reached them or a visit was made to them, the poor simply thought someone had a desire to make proselytes. They did not grasp any understanding of the gospel through such visits.²

For the church to make any widespread impression on the masses it needed to forsake its aristocratic and professional pretensions and adopt a radical lifestyle which imitated the incarnate life of Christ. 'The fact is,' Miall wrote,

that the Churches have yet to learn how comparatively useless is the mere scattering of the seeds of God's truth, until the soil of the heart is softened and purified and fertilized, by the influence upon it of the warm rays of Christian example. Show men all that you would have them to be in the coloured picture of your conduct, and if they do not yield to you, they will, at all events, understand you ten thousand times more readily than they do when your lessons are given in the letter-type of precept.

3

Miall argued that the working man would never be reached by the present theological approach but would see the gospel of peace and love if only the church were to engage in more philanthropy and sympathy for his unjust and oppressed condition.⁴ Church buildings needed to be secularized and the

1 ibid., pp.362-381.

2 ibid., p.225. Miall did, however, welcome the work of the Christian Instruction Society, city missions, etc. as examples of what unofficial Christian bodies could do and as a sign of hope for the future of the church.

3 ibid., p.336f.

4 ibid., p.434.

people needed to be familiar with them in the ordinary course of their daily lives if they were to resort to them for religious purposes.¹ Pulpits should be brought low and services should have a much freer approach to them, approximating to Paul's teaching at Ephesus rather than to the traditional religious service.² The church needed to break out of its ghetto and reject the mentality which believed that having erected a pulpit it had done nearly all that the gospel required.³

Miall's novel approach caused a storm of reaction. Dr. Campbell withdrew from the Anti-State Church Association as a result and announced that Miall was transforming it into a 'school of anarchy'.⁴ The Evangelical Magazine favoured the publication with two reviews, both of which were unfavourable. The first caricatured Miall's remedies and called them a sheer mockery. Although it was admitted that there were some good things in what Miall said, on the whole his work was considered to be 'unphilosophical and one-sided'.⁵ The second review was even more damning. The volume, it said, had scarcely one redeeming feature, it had been written by an enemy and Miall and the British churches could henceforth have little connection with each other.⁶

In some respects Miall's analysis was never to prove more acceptable to the churches. It was too radical and threatened the very existence of traditional church life. In other respects, however, he was simply a man who had the misfortune to live ahead of his time. Much of what he wrote was to become commonly accepted and worse things were to be said without stirring up the outbreak of horror which it was Miall's misfortune

1 ibid., pp.420-423.

2. ibid., p.423f.

3 ibid., p.455.

4 A.Miall, Life of Edward Miall (London, 1884), p.155.

5 E.M., NS,xxviii (1850), pp. 141-142.

6 ibid., pp.247-252.

to provoke. Much of his heresy was to become a later orthodoxy.

Themes similar to those orchestrated by Miall were also developed by his colleague and contemporary, Edward White. White was a large-hearted man with a passion for evangelism, who was inclusive in those whom he admired and equally dogmatic in contradicting their theology.¹ His life must be seen to some extent as a struggle to free himself from the Calvinist doctrine of God which had tormented him so much in his youth.² It led him to be rugged individualist in his thinking and his earliest writings What is the Fall ? and Life in Christ, provoked a storm of indignation.³ But, despite a life which remained turbulent, the gales died down sufficiently for him to be elected chairman of the London Congregational Union in 1883 and the Congregational Union of England and Wales in 1886.

Edward White produced a number of works and addresses on the theory of missions but the themes which he developed were few. To him evangelism was a priority for the church. God desired the publication of the Gospel and had chosen to limit himself to man as the instruments by which it was to be done.⁴ A church that was negligent in fulfilling this task hindered 'the spread of Christianity more than any other obstacle that could be devised by the "power of darkness"' for, in White's opinion, when a good thing became corrupt it was worse than a bad thing.⁵

White spent little time defining the mission of the church. His energies were reserved to expose the great obstacles in the church which prevented its mission from being successful. The chief obstacle was, in

1. He was a great admirer of Spurgeon and dedicated some of his writing to him, although in staunch disagreement with him over the doctrine of the eternity of evil. Similarly he assisted Moody in his Enquiry Room but would have dissented from many of his views. F.A.Freer, Edward White His Life and Work (London, 1902), pp.50, 69 & 180.

2 ibid., p.6.

3 ibid., e.g. pp.28-32. Though remaining a staunch Congregationalist he practiced believers' baptism. For an exposition of his views see G.Rowell op.cit., pp.185-192.

4 E.White, The Mystery of Growth and Other Discourses (London, 1867), p.390.

5 ibid., p.389f.

his view, that the church had a wrong conception of the moral character of God.¹ By holding on to this wrong view of God, the missionary societies represented the thinking of seventy years earlier. In so doing they not only demonstrated that they had learned nothing from theological developments in the intervening years but that they were out of touch with their own constituency and missionaries, with the result that they were losing support.²

The particular aspect of the doctrine of God which White called into question was the wrath of God. He was implacably opposed to the belief, which was common and considered orthodox, that a good God would punish sinful men by sentencing them to everlasting torment. That man should be punished for his obstinate wrong-doing 'with the awful penalty of extermination' was a fearful thing to think, but one could see the justice of it, according to White.³ On the other hand, the traditional conception of hell had little to be said for it. That the church had believed in it for centuries was no argument, for they had believed other things wrongly for centuries before the reformation.⁴

To White the deciding issue was simply what had God taught on the subject of the punishment of the wicked. He marshalled a number of arguments in favour of his view that when the wicked die they ceased to exist. To begin with, 'if the curse of the law had been everlasting torment, the substitute would have been liable to endure that penalty'.⁵ Scripture plainly taught that the wicked were destroyed and obscure passages of Scripture should, in his view, be interpreted in the light of

1 E.White, The Churches, the Outsiders and Theological Reform (London, 1880), p.12.

2 E.White, Missionary Theology (London, 1869), pp.5-7, The Theory of Missions (London, 1855), p.74, Outsiders, op.cit., p.18. Cf. Rowell, op.cit., pp.190ff.

3 White, Outsiders, op.cit., p.15.

4 White, Theory, op.cit., pp.17-19.

5 ibid., p.29.

these plain passages.¹ White was uneasy about having his views labelled as annihilationist, for he did not believe that man was immortal by nature. The point was that God desired to give man an everlasting life and could do so in Christ, but without that man would not continue to live.² Like Miall, White argued that the time had come for the gospel to be preached in more positive terms, through offering the advantages of life in Christ, rather than threatening the consequences of life without him.³ Three advantages would arise from this reorientation in preaching. The missionaries would be relieved of pressure to preach certain views they did not share, there would be a greater spirit of integrity in the church and the heathen, both at home and abroad, would be encouraged to believe more easily.⁴

The second great obstacle to effective mission was to be found in the life of the church. In words very reminiscent of Miall, White diagnosed the cause of the alienation of the working people from the church to be,

the want of Christ-like power in the ministry and in the church. We are overridden by priestcraft, by ecclesiasticism, by metaphysical theology. What is wanted is that this church Lazarus should be raised from the dead and delivered from the garments of the sepulchre. Loose him and let him go ! Let
Christianity come back to its primitive form. 5

The church, then, needed to reject their present patterns of behaviour and imitate much more exactly their Lord who was heard gladly by the common people because of his disinterestedness, manliness, depth and compassion.⁶

Also like Miall, White argued that the church needed to demonstrate the gospel in action more and talk about it less. To describe religion

1 ibid., pp.31-69.

2 White, Outsiders, op.cit., p.14 and Life in Christ, Four Discourses upon the Scripture Doctrine that Immortality is the Peculiar Privilege of the Regenerate (London, 1846).

3 White, Theory, op.cit., pp.75-77.

4 ibid., pp. 69-77 and Outsiders, op.cit., pp.4-10.

5 E.White, 'The Gospel and the Common People', Sermons Preached to Working Men, ed. A. P. Stanley (London, 1867), p.44.

6 ibid., pp. 39-43.

would make little impression but to exhibit it, both in ordinary life and through corporate action, would be persuasive.¹

A third obstacle to the church's effectiveness lay in its failure to engage seriously the alternative world views. According to White the church needed to get down to some hard work and to grapple with the modes of thought adopted by those around them and then engage in incessant disputation with them. This was merely to repeat, as he understood it, the method of the early church.²

Throughout his writings on the mission of the church, White gives the common man a central place.³ It was the absence of the ordinary working man from the church that concerned him and others most.⁴ Most of these common men were neither infidels nor atheists. Some even had had a good Sunday School background. It was not a question of avowed unbelief. It was more that the church was simply irrelevant, 'a rather expensive luxury of the richer people, or of their too servile dependants'.⁵ The churches had to a great extent caused this alienation themselves by their behaviour and belief. The mercenary character of ministers and the untransformed lives of members aided the process of alienation. The doctrines of a harsh God gave wind to the sails of the atheists and the multitude of opinions offered made it difficult for the working man to know what was true. The social conditions of the working man with his need for rest and recreation on Sundays, were further factors in dissuading him from church attendance.⁶

1. White, Mystery, op.cit., pp.398-401.

2. ibid., p.393.

3. White was a prime mover of the Conference on Working Men and Religious Institutions held in 1867 which E.Miall chaired.

4. For a similar, if safer, approach see S.G.Green, The Working Classes of Great Britain (London, 1850). For a more intellectual approach see B.Grant, The Dissenting World (London & Sheffield, 1869), pp.66-124.

5. White, Outsiders, op.cit., p.2f.

6. Freer, op.cit., p.59f.

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5 White, Outsiders, op.cit., p.2f.

6 Freer, op.cit., p.59f.

If the church would overcome the obstacles, White believed the common people would hear their message as eagerly as they listened to Jesus Christ. Christ spoke to the common people as the representative of the God of all classes. He neither spoke to them as if they were as good as their superiors, nor as if they were lower than they were. He spoke with sincerity, neither stooping to cheap jests nor to offering the bribe of temporal rewards. He spoke in order to raise them to a higher level of life which entailed a quality of existence unknown to most common folk and, incidentally, undefined by White. White longed for the church to offer the common folk a Christ who 'changed all common people who believed in him into uncommon people'.¹ And only a radically transformed church could do that.

A later writer to adopt the humanitarian perspective on the mission of the church was a Wesleyan minister, Frank Ballard. Even before the full exposition of his views had been published they were attacked by Spurgeon as poison and by Archibald Brown as a gross and brazen impudence, an evil in the Lord's camp which was destined to produce backsliders but not converts. The Methodist Conference of 1890 had also expressed 'great mental uneasiness' about his views and whilst not prepared to condemn them outright it considered them 'unguarded', 'misleading' and 'unfortunate'.²

For all the protests Ballard was articulating views which were gaining ground in the churches towards the end of the century, as other writings and the changing attitude to sport shows. In The Mission of Christianity, Ballard set about the dismantling of traditional evangelical views of the church's task and the reconstruction of its mission. The theological

1 White, Gospel, op.cit., pp.37-44.

2 F.Ballard, The Mission of Christianity. What are the Churches for ? (London, 1891), i.6-9 and iv. 77f. A.Brown, The Devil's Mission of Amusement (London, nd).

foundation of the reconstruction was to be found in Strauss and F.D.Maurice.¹ And the new building, once erected, was well defended by the meeting of possible objections in advance. His motives were not intended to be destructive but he felt compelled to re-examine the role of the church by the three-quarters of the population who were outside the church and the total indifference towards the church which was seen in both the working and upper classes. Why, he asked, if the churches were so right were they not more successful?²

In denouncing evangelicalism he accused its proponents of making the gospel a 'monstrum horrendum informe'.³ Gospel preaching was anything but the joyful announcement of good news. It was much more like 'a gloomy conspiracy of misanthropy'.⁴ It was based on views of the atonement as a judicial transaction of God which, far from being revealed truth, was merely a theory.⁵ Furthermore, evangelical preaching made the false assumption that man was totally depraved.⁶ It tried to threaten men into the Kingdom and preached a doctrine of hell which was 'crass literalism'.⁷

This evangelical conception of the gospel had led its proponents, in Ballard's view, to adopt a supreme arrogance in separating those who were saved from those who were damned, whereas, in fact, many had never adequately heard Christian truth and the distinction between the elect and the world was much more difficult to draw.⁸ It also trivialised the gospel, permitting the whole of Christianity to be equated with personal salvation and the good news to become a few repetitive formulae.⁹ It further

1 ibid., i, 24 and ii, 71.

2 ibid., i, 24-26.

3 ibid., i, 1.

4 ibid., i, 33.

5 ibid., iv, 78.

6 ibid., i, 33f.

7 ibid., i, 42-54, 69.

8 ibid., i, 27, 50f and ii, 23f.

9 ibid., i, 59 & 85 and ii, 62.

disembodied man and conveyed the impression that God was only interested in the spiritual dimension of man's life. And it was exclusively otherworldly in orientation.¹

Ballard's own approach is marked by greater humility, or perhaps less confidence. Those who sincerely did not find it possible to believe were no longer to be viewed as infidels. They were often 'as able and as irreproachable, mentally and morally, as those who believe'. All that a believer could say to such was that they had good grounds for believing in the reasonableness of their faith. Even, in the church, Ballard noted, people were less intellectually convinced of the intellectual truth of Christianity than once they were and the doubts were no longer cured by stirring exhortations to faith.²

To Ballard there was one doctrine which determined all other aspects of the mission of the church; the doctrine of the incarnation. 'This, then, is what it all comes to in the end,' he wrote, 'even incarnation, an incarnation of Christ in the Churches at least as real as of God in Christ.'³ Christ's incarnation set the pattern for the church's incarnation in the world. The difference between the two incarnations was one of degree rather than kind. That being so, Christianity, in its mission to the world, should be interested in the natural order and concerned about the whole man, in his spiritual, intellectual, social and physical complexity.⁴ They should also demonstrate a wideness in their love and acceptance of people, as wide as that evident in Christ. It was a positive God and a supernatural religion that should occupy the churches rather than a morbid concern with sound theology.⁵

1 ibid., i, 35-42.

2 ibid., ii, 84-86.

3 ibid., ii, 71f.

4 ibid., i, 41f and ii, 30.

5 ibid., iv, 4f, 35 & 59.

The implications for the mission of the church were numerous. Firstly, the church should be like a home with open doors so that weary wanderers could be welcomed by the Father.¹ Instead it was often nothing more than a 'Sunday luxury' and spoke with a voice which Ballard described as 'a mixture of the policeman and the irate schoolmaster'.²

Secondly, the method of the church should be educational instead of emphasising short-term preaching for nightly conversions. Citing the Roman Catholic church as a good example, he pleaded that churches rescue the concept of education from the world and be prepared through 'nursing wisdom' to train people to be its members.³ If this approach were adopted many children would not need to be converted, they would need 'no exhortation to return, to go back, but only to go rightly forward ...'⁴ In the light of this the whole church needed to become a Sunday School rather than being content to leave the Sunday School as a separate arm of the church.⁵

If the church were to adopt the educational approach to mission, however, it would be essential for the teaching to be integrated with real life; dealing with actual issues rather than those thought to be important by the theologians.⁶

Since man was created a social animal, his social needs would also need to find provision in the church.⁷ Ballard diagnosed that to do this adequately, three aspects of the mentality of the church would have to be changed. The first was the mentality that equated social events with church

1 ibid., i. 69 & 89.

2 ibid., i, 90.

3 ibid., ii, 6f.

4 ibid., ii, 12f.

5 ibid., ii, 17.

6 ibid., ii, 16ff.

7 ibid., iii, 1.

meetings.¹ The second was the mentality that viewed the body as evil² and the third was the preoccupation of the church with pain instead of health.³ The church should affirm that the body was from God and for God; and work to provide for its health. An essential means to health was 'recreation'; a word Ballard preferred to amusement. Those who objected to the idea of the church's involvement in this area did so, according to Ballard, because they had quite refined tastes themselves and ample means of gratifying them. They could not appreciate the needs of those in a different social situation.⁴ But the church must be engaged with the working classes so that their preferences could be elevated rather than allowed to gravitate to the piggery.⁵ The object of the church must be, Ballard pleaded, to Christianize the world of the working man. The more degrading his surroundings the greater the urgency to accept the challenge.⁶ 'If,' he wrote, 'our fellow men are to be truly "saved" their playing, no less than their praying, will have to be Christianized.'⁷

Whilst able to engage in philosophic debates about the nature of miracles,⁸ Ballard's heart lay elsewhere. By supernatural Ballard meant a certain extraordinary quality of life rather than a belief in the miraculous. In this sense he agreed with his opponent Archibald Brown, 'that the church of God is nothing if not supernatural'.⁹ Far from being opposed to supernatural Christianity, Ballard desired to show 'above all else ... that the hallowing of human life demands superhuman light and

1 ibid., iii, 45.

2 ibid., iii, 18f.

3 ibid., ii, 6-12.

4 ibid., iii, 23.

5 ibid., iii, 32.

6 ibid., iii, 87.

7 ibid., iii, 75.

8 ibid., iv, 13-33.

9 ibid., iv, 12.

love'.¹ The supernatural needed to invade the natural. They were not opposed to each other, even though the supernatural was beyond the natural. The supernatural was opposed to the carnal, the anti-natural and the unnatural.² The supernatural, however, was an essential, and its test was Christian character and altruistic living. It was this kind of supernaturalism which had authenticated the message of the apostles and it was this kind of supernaturalism which would, he believed, overcome the indifference of Ballard's own day.³

The last implication of the incarnational view of mission with which Ballard is concerned is the relationship of the church to the social evils in the world. Worldliness, he defined, not as amusement but as selfishness in all its manifest forms of oppression.⁴ Although it began in the heart of individual man, evil had become institutionalized in many social forms and the transformation of the lives of individuals alone, therefore, was inadequate.⁵ The church needed to arouse itself and become a great united crusading army against poverty, scepticism, drink, greed, opium and war. Conventional evangelism did not touch these issues.⁶ Nor did the conventional church, which would one day be held responsible for doing so little about it. And the reason for the failure was that they lacked supernaturalness in their lives.⁷

Miall, White and Ballard were perhaps the most radical exponents of the humanitarian perspective on mission but, towards the end of the century, less radical versions of their missiology became quite common. Four factors combined to secure this larger place for the humanitarian perspective. The failure of evangelicalism's ability to stem the tide of

1 ibid., v, 79.

2 ibid., iv, 61-66.

3 ibid., iv, 34f.

4 ibid., v, 1f.

5 ibid., v, 8.

6 ibid., v, 32.

7 ibid., v, 74f.

secularism. The rise of Biblical criticism which had lessened the confidence of many in the Bible as traditionally interpreted and as a source of revealed truth. The theory of evolution had led to changing views on the nature of and prospect for man. And German theology was to influence thinking in a move away from dogmatic theology to a greater emphasis on religion.

Many who were involved with late nineteenth century revivalists or evangelicals and who shared in their missions evidenced concern for a mellowed humanitarian perspective of mission.¹ The involvement of these men in traditional missions did not prevent them from being highly critical of the evangelical approach and increased their longing for a more effective means of affecting the world for Christ.

The mature blend of the humanitarian perspective combined with a more traditional approach was seen in Henry Drummond. Drummond, a highly respected University scientist and theologian, had a long-standing involvement with Moody and was a passionate evangelist himself, especially among students. He believed that Moody's work had been debased by his evangelical followers into a narrow movement,² but it did not lessen his own admiration for Moody or willingness to work with him. Yet Drummond himself was much influenced by newer theological and Biblical movements as well as by the theory of evolution.³

1 E.g. G. Adam Smith, The Life of Henry Drummond (London, 1899); R.F. Horton, An Autobiography (London, 1917) and J. Scott Lidgett, My Guided Life (London, 1935).

2 G.A. Smith, op.cit., p.92.

3 ibid., p.131.

In a lecture published posthumously, which he delivered to students at New College, Edinburgh, he set out his own views on the mission of the church. His starting point was to express concern at the failure of the gospel to reach men with salvation.¹ But his basic presupposition was that every generation needed to shape the gospel afresh for its own time. The gospel, he claimed, was not reaching their age because it was a gospel for a former age. It was not in itself bad; just a bad fit. It was not false; simply old. And there needed to be a restoration of vitality, a new shape to the gospel so that it would reach their own generation.²

The chief defect of the old gospel was that it lacked any appreciation of the incarnation, that it made nothing of the humanity of Christ.³ The new gospel, which Drummond wished to preach, would not be doctrinal. Propositional theology and questions concerning infallibility were for a former generation. He said, '... the new Evangelism as a provision for the hunger of men's souls is not to be doctrinal. Their truth is to be given them, not in infallible lumps, but as a diffused nutriment.'⁴ Neither was reason to be the key concept of faith. The primary faculty was to be imagination.⁵ That meant that there would be a return to a preaching of the gospel which was pictorial as it had been in the days of Christ, who had constantly taught through parables and metaphors.⁶ In fact, the gospel, said Drummond, was to be about Christ who was 'God's last metaphor'.⁷

Drummond was right, at least in one respect. The understanding of the gospel and of the mission of the church was shaped and reshaped according to the generation in which men lived. Neither the theology of

1. H.Drummond, The New Evangelism (London, 1899), p.4f.
2. ibid., pp.7 & 10.
3. ibid., pp. 13-16.
4. ibid., p. 26.
5. ibid., p.27f.
6. ibid., pp.28-38.
7. ibid., p.39.

salvation nor of mission were worked out in a cultural vacuum and fixed in an abstract form for all time. Both were the result of social conditioning. But the map tracing the theologies of salvation and mission is complex. There was never a simple fit between the theology and a generation. Theology was never a mere reaction to its social location. It too was an active force, influencing its surroundings. The map of the generations therefore, needs to be overlaid by a map of the theological perspectives which were held. These were inevitably fluid and can only be termed perspectives at the most. Nonetheless, they influenced the course of gospel preaching and mission throughout the nineteenth century.

The revivalist perspective catered for the needs of superstitious people and served as a reaction to arid rationalism. It fitted more easily with Arminianism than with Calvinism, although the latter, believing as they did in the sovereign power of God, tried hard to give it a disciplined place in their ecclesiastical experience. As the century progressed, revivalism became institutionalised and the spontaneous inbreaking of God gave way to the organisation of routine techniques. During this phase it was closely allied to Evangelicalism. By the end of the century it was little more than a 'cultural lag' in England.

The evangelical perspective breathed much more of the rationalist air without ever inhaling it completely. It was concerned for doctrinal truth and intellectual respectability and so essentially presented a cerebral and individualized form of salvation. Its fate was to be popularized and adulterated by revivalism. Towards the end of the century it, therefore, became a sub-culture, almost smugly catering for its own ghetto community but making less and less impact on the growing mass of people disaffected from the church.

The ecclesiastical perspective interacted with the growing aspirations of middle class Christians. Both in architecture and organisation it catered for their developing confidence. It was a theology which fitted the needs of the denominations, justifying their desire to control developments and so was largely adopted by them. Its legacy was to burden the church of a future generation with thousands of half-empty and wrongly located church buildings.

The humanitarian perspective began almost as a heresy but derived growing support from wider theological developments and so almost became, in popularized form, a new orthodoxy. It was to exercise a significant influence on the theology of mission for much of the twentieth century but, for all that, still owed much to the social and intellectual context of the nineteenth century in which it originally grew.

In spite of the popularity of the humanitarian perspective at the end of the nineteenth century it was not without its deficiencies which became even more apparent with its failure to reverse the decline of the church and to attract the masses to it. It did not prove true, as proponents of the humanitarian perspective predicted, that the removal of negative and dogmatic theology and its replacement with a more joyful, lively and this-worldly religion recruited, in any large numbers those who would otherwise have been untouched by the churches. In fact, at the point at which the beneficial results of the perspective might have been expected, that is, after due allowance has been made for its message to have persuaded those already disenchanted with the church, the churches commenced a period of prolonged decline.¹

1 A. D. Gilbert, Religion and Society in Industrial England (London, 1976), p. 38f.

The primary weakness of the humanitarian perspective lay in its conceding too much to the spirit of its age. The original expositors of this perspective were motivated by clear theological objectives. But their desire to produce such a through-going incarnational religion meant that it was all too easy to let go of the spiritual reference point and to fail to maintain sufficient distinction from other forms of humanitarianism.¹

Ironically, the humanitarian perspective might be said to have assisted the very progress of secularization which it was designed to inhibit because of its this-worldly orientation and acceptance, for example, of the significance of pleasure. In the end, as McLeod has pointed out, it involved 'a shrinking from the personal experience of God that has been religiously obligatory and the familiarity with him that had been socially obligatory for several decades'.² Since the emphasis had shifted from the theological to the anthropological the future of the churches was put at risk by this approach. If ultimately all the churches were offering was an improvement in the quality of this life, they differed little from the developing secular agencies which had the same aim and they therefore lacked any special claim on the people's allegiance.

Each theological perspective on mission under review manifests its own strengths and weaknesses. The strengths of revivalism lay in its ability to enable men to meet God experientially; in Evangelicalism the strength lay in its emphasis on personal conversion and the particular

1 For a critique of this see H. McLeod, Class and Religion in the Late Victorian City (London, 1974), pp. 246-250.

2 ibid., p. 247.

form that that took; in the ecclesiastical perspective its strength lay in taking seriously the need for a strategy for evangelism which maximised the use of the scarce resources available; in the humanitarian perspective its strength lay in its awareness of the need to take the love of God to real men in ordinary and specific human situations and its rejection of the idea that the church could evangelise spiritual abstractions.

An examination of the achievements of each perspective demonstrates the ineffectiveness of any one approach to produce long-term church growth in isolation from the other perspectives. Revivalism produced high, though decreasing, success rates which suffered from being sporadic and from failing to maintain the converts long-term commitment.¹ Evangelicalism failed to appreciate that the nation could not be converted merely as individuals, one by one. Men belong to social networks and groupings which have profound effect on their beliefs. This sociological context was ignored by evangelicals at great cost.² The ecclesiastical perspective which was so fine in theory and which took seriously the sociological factors neglected by the evangelicals, could rarely be made to work as smoothly as the whole basis of the approach demanded. Furthermore, it was inadequate in its appreciation of the spiritual factors involved in mission and had an inherent bias towards man-made bureaucracy. The humanitarian perspective whilst having the benefit of contact with the people failed to exploit that in bringing them to God.

The cause of evangelism would have been better served by a conscious endeavour on the part of the churches' leaders to combine

1 Gilbert, Religion and Society, op. cit., pp. 187-192.

2 P. Berger, A Rumour of Angels (Harmondsworth, 1970), pp. 50-55.

the disparate perspectives. C. H. Spurgeon, although not unique, is outstanding evidence of the value of a balanced approach to evangelism.¹ First and foremost an evangelical, he kept before him clear aims and convictions regarding the conversion of sinners. But all three alternative perspectives are evident in his approach to mission. Without his concern to bring people collectively to a state of revival, without his emphasis on the role and growth of the church as a collective body and without his deep feeling and practical concern for the fallen lot of man he would not have been the successful evangelist that he was. Evangelicalism in isolation would have been inadequate. But evangelicalism modified by the other perspectives provided Spurgeon with strength and success.

7.5 Conclusion

The enormous energy which the nineteenth century Nonconformists invested in the task of home mission is beyond question. But an assessment of the results achieved as a consequence of the investment of their mammoth resources leads to a sense of disappointment. Any evaluation of the success of Nonconformist home missions depends on the criteria chosen by which to measure success. By the standards of voluntary organisations at the end of the century Stephen Yeo believes that, as far as Reading was concerned, religious organisations were relatively successful in securing commitment and even 'more successful than circumstances would lead one to expect'.² But judged by the standards and aims which home missionary groups adopted for themselves

1 See above, pp. 354-359.

2 S. Yeo, Religion and Voluntary Organisations in Crisis (London, 1976), p. 120.

the conclusion must be somewhat less positive.

The motto of the Baptist Home Missionary Society was 'Unceasing Conquest' and the rapid expansion experienced by all nonconformist denominations until 1840 suggests that the motto was justified. But from that time onwards the rate of growth slowed down and recruitment became very much more sporadic. Progress throughout the century therefore was far from 'unceasing'. Nor did they achieve the 'conquest' for which they hoped. After the early decades of growth and the middle decades of confidence when Nonconformity, and more generally evangelicalism, played a crucial role in shaping the culture of Victorian England, the closing decades of the century reveal the Nonconformists in an increasingly frantic battle to retain and recruit members. At the turn of the century it no longer held the socially significant place in the nation of a few decades earlier.

Many investigations of Nonconformity's failure in this respect point to changes in the external context in which the churches were expected to work as an explanation of their lack of success.¹ Industrialism, with all its implications for new patterns of life, and the growth of pluralism, given the breakdown of the old social and religious consensus, had taken its toll of religion. In the words of W. Rauschenbusch,

I am sure that there is no great city in which modern industrialism has set up its smoking and flaring altars of mammon in which religion is not struggling for life like a flower growing among the cobble stones of the street.²

Whilst fully recognising the importance of contextual factors

1 S.Yeo, ibid., p. 126f., A.D.Gilbert, Religion & Society, op. cit., pp. 184-198, R. Currie, A.D.Gilbert & L. Horsley, Churches & Church-goers (Oxford, 1977), pp. 96-115, A.D.Gilbert, The Making of Post-Christian Britain (London, 1980) pp. 42-99 & H. McLeod, op. cit., pp. 214-257.

2 W. Rauschenbusch, Christianity and the Social Crisis (New York, 1907) cited in S. Yeo, op. cit., p. 121.

in helping to shape the fortunes of religion an explanation of religious change in terms of contextual factors alone is inadequate. An analysis of the inner dynamic of the life of religious organisations themselves has much to contribute to understanding its apparent success or failure.

The eventual failure of Nonconformity's attempt to convert England in the nineteenth century is partly explicable by its own internal mistakes. Whilst recognising that there was much to commend and that no single accusation was consistently applicable, an overall evaluation must enumerate several significant dimensions of their failure.

Firstly this study of the Nonconformists of the nineteenth century reveals their inability to plan their home missionary strategy. The failure of denominational initiative in home missionary affairs has already been noted but no explanation offered. The Methodists, in, for example, adopting their central hall policy towards the end of the century are somewhat of an exception to this. The organisational structure of Methodism had, from the beginning, made central direction much more acceptable than in the Baptist or Congregational denominations. The principle of independence in both these denominations made real cooperation difficult to achieve and so militated against strategic planning.

Individuals within these churches were able to secure support and commitment for the missionary task. Similarly a good deal of support for interdenominational evangelistic societies came from Baptists or Congregationalists. Although Baptists and Congregationalists were prepared to support causes they adopted voluntarily they were unwilling to submit their resources, on any considerable scale, to a centrally-directed denominational work which might be seen to threaten their independence. Among the numerous illustrations of this which occurred

throughout the century the clearest is that of the failure of the Congregational Church Aid Society at the end of the century.

The effect of this inability to plan strategically, knowing that support would be forthcoming, was that a certain degree of inflexibility is apparent in their missionary operations. The work of the home missionary societies remained a rural work long after the population of England had been urbanized to a fair degree. Resources were available for the maintenance of existing work or for the evangelization of familiar types of people. But adventurous experiments to evangelize the novel sub-cultures of the urban areas were not encouraged. Among the Baptists such caution is demonstrated both by their attitude to such experiments as theatre services in the mid-century and also to the attempt to establish new causes in York and London in 1861.

Further limitations to their flexibility emerged once buildings came to assume a high priority¹ in their thinking about evangelism. Stephen Yeo has analysed, from one perspective, the implications of the 'religion of bricks and mortar' which resulted in churches being heavily dependent on those who could finance such buildings. His assessment that 'the building option did not have to catch the chairman's eye as relentlessly as it did' is further supported by the evidence of the home missionary work generally.¹ Apart from the dependence on wealthy men a building-centred approach to evangelism diverted time, money and personnel away from person-centred missionary endeavour into maintaining fine architecture. Furthermore it implanted in home missions a geographical inflexibility. The population, being mobile, often moved away from where the buildings were but were still expected to return to them if they wished to be converted. Bunting's strictures against chapel

1 S. Yeo, op. cit., pp. 126-128.

builders holds true.

There are many reasons to question the accommodation theory of evangelism, that is, that if there was sufficient accommodation in places of worship in the right location the people would attend.¹ What the church needed was not accommodation but 'engagement'² and, as the Religious Census of 1851 showed, this quality it increasingly lacked as the century progressed. Michael Green has shown that it was precisely this quality of engagement with the people among whom they lived, lacking in the late nineteenth century, was a key factor in the success of the early church. The social context of the early Christians prevented them from relying on great public meetings as a method of evangelism but, motivated as they were to make Christ known, caused them to exploit all available private channels and social structures for evangelism.³

The late Victorian Nonconformists had a social context which, unlike their predecessors earlier in the century, encouraged them to use buildings and mass meetings to invite people to Christ. But real engagement was lacking.

This absence of real engagement with the wider society is further demonstrated in the way in which evangelism changed in emphasis from seeking to convert those outside the church to securing the deeper commitment of those already inside. A. D. Gilbert's research has demonstrated the way in which the Nonconformists became even more dependent on endogenous growth than the Church of England.⁴ Early in the century the representative Nonconformist figure was the itinerant evangelist

1 H. McLeod, op. cit., pp. 104-109.

2 A term borrowed from E. R. Wickham, Church and People in an Industrial City (London, 1957), p. 241f. This concept is useful but the present author would not necessarily endorse Wickham's other conclusions.

3 M. Green, Evangelism in the Early Church (London, 1970), p. 278.

4 A.D. Gilbert, Religion & Society, op. cit., pp. 198-202.

converting pagan adults. Later in the century the representative figure was the Sunday School teacher socializing children to become adult church members. Sadly, the success of the latter was nothing like as great as was hoped and nothing like as effective as that of the earlier itinerants. Around the chapel community their grew, in the late century, a penumbra of meetings and organisations which were all indirectly recruiting agencies. They created a pool of adherents from which committed converts were expected to emerge. But the expectation all too often was unfulfilled. The creation of these pools had the effect instead of creating a chapel sub-culture which was progressively isolated from the wider community. The churches' most effective recruiting periods were to be seen when aggressive engagement with the population outside the church took place.¹

The tradition of the itinerant preacher was continued from the mid-century onwards in the evangelistic societies. Even here there were developments to suit the changing social context. On the one hand the city missionaries became more localized as the urban situation demanded and on the other hand many itinerant evangelists suffered from the temptation to preach to the converted simply in order to secure financial support. Nonetheless it was within the evangelistic societies that the clear aim of converting men was maintained and many of them worked on the church's frontier with society whilst the churches themselves faced inward to their own constituencies. In these respects they remain the true heirs of the early itinerants.

Here too however the results were disappointing. Part of the explanation for this may well lie in the simplistic nature of their answers to complex human and social problems. But part of the explanation lies too in their relationship to the churches and blame must

¹ For the further and somewhat different exposition of these themes see R. Currie, A.D. Gilbert & L. Horsley, op. cit., pp. 79-90.

be apportioned to the churches. The churches, of all denominational complexions, were jealous to guard their own status as churches and jealous to guard the status of their ministers. They were happy therefore to credit the status of society or mission to these organisations or of missionary or evangelist to their agents. But they would not permit the full status of church or minister to be assumed. The motivation among Anglicans lay in their belief that they were entitled to an ecclesiastical monopoly. Among Nonconformists the motivation was often more to be found in middle class attitudes of respectability.¹ To be fully accepted as a church there were certain mores to be adopted as an indication of worthiness. In many cases this meant that the population among whom the city missionaries worked were debarred from ever being able to become a church.

Quite apart from the fact that the condemnation of these potential converts to only second-class status in the Kingdom of Heaven was hardly an encouragement to them to forsake their present way of life and accept the life of discipleship, it was, as a missionary strategy, inept. Converts needed to enjoy the full privileges available to the other associations which saw themselves as 'the body' of Christ. The denial of these full privileges meant that membership was denied the incentive to develop a mature independence. If only the church had not created this dichotomy but had fully accepted such work as an integral aspect of its own life and not kept it at arms-length they may have enjoyed greater long-term success.

A final feature of the churches' home missionary endeavours which deserves attention is the fitful nature of their efforts. The sporadic nature of their work has already been the subject of extensive

1 H. McLeod, op. cit., p. 13f.

comment both in the nineteenth century and more recently.¹ The cyclical effect of growth and decline, of aggressive recruitment and withdrawal, is plainly evident. It is also easy to understand the explanations offered to account for, or perhaps even justify, the pattern. Once growth has taken place it is natural that the attention of the church should be turned to consolidation and that after a period of active evangelism energy should need to be recovered. Nonetheless it remains unclear whether this pattern of life is a necessary one. It may have been more beneficial for the church to attempt a more steady and consistent pattern of regular growth rather than the alternating pattern of large gains followed by almost equally large losses.

These criticisms are not intended to detract from the enormous contribution which was made through the home missionary movement to the development of the church in the nineteenth century. But it remains true that if only the church had been more willing to be flexible, and to submit its resources in a more single-minded way to the achievement of the goal of evangelism rather than to maintaining certain ways of doing it and to commit its resources in a regular and steady way the results may well have been even greater.

APPENDIX ALIST OF COUNTY ASSOCIATIONS mentioned in the EVANGELICAL MAGAZINE 1793-1815

<u>Association</u>	<u>Founded</u>	<u>Denomination</u>	<u>Comment</u>
Kent	1791	Independent	Concerned with home and overseas missions.
Warwickshire	1793	Independent	Main emphasis overseas missions.
Suffolk	1794	Independent	Started in imitation of Warwickshire.
Worcester	1795	Undenominational	
Leeds	1795	Undenominational	Primarily concerned with evangelism of the poor.
Gloucester	1795	Independent	
Cambridge	1795	Undenominational	Started as a result of various denominations meeting at an Induction Main activities were prayer, charity schools and two itinerants.
St. Albans	1796	Baptist	Evangelism one of several purposes.
Shropshire	1796	Undenominational	
Hampshire	1796	Undenominational	Had erected twenty chapels by 1814.
London	1797	Congregational	"The London Itinerant Society".
Reading	1797		Itinerant society of Berkshire.
Surrey	1797	Undenominational	
Bedfordshire	1797	Undenominational	Union of Churches with wide aims.
Dorset	1795		Appointed itinerant 1797 and expanded further in 1814.
Somerset	1796	Independent	Appointed Itinerant in 1795.
Wiltshire	1797		Date of their first report and first time Baptists were included. Wide aims included support of Itinerant.
Suffolk	1798	Undenominational	
Essex	1798	Congregational	Already separate Baptist Society here.
Lancashire, Cheshire & Derby	1798	Independent	Purpose was fellowship and evangelism.
Northern	1798	Undenominational	Grew out of old Baptist Association (1778).
East Kent	1798	Undenominational	Itinerant appointed 1799.
West Kent	1798	Undenominational	
Devon & Cornwall	1798	Undenominational	Grew out of the Congregational established Western Association.
Coventry	1799		
Lincolnshire & Nottinghamshire	1799	Undenominational	

<u>Association</u>	<u>Founded</u>	<u>Denomination</u>	<u>Comment</u>
Staffordshire			1799, evangelism had become the point of their meeting. Had an abortive attempt to set up training for itinerants.
Hertfordshire & Worcester	1799	Undenominational	
Herefordshire	1799	Undenominational	Started as a missionary prayer meeting.
Norfolk	1799	Undenominational	Main activity was a Benevolent Society.
Oxford	1802	Baptist	
Sussex	1803	Undenominational	
North Wiltshire	1804		
Cleveland	1805		
Cheshire	1806		
Middlesex & Hertfordshire	1806	Undenominational	Union of Protestant Dissenting Ministers.
East York	1809	Undenominational	Not primarily evangelistic.
Hertfordshire	1810		
London	1813		Association for extending the knowledge of the Gospel in the Metropolis.
Hampshire	1813		
Sheffield, Rotherham & Wakefield	1814	Undenominational	
Staffordshire	1814		
West York			Became primarily evangelistic in 1815.
Uttoxeter	1815	Congregational	

Dates of the following are unknown:

Henley Itinerant Society

Greenwich

Buckinghamshire

Footnote:

The Evangelical Magazine, ii, 509; iii, 114; 243, 257, 291; iv, 294; v, 253, 255, 383, 425, 473; vi, 160, 258, 424, 425, 426, 511; vii, 215, 216, 478-9, 557; x, 290; xii, 428; xv, 571; xvii, 350, 351; xviii, 491; xxii, 65, 154, 288, 481, 482; xxiii, 31; xxiii, 118.

APPENDIX B

OTHER NONCONFORMIST SECTS AND DENOMINATIONS

B.1 The Presbyterians

B.1.1 The Unitarians

The history of many of the Presbyterian churches which belonged to Old Dissent is exemplified by the history of Presbyterian congregations in Exeter. Throughout the nineteenth century there was a gradual drift away from orthodox trinitarianism until in 1784 the congregation at George's Meeting appointed their first thorough-going Unitarian minister.¹ Within eleven years a second avowedly Unitarian minister was called to Exeter, with the result that those members of the congregation at Bow, who wished to maintain their orthodoxy, seceded and formed a Congregational Church.² By 1810 the transition to Unitarianism from orthodox Presbyterianism was complete.³ But it meant that the number of congregations that claimed to stand within the Presbyterian tradition had been reduced to one. Old Presbyterianism therefore entered the nineteenth century in a much weakened state and with a much discouraged spirit.

The drift into Unitarianism had been fairly general among the Old Presbyterians and the General Baptists⁴, with those who objected to the movement away from orthodoxy forming Independent or New Connexion Baptist congregations.⁵ Bogue and Bennett, together with most older interpreters of the transition, have no doubt that the cause of Presbyterianism's

1 A. Brockett, Nonconformity in Exeter (Manchester, 1962), p. 141.

2 ibid., p. 146.

3 ibid., p. 158f.

4 I. Sellers, 'The Old General Baptists', Baptist Quarterly, xxiv (1971), 30-41, 74-88.

5 G. Bolam, J. Goring, H. L. Short and R. Thomas, The English Presbyterians (London, 1968), pp. 17-28 and 175-235.

debilitated state at the beginning of the nineteenth century was its adoption of erroneous theology.¹ More recently, however, the cause of the drift has been accounted for in other terms. J. Goring argues that it arose from an attempt to adopt a positive and thorough-going form of Arminianism. He adds that economic factors, particularly the decline in the cloth trade, and the general spirit of the age with its emphasis on secular issues, were also partly responsible for the transition to Unitarianism.²

Three factors would suggest that the Unitarians were not much concerned with home missions in the nineteenth century. Firstly, they came to be preoccupied with devising a more rational theology rather than disseminating truth. Secondly, they were engaged in much internal and external controversy during the century.³ Thirdly, unlike the other branches of Nonconformity, they were almost completely untouched by the Evangelical Revival,⁴ and remained small, even declining, throughout the century.⁵ The conclusion that home missions did not concern the Unitarians would however be premature. A number of developments indicate a concern for home missions, even if it was less successful in its effects than any other Nonconformist group. In fact the Unitarians were subject to some extent, to the same changing winds of home missionary endeavour as other bodies.

1 D. Bogue and J. Bennett, History of Dissenters from the Reformation in 1688 to the year 1808 (London, 1812), iv, 318.

2 C. G. Bolam et al., op.cit., pp. 24-27.

3 ibid., pp. 235-249.

4 ibid., p. 27 and p. 221f.

5 A. D. Gilbert, Growth and Decline of Nonconformity in England and Wales (Oxford University D. Phil thesis 1973), p. 76f points out that any growth shown by Unitarians in the early part of the century was due to a regrouping of the heterodox elements of old Dissent rather than conversion. This probably also explains the hectic phase of chapel building in which they engaged at the beginning of the century. A. H. Drysdale, History of Presbyterianism in England (London, 1889), p. 541.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the Unitarians engaged in itinerancy as a means of spreading their views. A Unitarian Fund was formed in 1800 under the direction of Robert Aspland, William Vidler, David Eaton and Richard Wright. Wright himself became an itinerant preaching in barns and on greens; places familiar to other Nonconformist itinerants. He was able to offer aid to a number of small Unitarian causes from the Fund. After some years of itinerancy and some success in seeing old Presbyterian causes revived, he was invited to London to supervise the work of other itinerant preachers. In this capacity, however, he was not unduly busy, since few other itinerants followed in his footsteps. Another development of this period was the founding of a number of local book and tract societies for missionary purposes.¹

In the next phase the Unitarians showed some concern to systematize the disparate missionary activities in a denominational society. So in 1825 the Unitarian Fund amalgamated with a number of local societies to form the British & Foreign Unitarian Association. Robert Aspland was once more the inspiration behind the move. But the move towards aggressive centralisation was not welcomed by all the churches any more than the parallel developments among Baptists and Congregationalists met with universal approval.²

The British & Foreign Unitarian Association continued its aggressive work for most of the century, although it came to represent only one of the two main parties within Unitarianism. The party which had its roots in Priestly and the rationalism of the eighteenth century were far more

1 C. G. Bolam et al, op. cit., pp. 238-240.

2 ibid., p. 240f.

concerned with missionary activity than the party which emerged under James Martineau which breathed the spirit of nineteenth century romanticism.¹ The former party were able to use the structures of the British & Foreign Unitarian Association to establish an adequate denominational machinery. By 1886 it was so firmly established among them, although it had never been of interest to Martineau's party and had often been opposed by them,² that they were able to purchase their own denominational Headquarters in Essex Street Chapel. By this time the chief concern of the Association, as with other denominational home missionary societies, had become the granting of aid to smaller churches and the liquidation of chapel debts.³

Among the aggressive party, one other development deserves note. A new impetus to evangelism was received through the activity of Joseph Barker, who joined the Unitarians after his expulsion from the Methodist New Connexion in 1841. Barker was subsequently to rejoin the Methodists and regret his slide down the Unitarian incline 'till I reached at last the land of doubt and unbelief'.⁴ But whilst he was identified with the Unitarians he continued to exhibit the evangelistic habits he had learned in Methodism⁵ and so he formed a number of new congregations and acted as a catalyst for a general renewal of evangelistic zeal.⁶ The fruit of his work was to be seen in the establishment of a new Home Missionary Board under the direction of John Rely Beard in 1854.⁷

Martineau's party were not devoid of missionary concern. The chief expression of their concern took the form of Domestic Missions, whose sole

1 ibid., p. 259f.

2 ibid., pp. 267-269.

3 ibid., p. 274.

4 Joseph Barker, The Life of Joseph Barker (London, 1880), p. 282.

5 ibid., p. 283.

6 C. G. Bolam, op. cit., p. 264f.

7 ibid., p. 265.

interest was the poor inhabitants of the big cities. The inspiration for Domestic Missions came from the work of Joseph Tuckerman in Boston and from visits he made to England in 1833.¹ Tuckerman's theology was broad and appealing to Unitarians among whom he expended virtually the whole of his influence.² Other Christians were showing concern for the city, during the same period, and expressing it, inter alia, through city missions. But Tuckerman's approach was distinctive and it was his theology which made it so. He believed that every man should be treated as an individual with dignity who, however depraved, was not totally depraved and who had within him an 'unextinguished spark of moral sensibility, which, with God's blessing may ... be blown into a flame'.³ The object therefore was not simply to relieve the immediate symptoms of sin but to seek a long-term and deep change in man as well as an immediate change in his physical circumstances. Men were to be encouraged 'to exercise their moral powers for the ends for which God gave their powers - for the self-improvement and the immediate salvation to which he calls them'.⁴

It was missionary work of this broad philanthropic kind in which Martineau and his followers engaged. Missioners were appointed to visit the poor, offer advice and set up structures for self-improvement, such as penny-banks and reading rooms. In Manchester a Domestic Mission was formed in 1833 as a result of a motion passed by the British and Foreign Unitarian Association and through the inspiration of Joseph Tuckerman.⁵ Although it claimed to be unsectarian it was

1 ibid., p. 261.

2 H. D. Rack, 'Domestic Visitation: a Chapter in Early Nineteenth Century Evangelism', Journal of Ecclesiastical History, xxiv (1973), 361.

3 J. Tuckerman, Ministry at Large in Boston (London, 1838), pp. 85-89.

4 ibid., p. 98f.

5 H. E. Perry, A Century of Liberal Religion & Philanthropy in Manchester (Manchester, 1933), pp. 1-5.

in fact a Unitarian cause.¹ Its aim was to serve as a bridge between the poorest classes who were devoid of the benefits of religion and their wealthier brethren. It was believed that the sympathy which the missionaries were to demonstrate would kindle divine aspirations in the poor. The mission claimed that they would 'awaken in them the dormant sense of the power of a religious life (and) would make them once again feel the common bond which should unite all men to each other, as members of the great family of God.'²

The first missionary, John Ashworth, was mostly occupied in visiting and encouraging attendance at Sunday Schools. In the early years, too, a mutual improvement society and a clothing society were formed.³ The prevalence of unemployment and disease in the 1840s caused the mission to invest much more of its resources than it had so far done in food and clothing for the poor.⁴ In 1856 the mission changed its location and the new chapter which was then commenced was one when a host of societies were formed for temperance, saving and a host of other good causes.⁵

From 1859, when communion was celebrated for the first time, the ecclesiastical nature of the Mission became more and more prominent.⁶ But its practical aims still remained social and humanitarian rather than religious and sectarian.

The changing social situation of the end of the century was reflected in the mission in a number of ways. New methods, such as flower exhibitions were being tried. Drunkenness was reported as on the decrease and the mission's recreational work was taken over by others in 1892.⁷ Yet the mission's character had still not really changed and it was still a boast that a Sister of Mercy appointed in the 1890s carried a

1 ibid., pp. 7-10.

2 ibid., pp. 48 & 39.

3 ibid., pp. 6, & 11-14.

4 ibid., pp. 17-21.

5 ibid., pp. 27-29.

6 ibid., p. 29f.

7 ibid., pp. 47, 50 & 57.

bucket of lime with her rather than a Bible.¹

Domestic missions and District Visiting Missions were not exclusive to Martineau's party and most large towns boasted them. In many cases the continuity with more traditional work was more obvious and among their many activities the holding of popular religious services took its unashamed place.²

The Unitarians then boasted a variety of attempts to engage in home missionary activities. In a number of respects their experience paralleled the experience of other nonconformist groups as increasing denominationalism developed throughout the century. The differences between them and the other nonconformist groups lay in their objectives and their style rather than in their structures or activities. They were not concerned to win converts to a system of well-defined dogma. Rather they sought to awaken each man to the potential of a moral life which was already within him. Secondly they were, in style and temper, intellectual, reflecting their middle class origins. In this they lacked rapport with the working classes they were trying to illuminate. George Harris, one of Unitarian's most active evangelists, began lectures for the poor in Liverpool in 1818 but by 1830 had no audience left because of the intellectual nature of their content.³ Elsewhere they were more successful but theirs was not a style which would ever gain the Unitarians popular support among the poor. Their appeal was to the thinking man and

1 ibid., p. 58. Liverpool offers another example of a Domestic Mission. I. Sellars, 'Liverpool Nonconformity 1786-1914' (Keele University PhD thesis 1968), pp. 229-232.

2 C. G. Bolam et al op. cit., p. 262. Popular services were held in Liverpool later in the century by the Rev. R. A. Armstrong, Sellers, ibid., p. 258f.

3 Sellers, Liverpool Nonconformity, op. cit., p. 228.

they struck many a chord of sympathy in the troubled minds of Victorian doubters. Indeed, writes Owen Chadwick, 'they grumbled sometimes that they only grew by other men's doubts.'¹

Thirdly, they failed to commend themselves as a popular movement because of the extreme paternalism of their attitude, which conveyed itself in their missionary work. They were the aristocracy of Dissent² and the difference in life-style and thought patterns between them and most of their hearers was too great to render their home missionary endeavours a success.

B.1.2 The Presbyterian Church of England

The history of the revival of orthodox Presbyterianism in England remains largely unresearched and only the general outline of the revival is clear. A number of congregations remained loyal to orthodoxy whilst most of their fellow Presbyterian churches drifted into Unitarianism.

But the orthodox congregations remained isolated from each other, largely until the formation of the Presbyterian Church of England in 1876. The major impetus to the revival of Presbyterianism came from Scotland and for most of the century the Presbyterians saw themselves as a Scottish church for Scottish migrants to England. In the light of this it is not surprising that the major impact of Presbyterianism in the early part of the century should have been in the north of England with its proximity to the Scottish border.³

Drysdale cites John Black's summary of the development of a more English Presbyterian organisation:

1 O. Chadwick, The Victorian Church (2nd edn., London, 1970), i, 396.

2 Sellers, Liverpool Nonconformity, p. 217.

3 J. D. Gay, The Geography of Religion in England (London, 1971), pp. 127-131.

Soon after 1812 began the Evangelical movement in the Church of Scotland, the influence of which was immediately felt by the orthodox English Presbyterians, who had for some time drawn their ministers increasingly, and latterly almost exclusively, from that Church. Already about eighteen of the old English congregations had connected themselves, for the sake of an Evangelical ministry, with one or other of the branches of the Scottish Secession. Some fifty more, together with twenty congregations of later origin, formed themselves between 1836 and 1842 into an English Synod in ecclesiastical communion with the Church of Scotland, though not subject to its jurisdiction. Both sections from that time made rapid progress till, in 1876, they numbered together about two hundred and fifty nine congregations. These became united in that year, in the present Synod of the Presbyterian Church of England, numbering today two hundred and eighty six congregations, ...¹

Gilbert's estimate of their growth in membership is that between 1838 and 1876 they grew from 10,000 to 46,000.² The expansion is largely explained by the transfer of Scotsmen to churches in England or by the bringing back into the Presbyterian fold of isolated or even Independent congregations. Growth through evangelism among those outside the church does not seem a significant factor.

As far as home missionary endeavours are concerned, the evidence suggests that they were engaged in the same pattern of activities as other Nonconformist bodies. They lacked the denominational framework and avoided the tensions produced by the process towards denominationalism. In many other respects, however, the similarities are apparent.

Until he became a persona non grata in such circles, Edward Irving, as minister of the Caledonian Church in London, was involved in the round of missionary society activities in London and at their meetings or on their behalf.³ Irving's idiosyncratic approach quickly led him

1 Drysdale, op. cit., p. 606f.

2 A. D. Gilbert, Religion and Society in Industrial England (London, 1976), p. 42.

3 E. Irving, For Missionaries after the Apostolical School (London, 1825) was prepared in response to a request to give a lecture to the London Missionary Society.

to a position of isolation. But there was no inherent reason in Presbyterianism for them to be different from other Nonconformists when it came to home missions.

Like others in the mid-century the Presbyterians benefited from the 1859 Revival. J. Edwin Orr reports that the Lancashire Presbytery gained four hundred accessions in the first year of the Revival and that the London Presbyterians increased their sittings by 25%.¹ Certainly J. Oswald Dykes, a successor to Irving at Regent Square, lectured in cautious favour of the 1859 Revival in Northern Ireland. Despite some hesitancy over the physical manifestations, he believed what he saw to be one with the New Testament church, sound in its spiritual fruit and worth imitating.²

Later in the century when Nonconformist home missionary activity was adopting the form of the mission hall, Presbyterianism too adopted that form. Skeats and Miall report that 'several fine and costly churches have been erected in London and its suburbs during the last twenty years, attached to which are many evangelistic agencies, both for the poor at home and the heathen abroad.'³ Ian Sellers reports the same development in Liverpool where, due to the leadership of Mr. Thomas Matheson, Presbyterianism ceased to see itself as a Scottish enclave and became one of the most evangelistically-minded denominations in the city. Through his work most of the churches had missions attached to them through which they attracted a smattering of the lower classes.⁴

1 J. E. Orr, The Second Evangelical Awakening in Britain (London, 1849), p. 201.

2 J. O. Dykes, Apostolic Times Revived (London & Edinburgh, 1859).

3 H. S. Skeats and C. S. Miall, History of the Free Churches in England 1688-1891 (London, 1891), p. 716.

4 Sellers, Liverpool Nonconformity, pp. 74-76.

A further similarity with other branches of Nonconformity is evident at the time of union of the different Synods into the Presbyterian Church of England in 1876. Home Missions was one of seven major aspects of its work. In summary form the Home Mission Scheme had two objects.

1. To raise and administer funds for church building, or reduction of building debt. In 10 years (from 1876 to 1886) churches have been raised at a cost of £215,000 and only £30,000 of debt remains. Within twelve years the Church's property has increased from £1,000,000 to £1,500,000.

2. The other and urgent object of this Fund is to promote and further Evangelistic and Home Missionary efforts - a matter of the very vital and vast importance, on which much remains¹ to be done in stimulating local efforts among the masses.

The distinctive marks of Presbyterian evangelism lay in the Scottish accent, the intellectual language and the erudite theological style they adopted. An article in the Daily Telegraph records the meeting of the Scottish Synod for England held at Regent Square Church in 1873. It reports that Mr. Mathieson, in a broad Scottish accent, 'eloquently dwelt on the present aspects of Presbyterianism in England'. In so doing he revealed much about the Presbyterian style of evangelism.

He threw in a word of commendation on the American evangelists, 'who have moved the myriad-peopled city', he said, 'as it has never been moved before'. It might have been that their own ministers had relied too much on intellect, and that God was teaching them a lesson in these men. In the last ten years the English congregations had increased from 106 to 160, and that not chiefly in the North, where such increase might have been expected, but in the South, where they were more scattered. Perhaps the state of the Church of England might lead people to look at Presbyterianism as the safeguard against Romanism under the form of Ritualism. He concluded a most interesting excursus by dwelling on the prospects of Church extension, of union with the United Presbyterians, and eventually of a complete unanimity which might once more make people say, 'Behold, how these Christians love one another'.²

1 Cited by Drysdale, op. cit., p. 627.

2 Cited in Nonconformity in the Nineteenth Century, ed. D. M. Thompson, (London, 1972), p. 201.

B.2 The Brethren

The characterization of the Brethren by some recent sociologists as an introversionist sect could be misleading. As so often, precise realities do not conform too easily to general models. According to Bryan Wilson, 'no evangelism is undertaken' in an introversionist sect.¹ The Brethren, however, both in their origin and in the development of the non-exclusive branch display much evidence of concern with evangelism.

The Brethren movement emerged from the coalescence of a number of small groups of evangelicals who were discontented with the established and dissenting churches to which they belonged. The 'foremost architect'² of the movement in its formative period was J. N. Darby, although he played only a slight part in the very earliest days of the movement in Dublin.³ Darby had been ordained as a Church of Ireland curate in 1825 but he only served in a parish for two years before devoting himself to itinerant preaching and eventually leaving the Church of Ireland altogether, probably never resigning his clerical orders, but separating from the church in 1828. Among the many causes of Darby's discontent with the established church was the way in which the Church of Ireland had responded to the question of Home Missions. Indeed, this particular issue brought many of his reasons for discontent into focus.

Darby claimed to have been the first to put forward the idea of a home mission⁴ and in 1828 a group of clergy, having received official approval, constituted the Church Home Missionary Society. The way in

1 Patterns of Sectarianism, ed. B. Wilson (London, 1967), p. 28.

2 ibid., p. 221.

3 H. H. Rowdon, The Origins of the Brethren (London, 1967), pp. 43-53.

4 The Collected Writings of J. N. Darby, ed. William Kelly (Kingston-on-Thames, nd) iv 138.

which they developed his idea, however, failed to satisfy Darby and in 1833 he published a pamphlet fully setting out his complaints. 'It appears to my mind,' he wrote, 'that the position and worldliness of the church (i.e. the establishment) ... disqualified it from being an agent of the gospel in the country, and converting it to faith in God,'¹ Parochial and episcopal systems, he argued, were adequate for the pastoral care of those within the church but to impose the same system on a Home Mission, was to deny the principle on which a home mission had to work, namely a general preaching of the gospel to those who were not within the pale of the Christian Church. Home missions should consist of individuals acting on their own authority out of duty to God and not in obedience to a 'nominal system'.²

Such men, Darby asserted, would engage in home missions because they were using the gifts God had given them rather than filling an office of man.³ Darby's greatest point of contention with the Church Home Missionary Society was that laymen had been excluded from participating in it jointly with the clergy.⁴ The heart of the matter was 'the dissociation of nominal office from the power of the Spirit'.

The Spirit has been poured out in efficient service on many not officially employed. The clergy are setting themselves to exclude these: they are standing on office against the title and competency to act of those who have the Spirit without office ... And in thus standing ... they identify themselves with ungodliness ...⁵

1 ibid., i, 52.

2 ibid., i, 53.

3 ibid., i, 53. Darby later claimed that the doctrine of gifts 'has been almost forgotten or else it is altogether set aside by assigning the right to edify men to those who have been placed by men in their positions', xiv, 13.

4 ibid., i, 53-67.

5 ibid., i, 59f.

This passionate attack on the clericalism of the church led Darby not only to engage in itinerant gospel preaching himself but to seek to join with others, whether ordained or not, in mission.

The early years of the Brethren movement were plagued by doctrinal suspicions and disputes which eventually led to the movement dividing into two streams in 1848.¹ It was then that the introversion developed in one of the streams; the one which flowed after Darby. For a time they continued to accept the value of personal evangelism but they rejected any technique which could be construed as revivalism and before long had given up any attempt to convert others. It was from this stream that the Exclusive Brethren, as they became known to a future generation, developed.²

By contrast, the second stream of open Brethren remained committed to evangelism throughout the century. Two preliminary features of their evangelism must be noted. Firstly, it was never centrally organised or directed. One result of this is that it gave rise to a great diversity of style and method. A second result was that the growth of the Brethren movement often appears to expand spontaneously.³

The second feature is that Brethren evangelists shared a fairly common motive for their activity in that they believed that the near Second Advent of Christ was an incentive for them to preach the gospel to all nations.⁴

Two recent historians of the Brethren movement, H. H. Rowdon and F. Roy Coad, have both paid attention to the Brethren approach to evangelism in the nineteenth century. From their researches the main

1 Rowdon, op. cit., pp. 227-266 and F. Roy Coad, A. History of the Brethren Movement (Exeter, 1968), pp. 105-153.

2 Wilson, op. cit., p. 287f.

3 Rowdon, op. cit., p. 187 and Coad, op. cit., p. 167.

4 Rowdon, op. cit., p. 187.

outline of the Brethren home missionary activities is clear. In the early decades of the century they relied on itinerancy as the main method of recruitment. It was evident in Darby's early years but it was not by any means confined to him or his circle. Robert Gribble, after leaving the Congregational Home Missionary Society, became associated with the Christian Brethren and it is possible that the cause of friction between him and the Congregational committee was his acquaintance with a member of the Brethren.¹ His achievements in establishing churches and the fruits of his extensive open air work fed into the growing Brethren movement. Other examples of tireless open air itinerants among the Brethren abound. John Eliot Howard, formerly a member of the Society of Friends, began preaching after his conversion in Tottenham.² Captain Hall of Plymouth is another well-known example.³ His naval background, so different from Robert Gribble's agricultural background, further illustrates the social diversity which is evident among the early brethren.

A study of Hereford in the late 1830s and 1840s reveals a rich variety of approach to home mission. Hereford served as a centre from which many preachers were sent out to evangelize the surrounding villages. Strong central churches often played this role in their district.⁴ Loaned, or hired halls would be used as well as open air preaching and much use was made of religious tracts. Converts would travel into Hereford itself for worship and instruction on Sunday mornings. There is record of a 'Mission House' during this period, both at Colwell and at Malvern. This presumably served as a resource centre and meeting place for evangelistic purposes. Occasionally more idiosyncratic methods of evangelism were

1 See pp. 184-5. R. Gribble, Recollections of an Evangelist (London, 1858, p. 61., Rowdon, op. cit., pp. 147-153.

2 Rowdon, op. cit., p. 162. 3 ibid., p. 164f.

4 ibid., 165 and Coad, op. cit., p. 174.

adopted, as in the case of Dr. Griffin who expounded the gospel to patients in his consulting room by means of an allegorical interpretation of pictures of the Tabernacle.¹

One feature of the work at Hereford was characteristic of the wider Brethren approach to home missions. The meeting at Hereford maintained an Orphan Asylum.² Muller's orphanages at Bristol are the best known example of this aspect of their philanthropic work.³ But their philanthropy was widespread, even if it has been popular to criticize them for their individualism in recent years.⁴ It was a tradition which was to continue throughout the century and to express itself most remarkably in Dr. Thomas Barnardo, who continued to demonstrate the intimate relationship between evangelism and philanthropy.⁵

The Brethren horizon of 1859 was dominated by the Revival. Coad has described its effects on the movement as 'more fundamental than on other bodies', not only in terms of a greatly accelerated growth rate but in the renewed impetus it gave to the movement, changing both its character and its influence.⁶ One effect was that, whereas previously a number of Revival preachers like Richard Weaver and Brownlow North had mixed freely with the Brethren but not wholly identified with them, the next generation of revival preachers were content to be exclusively known as Brethren. Among these men Coad names Joseph Denham Smith, Gordon Furlong, John Hambleton, Charles Russell Hurditch and, most notably of all, Henry Moorhouse.

1 Rowdon, op. cit., p. 166.

2 ibid., p. 168.

3 For a recent biography of Muller see Roger Steer, George Muller: Delighted in God (London, 1975).

4 Coad, op. cit., p 178.

5 G. Wagner, Barnardo (London, 1979).

6 Coad, op. cit., p. 168.

Moorhouse at first resisted conversion when taken to revival meetings in Manchester, but eventually was converted after a three week long struggle with guilt.¹ 'His conversion was in all respects a distinct, clear-cut separation from the world'² and he soon found himself engaged in a flurry of evangelistic activity preaching in theatres and on streets. He became best known as an evangelist, however, by his preaching at racecourses and on one occasion at Chester races managed to distribute fifty thousand tracts in three days.³ In later years, when his health began to decline, he engaged in selling Bibles through a Bible carriage which he purchased in 1878.⁴ With that carriage he was still able to reach men at markets and fairs, even though he was no longer able to preach to them.

An honourable succession of evangelists among the Brethren came from very humble social origins, viz. Gribble, Weaver and Moorhouse. But Coad has pointed out that there was another quite distinct class of evangelists within the same movement whom he terms the 'gentleman evangelists'.⁵ For the most part, the 'gentleman evangelists' he names were Irish or Scottish. One Englishman of significance, however, is John Morley, the older brother of Samuel Morley, the Congregationalist leader and Member of Parliament. The most useful part of John Morley's widespread evangelistic activity lay in his introducing many revival preachers to North London, in his introducing leading evangelical men to each other and in setting up an 'iron room' in Clapton, North London, which not only experienced phenomenal growth itself but exercised extensive influence elsewhere.⁶

1 J. Macpherson, Henry Moorhouse, The English Evangelist (London, 1881), pp. 11-17.

2 ibid., p. 33.

3 ibid., p. 40.

4 ibid., pp. 112-115.

5 Coad, op. cit., p. 172.

6 ibid., p. 174f.

In the last quarter of the century it was once again revivalism which set the tone of Brethren evangelism; only now it was the revivalism of Moody, Sankey and gospel missions rather than the prayer-inspired revival of 1859. Coad goes so far as to say that 'the independent Brethren very largely (turned) into a "gospel mission" movement'.¹ They certainly adopted the evangelistic mission approach more uncritically than other Christian group and its effects are everywhere to be seen.

Until recently, the names of most Brethren meeting places were called 'Gospel Halls', which was a legacy from this era. The halls were often built in the area where a temporary accommodation, such as a tent, hut or iron chapel had been originally established for an evangelistic mission. They shunned normal Victorian church architecture as much as possible. The liturgy of the evening Gospel service owed much, and still does to the form of service used in the Moody era. A separate hymn book was used for gospel services with a different selection of hymns, often of the Sankey type with a chorus attached to each verse. The firmly ingrained belief that the best and God-given method of evangelizing the nation is through a Sunday evening Gospel service was an enduring bequest of the late Victorian era.

1 ibid., p. 184.

B.3 The Catholic Apostolic Church

The Catholic Apostolic Church, whose origin is interwoven with the ministry of Edward Irving, is more a matter of curiosity than of significance for the historian, although in some of its teaching it anticipated debates which were to become prominent in the twentieth century church. It lacks significance because it was never numerically large and after exciting fierce initial opposition it settled into relative obscurity.

The dissidents who composed the Catholic Apostolic Church came together because they shared an interest in premillennial prophetic teaching. Millenarian speculation affected many Christians in the early nineteenth century and played an important role in the development of other bodies too, such as the Brethren.¹ It was an aspect of this interest, the belief in the revival and practice of the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit, which provided the catalyst for the formation of a separate Catholic Apostolic Church. The restoration of these gifts were considered to be a sign that the church was living in the last days.

The first manifestation of the gifts of healing and speaking in tongues occurred to Mary Campbell of Fernicarry in 1828 and within just over a year a deputation from the Albury Conference, a prophetic Conference hosted by Henry Drummond, had declared them to be a genuine work of God.² Soon a number of occurrences of speaking in tongues took place in London, chiefly in the fashionable Scots Presbyterian Church of Edward Irving, who had become one of the leading personalities of the London pulpits. After some private investigation, Irving decided to allow the gifts to be used in

1 E. R. Sandeen, The Roots of Fundamentalism (Chicago and London, 1970), pp. 3-41, 59-80, and W. H. Oliver, Prohets and Millennialists (Oxford, 1975), pp. 99-149.

2 A. L. Drummond, Edward Irving and his Circle (London, nd), pp. 136-153, Mrs. Oliphant, The Life of Edward Irving (6th edn. London, nd), pp. 186-9 and C. G. Strachen, The Pentecostal Theology of Edward Irving (London, 1973), pp. 61-74.

public in worship. The trustees of his church objected to the disturbances caused in the services and refused to concur with Irving's judgment. Since Irving was already under suspicion for his theological views - he was accused of preaching that Jesus had assumed fallen humanity in order to save mankind - this was taken as a signal for the trustees to pursue their opposition to him to its logical conclusion. Irving and most of his congregation, since they supported him, were locked out of the church and, after trial in the synods of the church, Irving was dismissed from the ministry of the Church of Scotland. After his dismissal in 1832, he returned to London to be ordained as a pastor of the newly formed Catholic Apostolic Church. He served them for two years until his death.¹

After Irving's death the leadership of the new church passed into the hands of an apostolic college of twelve who included J. B. Cardale, Henry Drummond and Henry Dalton. In 1842 a liturgy was introduced and a number of Roman Catholic practices became a feature of its worship, such as vestments, extreme unction, candles, incense and the use of holy water. Not all members of the church agreed with these developments and a number split from them. Alliances and missionary tours of the continent provided the church with some following there but in England the church went into a steady decline.

The personalities and religious experiences of the founders of the Catholic Apostolic Church combined with their doctrinal beliefs to give a radical shape to its evangelism. Irving's radicalism was evident in 1824 when he was invited to address the Annual Meeting of the London Missionary Society. On such occasions the preacher usually preached a sermon encouraging support for the Society. Irving felt free to deviate

¹ Strachen, *op. cit.*, pp. 141-185. Parallel accounts can be found in Drummond and Oliphant.

from that tradition and preached, for almost three hours, using the occasion to set out a radical exposition of his views on the truly apostolic nature of missionary service.

At this stage he believed that the modern missionary derived from the Biblical apostle and was sent out to preach the gospel to those who did not know it. Evangelists were those who built up those who believed.¹

Irving's basic thesis was that the church had imbibed the spirit of the age in sending out missionaries who relied on visible means of support instead of exercising faith in the invisible. Matthew 10, he was convinced, showed that God sent out humble men who had their confidence in everything terrestrial removed, so that they might rest on God alone.² It was faith they were sent out to plant and therefore they had to live by faith. Since their task was to deliver the nations from idolatry - the idolatry of gold and silver, of wisdom, of power and might and of fame and reputation - God chose as his representatives those whose lives demonstrated total independence from the idols.³ He believed that the whole of the New Testament taught 'that the things of the Spirit prosper in proportion as the things of the flesh decay'. The problem was that modern missionary societies, of which he was not wholly critical and did express some admiration,⁴ had not delivered themselves or their agents from the things of the flesh.

How precisely Irving's views on a missionary's lifestyle were translated into action among the Evangelists of the Catholic Apostolic Church is undocumented. What is clear, however, is that their whole approach assumed a fairly radical air.

1 Edward Irving, op. cit., p. xxi. Later on the Catholic Apostolic Church was to adopt the view that evangelists announced the gospel to unbelievers.

2 ibid., pp. 15-17.

3 ibid., p. 27f.

4 ibid., p. 106.

The church believed in the distinct office of an evangelist. Henry Dalton, one of the apostles and apologists of the Church articulated their belief that God had given a four-fold ministry as a permanent gift to the church - that of the apostle, pastor, prophet and evangelist.¹ Dalton believed that 'the speciality of the Apostolic office and ministry is to present the church unto Christ at his appearing and coming'.² It was the task of the evangelist to go to those outside of the church to lead people into the true church.

By 1836 a typological understanding of the Old Testament picture of the Tabernacle had led them to believe that each of their tribes should have sixty evangelists, typified in the Tabernacle by the sixty pillars. These were organised into five bands under five angel-evangelists.³ In addition, each apostle and each church had an evangelist attached.⁴ Whilst the apostles retreated at Albury to construct the doctrine of the church, the evangelists set about building it. By the end of 1836 they had formed as many as thirty six churches in England, Ireland and Scotland.⁵

1 Henry Dalton, The Baptism of the Holy Spirit (Wolverhampton, 1833), passim. Dalton was a curate at Bridgnorth until 1833 he was tried in the Court of the Royal Peculiar for preaching in the streets, altering the service of Prayer Book and substituting prayers of his own and for publishing certain views and advocating certain practices regarding the Holy Spirit. The trial, in which Dalton offered no defence, took two years and ended with Dalton being deprived of his living. MS, (Salop County Record Office).

2 Henry Dalton, Apostleship (London, 1864), p. 9.

3 E. Miller, The History and Doctrines of Irvingism (London, 1878), i, 171 and ii, 48. Although Miller gives a very critical and negative account, he is illuminating on the question of evangelists.

4 ibid., i, 183 and ii, 52 and P. E. Shaw, The Catholic Apostolic Church (New York, 1946), p. 235.

5 ibid., i, 176.

The message the evangelists offered was pessimistic. It was to flee from the wrath that was coming on the world and on the apostate church.¹ Many of their converts, Miller claims, did not come from outside the pale of the churches at all but from other churches.² The evangelists worked with terrific zeal and energy and sometimes provoked the attention of 'the alarmed protectors of the public peace'.³ Documentary evidence is unavailable to prove that the evangelists worked miracles on their preaching tours, but it would be consistent with the teaching of the Catholic Apostolic Church if they had.⁴ In fact, since the movement must to some extent be seen as a reaction to growing secularism, the employment of supernatural manifestations of the Spirit was an essential, not expendable, element of their strategy.⁵

Internal disputes between the apostles and elders and prophets in the late 1830s caused a setback to the hopes of expansion in the developing church. But by 1851 the Census revealed that they had thirty two churches which were attended by three thousand one hundred and seventy six in the morning, one thousand six hundred and fifty nine in the afternoon and two thousand seven hundred and seven in the evening.⁶ In spite of much evangelistic activity, Miller estimated that there were still only thirty churches in the Catholic Apostolic Church in 1871, although he believed

1 Shaw, op. cit., p. 173. 2 Miller, op. cit., i, 341.

3 Mrs. Oliphant, op. cit., p. 346.

4 Dalton, Apostleship, op. cit., p. 15 and Miller, op. cit., ii, 48f.

5 Stracken, op. cit., pp. 76-78.

6 Cited by Miller, op. cit., i, 260.

that there were three thousand worshippers in London alone.¹ The church, however, never grew to a strong position in England and with the repeated disappointments resulting from unfulfilled prophecy, it is difficult to see how expansion could have been expected. The ultimate disappointment to the hopes of believers occurred when the last apostle died in 1901 without the Second Coming of Christ having occurred as predicted. Drummond, a sympathetic observer of the movement, claimed that since that hope was dashed 'the Church has abandoned further extension'.² The church did not experience a sudden collapse; movements which have the misfortune to have their definite predictions proved wrong rarely do,³ but it did continue its drift in England to non-existence.

1 ibid., i, 345. This figure receives independent confirmation from Mudie-Smith, cited in O. Chadwick, op. cit., ii, 235.

2 Drummond, op. cit., p. 234f. and Shaw, op. cit., p. 2, footnote 2.

3 See L. Festinger, H. Riechen and S. Schachter, When Prophecy Fails (New York, 1964 edn.). A sociological study of the Catholic Apostolic Church along similar lines is still to be undertaken.

B.4 The Peculiar People

The Peculiar People were an enthusiastic sect founded among Essex agricultural workers by James Banyard. It first constituted itself a church in 1852 but was in existence, in an embryonic form, for several years before that. Banyard was a Methodist local preacher who, following a visit to London, entered a new dimension of his Christian experience and sought to restore his fellow Wesleyans at Rockford to vital religion. He met with little understanding among the people who believed him to be crazy and so he and a small group of supporters set up a new congregation in his own home.¹

From the first the movement was characterised by zealous evangelism and open-air preaching. It was firmly committed to the view that all men needed to undergo a definite conversion experience. Furthermore, it emphasised holiness and a belief in the power of the Holy Spirit. The chief manifestation of the Spirit's work, in addition to holiness, was through healing. The first reported healing was that of William Perry who, in 1842, was cured of consumption and walked twelve miles the same day to prove that God had delivered him.² A number of other healings followed and it became a conviction among the Peculiar People that to resort to a doctor was sinful, since it lacked faith in God. This belief was the cause of much trouble among them. Banyard himself turned to a doctor in 1855 and so caused a division in the group.³ They were held responsible for the spreading of smallpox in the Woolwich district in 1872⁴ and for the death of a child in 1875.⁵ In both cases they were subject to legal proceedings. A further division over the strict enforcement of divine healing took place in 1900.⁶

1 Mark Sorrell, The Peculiar People (Exeter, 1979), pp. 15-18.

2 ibid., p. 21.

3 ibid., p. 28.

4 ibid., p. 32. cp. pp. 90-101.

5 ibid., p. 33.

6 ibid., p.43.

It would appear that there was no organised approach to evangelism until 1923. The movement originally spread and recruitment took place in a much more spontaneous way. A number of factors account for the conversions that happened. Firstly, the fervent revivalist nature of their gatherings were powerful converting agencies in their own right; as they were in other groups of Nonconformists. Exhortation and appeal would encourage some guilty sinner to off-load his burden of guilt with the aid of copious hymn singing.¹ The style of the meetings would have had a contagious effect.

A second factor was the belief in miracles and divine healing which would have provoked strong, if mixed, reactions among those who heard about them or saw them. Curiosity was often roused which, after further investigation by an enquirer, turned into fear, hostility or a desire to know the power for themselves.² For some, at least, the demonstration of divine power was the initial bait which encouraged them to swallow the whole gospel.

A third factor seems to have been that the Peculiar People became a meeting place for a number of individuals who were converted whilst alone and whose conversions involved intense religious emotions. What led them to join the Peculiar People may well have been some previous contact with them through one of their zealous members, who were incorrigible personal evangelists. But the conversion experience appears to have been of a limited intense kind. Sorrell records the testimonies of Elijah Everitt, Isaac Anderson, John Hockley and William Heddle, all of which fall within this category.³

1 ibid., p. 68f. See also K. Young, Chapel (London, 1972), pp. 208-215.

2 Sorrell, op. cit., p. 62-64.

3 ibid., p. 61f. and pp. 115-142. Young, op.cit., p. 215.

One other feature which accounts for its initial expansion in Essex is the sect's sensitive relationship to its cultural context. Their great celebrations each year took place at Harvest time and the meetings which were arranged before and after the gathering in of the crop contained a mixture of practical advice and strong spiritual exhortation. Furthermore, the meetings were free from the inhibitions of respectability and were such as to suit the expressive needs of harvest labourers.¹

As the century progressed the Peculiar People were subject, as are most conversionist sects, to the gradual sapping of their sectarian vitality. Non-agricultural men, who were wealthier, assumed positions of leadership² and a second generation were becoming members of the sect. Committees and ritual increased, as did disputes about which group was most effectively preserving original purity.³ Furthermore, government legislation, particularly in the area of health, was destined to undermine the simple living by faith which was so much a part of the Peculiar People.⁴

These various internal and external changes conspired together to threaten the continuing existence of the Peculiar People. When they awoke to the fact that they could no longer rely on spontaneous evangelism, they set about organising their home missionary effort.⁵ In 1923 they initiated a Forward Mission Movement which a few years later gave rise to an Itinerant Ministry. But the sect's day was really over. They were losing their distinctive agricultural, charismatic and Essex flavour and becoming more like other evangelical churches. In 1956 those churches which remained ceased their separate existence and joined the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches.

1 Sorrell, op. cit., pp. 74-78.

2 e.g. William Heddle was a draper with a thriving business.

3 ibid., p. 45f. and p. 42. 4 ibid., p. 106f.

5 ibid., p. 57.

B.5 The Salvation Army

No other religious organisation of recent centuries has so quickly or so firmly established itself as part of a nation's life as the Salvation Army. That may explain why it has been the subject of some excellent histories and articles.¹ Since evangelism was the raison d'etre of the Salvation Army, its place as a home missionary movement has been extensively considered.

The Salvation Army was prominent in the new wave of Nonconformist growth that took place in the second half of the nineteenth century, when the major Nonconformist bodies were experiencing a slowing down of their growth rates. As the Methodist, Baptist and Congregationalist groups showed increasing concern with the problems of internal development and increasing difficulty in attracting and holding new members, the Salvation Army grew rapidly, although it never compensated fully for the decelerating growth of the traditional Nonconformist bodies.²

The early development of what became known after 1878 as the Salvation Army owes much to the Revival of 1859. After William Booth had been refused an appointment by the Methodist New Connexion as a travelling evangelist, he left the denomination in 1861 to spend a number of years in freelance evangelism in various places before preaching in the East End of London at the invitation of the East London Special Services Committee. The invitation came to Booth after an apparently chance meeting between Booth and members of the East London Committee at an open air service. As a revivalist preacher in East London, he proved so successful that the

1 E.G., R. Sandall & A. R. Wiggins, The History of the Salvation Army (London, 1947-68) i-v; H. Begbie, Life of William Booth (London, 1920) i-ii; R. Robertson, 'The Salvation Army: The Persistence of Sectarianism', Patterns of Sectarianism, op. cit., pp. 49-105 and K. S. Inglis, Churches and the Working Classes in Victorian England (London, 1963), pp. 175-214.

2 Gilbert, Religion and Society, op. cit., pp. 42-44.

services continued and the East End of London began to figure prominently in Booth's thinking. Both had at last found his destiny.¹

The work evolved into Booth's own mission in 1865 and operated under a number of names² until undergoing a major metamorphosis in 1878 from which it emerged as the Salvation Army.³ The change of name symbolized an evolution of the character of the movement. It had always stood for militant Christianity and had experienced conflict as a result. But now Booth was able to run it on army lines with rigid discipline, a dictatorial constitution and military flair.

The East London Special Services Committee were, according to Sandall, an off-shoot of the society established by Samuel Morley to conduct theatre services in 1851. Although the parent committee predates the 1859 Revival, it is evident that the East London committee owed its foundation to the Revival spirit.⁴ Samuel Morley continued to give Booth valuable assistance in the early years.⁵ Other societies which were the fruit of the 1859 Revival were also to play a crucial role in the years when Booth was attempting to establish a mission in the East End of London. Most notable among these agencies were the Evangelisation Society and the Revival newspaper. The former gave Booth regular financial assistance until 1868. Sandall expressed the view that the chief reason for the cessation of their support to Booth was the success which Booth had experienced in his work with the result that the Evangelisation Society could no longer support such a large and established body.⁶ It needed to become autonomous. The chief contribution of the Revival was to

1 Sandall, op. cit., i, 37-45.

2 e.g., The Christian Revival Association and the East London Christian Mission.

3 Sandall, op. cit., i, 226-238.

4 ibid., i, 21-24 and 249f.

5 ibid., i, 93.

6 ibid., i, 74, 76, 80, 81, 93-96 and 99-115.

publicize Booth's activities and successes.¹

It is clear that Booth had no intention of founding a new religious sect. The report of Booth's work for 1867 concluded with Booth's own view of his work.

1. That there is a true Home Mission; a mission to the heathen of London who are as ignorant, as besotted, as miserable, as wicked, nay more so, and in danger of a greater damnation than the heathen abroad.
2. That this work is in true sympathy with man as man, seeking to bless him in body and soul, for time and eternity.
3. That this is truly evangelistic work. As we stood at the corner of a densely populated thoroughfare in Shoreditch preaching not only to a crowd around but to an audience at every door and window in the street, a man cried out, "They cannot get the people into the chapels, and so they have come out here." That was just it ...
4. That this is an unsectarian mission. Our creed is the Bible, our work is to publish the Gospel and we welcome as co-workers all who hold the word of God as the standard of faith and practice and whose hearts are in sympathy with revival work.²

For all Booth's hopes of maintaining an unsectarian character to his movement, the Salvation Army quickly became a sect. The imagery of the Army contributed to this process, since it involved the drawing up of battle lines and the defining of who had been recruited to fight.³ The clear boundaries and conflict model of behaviour are characteristic of sects. Another factor which contributed to the emergence of the Salvation Army as a distinct sect was its failure to be absorbed by any particular existing denomination and equally its failure to be freely used by the existing denominations as an evangelistic agency.⁴

1 ibid., i, 39, 41, and 113.

2 Cited ibid., i, 93. See also ii, 125.

3 Robertson, op. cit., pp. 49-58. In contrast to the development which commonly occurs in conversionist sects, Robertson argues that the Salvation Army did not evolve into a denomination but became an established sect.

4 A Lancashire, 'William Booth: Missionary or Sectarian?' Theology, ixviii (1965), 285-290.

Although all major denominations admired Booth's work and although the Church of England eventually paid Booth the sincerest form of flattery, that of imitation, through the Church Army, the Salvation Army was in reality isolated from the major denominations and had little option but to organise itself as a separate sect.

The primary aim, then, of General Booth was to engage in Home Mission. He was flexible as to the method to be adopted but once described his policy in the following terms:

When we go fishing, we bait our hooks with the most enticing bait we can find. If one bait does not take, then we try another, and another, and another, and if they won't take any, then, as one of our Officers said the other day, we go down and hook them on ... ¹

Since the aim was to win ordinary unsaved men and women who were antagonistic to God and thought more of pleasure than religion, Booth's policy meant in practice going to the places where the people already congregated, e.g. the streets and the public houses, and communicating with them in their own cultural context. In the early days this meant that the principle modes of operation used by the Salvation Army, as they described them themselves, were:

1. By holding meetings out-of-doors, and marching, singing, through the streets in harmony with law and order.
2. By visiting public-houses, gin palaces, prisons, private houses, and speaking to and praying with all who can be reached.
3. By holding meetings in theatres, music-halls, saloons, and the other common resorts of those who prefer pleasure to God, and by turning factories and other available buildings into meeting-rooms, so securing hearers who would not enter ordinary places of worship.
4. By using the most popular song-tunes and the language of every-day life not only to convey God's thoughts to everyone in novel and striking forms, but in such language as they can easily understand.
5. By making every convert² a daily witness for Christ, both in public and private.

¹ Cited in Inglis, op. cit., p. 186 from the War Cry, 25 May 1882.

² Cited in Skeats and Miall, op. cit., p. 730. On Point 5 see Sandall op. cit., pp. 65-72.

It is important to realise that the adoption of these methods, the adoption of language which suited inner city culture and the adoption of an approach to evangelism which many considered vulgar was not merely as a means of gaining converts. It was not an accommodation made to the tastes of the masses for the sake of achieving a particular aim, but a genuine expression of the culture of many of the Salvationists themselves. As Inglis has pointed out, it was because they themselves enjoyed their expression of their faith so much that their evangelism was lively. The Salvation Army believed it necessary to approach the working man at his own cultural level and they were the only significant group to do so.¹

The issue which has caused most debate among the historians of the Salvation Army is whether or not Booth changed his whole approach to evangelism following his publication of In Darkest England and the Way Out. Most assume that the book does indicate a change of direction and that in this publication Booth was admitting that his previous approach had been a failure. It is said that he replaced the spiritual only approach with a combination of the social and spiritual method of evangelism. Sandall writes the history of this period under the title of 'The General's change of Mind' and many others follow his lead.²

More recently, however, it has been argued that the argument that there were two William Booths, not one, is a 'serious misinterpretation' of the evidence. Frederick Coutts has stated the case that William Booth never deviated from his view that 'the work of redemption embraced the whole man'. He says of Booth that,

1 Inglis, op. cit., p. 187f. On p. 176 Inglis cites Catherine Booth as saying that the poor would only be made Christians 'by people of their own class, who would go after them in their own resorts, who would speak to them in language they understood, and reach them by means suited to their own taste.'

2 Sandall, op. cit., iii, 63-74. Inglis is only slightly more cautious, op. cit., pp. 194-204.

He was first and last an evangelist, but never an evangelist who was content to preach sermons and then count the heads of kneeling penitents. He understood the Biblical word salvation as bringing health - physical, mental and spiritual - to every man.¹

There are several arguments in favour of the view that Booth did change his mind. In the early days of his mission he had tried and abandoned the idea of evangelising the poor using food and coal tickets as a bait. In or around 1890, therefore, Booth would seem to be re-adopting the view that the relief of social distress was essential after previously rejecting it.²

Secondly, certain statements in the Preface to Booth's book would be read as implying a change of mind. Booth wrote,

The progress of the Salvation Army in its work amongst the poor and lost of many lands has compelled me to face the problems which are more or less hopefully considered in the following pages. The grim necessities of a huge Campaign carried on for many years against the evils which lie at the root of all the miseries of modern life ... have led me step by step to contemplate ... a possible solution ...'³

In addition, he spoke of those who were rescued by the ordinary means of Christian philanthropy as 'appallingly few' and of the programmes themselves as 'lamentably inadequate'. And he claimed that in providing temporal relief 'I reckon that I am only making it easy where it is now difficult, and possible where it is now all but impossible, for men and women to find their way to the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.'⁴

On the other hand, there are arguments which would suggest that Booth was not changing his mind on how to convert the masses. Eternal salvation remained his primary aim. He himself stated, 'I have no intention to

1 Frederick Coutts, Bread for my Neighbour (London, 1978), p. 20. For the whole debate see pp. 11-21.

2 Sandall, op. cit., i, 292-294.

3 W. Booth, In Darkest England and the Way Out (London, 1890) Preface.

4 ibid.

depart in the smallest degree from the main principles on which I have acted in the past'.¹ A concern for the whole man had always been evident in Booth's missionary activity. And, most important of all, is the fact that Booth's new scheme was not a general scheme of social relief but a scheme to deal with the particular problems of the poorest in society; 'the sinking classes' or the 'submerged tenth' as he referred to them. It was to deal with their plight that Booth proposed a scheme which was radical but not entirely novel.

On balance it would seem more appropriate to view 1890, not as indicating a departure in Booth's views or an admission of past failures, so much as a crystallization of previously held views. At heart Booth's view of evangelism did not change; it only developed in the course of its application to specific groups of men.

Neither the evangelistic method nor the social work approach of the Salvation Army were new. They were, in fact, the traditional methods of revivalists and evangelicals. The only difference was that they were dressed in a new uniform and spoke with a different accent. They were popularized and even vulgarized. It is the differences which accounted for the ability of the Salvation Army to fire the nation's imagination and carve a secure place for itself in the nation's heart.

To evaluate the success of the Salvation Army would require a complex investigation. The rapport which was evident between its early officers and the masses point in the direction of it being a success. Similarly, the rapid development and worldwide growth of the army would suggest it was a success. On the other hand, hard questions need to be asked about

1 ibid., See also W. Booth, The Future of Missions and the Missions of the Future (London, 1889) in which Booth protests the pointlessness of civilizing the heathen when what they needed was saving.

how many of their converts were transfers from other, particularly Nonconformist denominations¹ and how many of their converts were really from the working classes. Doubts have been raised in both these areas. Inglis also suggests that Booth suffered from the same problems as other charismatic leaders.² It is one thing to start the fire but it is another thing to keep it going. In becoming a General, Booth made provision for his charisma to be institutionalized. But institutionalized charismatics usually find it more difficult to sustain the rate of growth than pure charismatics. By the end of the century Booth, too, found that the rapid expansion of the army through conversion growth in England was over.

If the aim of the Salvation Army was to wage war on the forces of secularism then it was, in the long term, no more successful in defeating their advance than others had been. If it was to harry the enemy in all its manifest forms of evil and to deliver some from occupied territory and offer them freedom, then for some years at least it was the most effective arm of the Divine Army that England knew.

1 Gay, op. cit., p. 156.

2 Inglis, op. cit., pp. 212-214.

B.6 The Society of Friends

When James Bennett wrote his History of Dissenters in 1839, he was able to record with a fair degree of certainty that the Society of Friends were not much involved in missions.¹ After An Appeal to the Society of Friends, on behalf of missions, by a Member of that Society, a few ill-prepared attempts at overseas missionary work were attempted but they were brief exceptions to the general position of the Society. By the time that Skeats and Miall came to write their general history of Nonconformists in 1891, however, the situation was different. They asserted that the Society of Friends had, during the previous forty years, been engaged in Foreign missions and home evangelisation in what, for them, was an unprecedented way.²

The settled character of Quakerism was that of an introversionist sect.³ It did not usually concern itself therefore, with evangelism. It was more concerned to shun the world than engage it and to maintain the purity of its members by an elaborate mechanism of exclusivist practices. Such a position prevented the Society of Friends from enjoying the expansion experienced by revived Dissent at the beginning of the century and militated against any active policy of recruitment.⁴ Given that context, two essential features of Quaker home missions can be stated. Firstly, their engagement in home missionary activity was fitful rather than constant and it was often the province of the deviants. Secondly, it was not concerned to convert people to a theological system but rather

1 J. Bennett, The History of Dissenters during the last thirty years from 1808 to 1838 (London, 1839), pp. 362-364.

2 Skeats and Miall, op. cit., p. 720.

3 Wilson, op. cit., p. 28.

4 A. D. Gilbert, Religion and Society, op. cit., p. 36 and p. 87f.

to engage in a wide range of activity for the betterment of society. If conversion took place it was due to inner illumination rather than external persuasion.¹

The periods when the Society of Friends were most concerned with home missions coincided with the periods when evangelical theology was in the ascendancy among them. Elizabeth Isichei has pointed out that in the early decades of the nineteenth century, the Society of Friends were overcoming their distrust of other denominations, growing in sympathy with the Evangelicals and actively supporting bodies such as the British and Foreign Bible Society.² Quakerism as a whole, however, was to reject thorough evangelicalism at this stage and those members who were most implacably identified with it seceded in 1836.

The seceders were led by Isaac Crewdson and were concentrated in Manchester. Some seceders joined other denominations but those who followed Crewdson formed the Evangelical Friends. They rejected the distinctive practices of Quakerism, such as birthright membership and silent worship, and adopted the practices of other dissenting bodies. Their services became indistinguishable from other dissenting services and baptism and communion were administered. They also, unlike most Quakers, established a large Sunday School and aimed for child conversions. The seceders only remained a distinct group until 1844, when Crewdson died. Its members then either joined Anglican churches or Brethren meetings.³

1 D. M. Thompson, op. cit., p. 39f.

2 E. Isichei, Victorian Quakers (Oxford, 1970), pp. xxi and xxvf.

3 ibid., pp. 45-53 and p. 260 and Geoffrey Hubbard, Quaker by Convincement (Harmondsworth, 1974), p. 57.

It was in the second half of the century that the evangelical strain which had remained within the Society of Friends was to have its maximum effect in regard to home missions. Many of the distinctive elements of Quakerism were eroded in the 1850s with, for example, marriage to non-Quakers being permitted from 1859 and 'peculiarities' being made optional in 1860.¹ The new openness together with the fear of decline² combined to encourage a new willingness to adopt evangelistic methods. These remained common for about thirty years before, in Isichei's view, succumbing to the inroads of liberal theology.³ The two chief expressions of evangelistic concern were to be seen in the Home Missionary Committee and the refashioning of Quaker worship.

The Home Missionary Committee were appointed in 1881 as a direct outcome of Moody and Sankey's visits to England. It met the desire of many Quakers for revivalist services by providing a band of young men who were willing and able to conduct them. The missionary carried out his operations through preaching, Sunday School work, tract distribution and so on. In other words he behaved in a way identical to his evangelical counterparts in other denominations. The formal recognition of the existence of such evangelists, which was given by the setting up of a committee in 1881, caused not a little unease within Quakerism. At first the committee was only appointed for one year and its annual re-appointment for some years after that caused controversy. Nonetheless the work grew and by 1893 the committee was responsible for forty three missionaries.⁴

1 Isichei, op. cit., pp. 158-165.

2 Expressed, e.g. in J. S. Rowntree, Quakerism: Past and Present: being an Inquiry into the causes of its Decline in Britain and Ireland (London, 1859), passim.

3 Isichei, op. cit., p. 9.

4 ibid., p. 99f.

The concern of the missionaries to save souls was out of step with the great traditions of Quakerism. Moreover, as individuals they do not seem to have shared the usual cultured and educated character of middle class Friends. By the twentieth century, therefore, with the re-emergence of more traditional Quakerism, changes in their job descriptions were introduced which gradually led to their demise as evangelical missionaries.¹

A parallel but not identical development was the emergence of mission services. Mission Meetings had a slightly earlier origin than the Home Missioners, being a spontaneous response in the 1860s to the unsuitable nature of existing Quaker worship for any who were not already committed Quakers. In particular, the meetings were designed to meet the needs of children and of those who attended the Adult Schools and who could not easily relate to the usual Quaker worship, which was lacking both in hymns and prepared addresses. The Mission Meetings took the form of more normal Nonconformist worship with an order of hymns, prayers and prepared sermons.²

A minority of Mission Meetings actually developed into separate churches. Their relationship with the Quakers was an uncertain one. Some encouraged their adherents to become Quakers and others did not. The Quakers themselves were uncertain whether to welcome the work and treat it as part of their own or not. It was another development which was to prove only temporary. Isichei estimates that there were at least a score of mission churches in existence by the end of the century. But their impact on Quakerism was minimal and in the twentieth century they were to decline rapidly.³

1 ibid., p. 101.

2 ibid., p. 276 and Sellers, Liverpool Nonconformity, op. cit., p. 207.

3 Isichei, op. cit., pp. 277-9.

This evangelical understanding of home missions is too narrow a framework within which to understand the Quaker perspective on home missions. Skeats and Miall's informant, who claimed in 1891 that the Society of Friends had never been so active in Home Evangelisation, was not thinking of the Home Missionary Committee or the Mission Meetings when he made that claim. He had in mind the educational and philanthropic activity of the Friends.¹

A detailed account of their work in regard to peace, slavery, temperance, prisons and education is inappropriate here and is, in any case already available.² The work of Joseph Sturge, who started an Adult School in Birmingham in 1845, which developed into an association of schools in 1847 and which resulted in 1870 in their being more scholars attached to the Society of Friends than members, is perhaps worthy of note. This work encapsulates the wider approach to missions which was so characteristic of Quakers.

The teaching in these schools was neither Bible-restricted nor doctrinally based. It was difficult for any Quaker to accept that he could impart education to another man for he believed that each man had within him an inner light which was to lead to self-illumination. Proselytism could not, therefore, be an acceptable objective for engaging in mission. Each man was encouraged to obey the light for himself and such obedience, at least in theory, did not necessarily involve identification with a Quaker Meeting. But a tension existed just at that point in Quaker philanthropy. Even if the primary purpose was not to convert people to their system, they still rejoiced that through their philanthropy they did gain many valuable members. And if they did not

1 Skeats and Miall, op. cit., pp. 720-726. Cp. Hubbard, op. cit., who entitles his chapter which is largely concerned with their philanthropic activities, 'The Effects of Evangelism'.

2 Isichei, op. cit., pp. 212-279.

gain them by this means, how else were they to recruit new members?

Reliance on the children of members being socialized into adult membership themselves was an insufficient means to enable the Society of Friends to hold its own in an expanding population. The need for recruitment was, therefore, evident and the way of philanthropy or education was seen by some, at least, as ready-made.

Within this broad framework of mission, then, the Society of Friends suffered throughout the century from an ambivalence in its attitude to the need to convert. When evangelicalism was in the ascendancy, mission as a means to recruitment was more acceptable than at other times. When evangelicalism was less influential, the Quakers involved themselves in the misfortunates of the world, to alleviate those misfortunes for the sake of the people who suffered them and to alleviate the guilt many Quakers felt because of their wealth. In all cases philanthropy was seen as fruit of the life of God within.¹ Whatever the motive, the achievements of the Quakers in the area of philanthropy was out of all proportion to their size. Their achievement in recruitment was another matter.

1 ibid., pp. 213-215.

APPENDIX C

Contemporary Evangelistic Societies together with their date of foundation and published histories.¹ The societies are interdenominational unless otherwise indicated.

1803	National Christian Education Council ² (formerly National Sunday School Union)
1804	The British and Foreign Bible Society ³
1818	British Sailors Society ⁴
1826	Bristol City Mission ⁴
1829	Liverpool City Mission ⁵
1835	London City Mission ⁵
1837	Leeds City Mission ⁶
	Manchester City Mission ⁶
1838	Darlington Town Mission
	Soldiers and Airmen's Scripture Readers Association (formerly
1844	The Shaftesbury Society ⁷ (formerly Ragged School Union)
1852	The North Shields Town Missionary Society
1853	Open Air Mission
1864	The Evangelisation Society ⁸
1865	Bow Mission (Methodist)
1866	Bethnal Green Medical Mission
1867	Scripture Union ⁹
1874	Christian Colportage Association ¹⁰
1876	Association for the free distribution of Scriptures
	Royal Sailors Rest
1881	Railway Mission
	Royal National Mission to Deep Sea Fisherman ¹¹
1882	Evangelical Tract Society
1883	Boys Brigade
1885	East End Mission (Methodist)
1886	The Faith Mission
	Manchester and Salford Methodist Mission
1888	Scripture Gift Mission ¹²
1889	Clerkenwell and Islington Medical Mission
1893	Student Christian Movement
1896	Whitechapel Mission (Methodist)
1899	Counties Evangelistic Work (Brethren)

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- 1 Source: U.K. Protestant Missions Handbook (London, 1977 and 1978)
 2 W. Watson, The History of the Sunday School Union (London, 1853)
 3 N. Cryer, Bibles Across the World (London, 1978)
 4 R. Cleves, Mission of Mercy (Bristol, 1979)
 5 J. M. Weylland, These Fifty Years (London, 1884)
 6 R. Lee, The Cry of Two Cities (London, 1927)
 7 G. Franklyn, The Shaftesbury Story (London, 1980)
 8 J. Wood, The Story of the Evangelisation Society (London, 1907)
 9 J. C. Pollock, The Good Seed (London, 1959)
 10 F. H. Wrintmore, Two Feet for God (London, 1974)
 11 E. J. Mather, Nor' Rad of the Dogger (London, 1887)
 12 Publishing Salvation (London, 1960)

APPENDIX DLECTURES

Delivered by Ministers in connection with the Christian
Instruction Society

I

A Course of Fourteen Lectures on the Evidences of some Important Facts and Events recorded in the Bible, with reference especially to the Discoveries of Modern Science and the statements of Recent Travellers, delivered at the Weigh-House Chapel, 1837-1838.

No.	Name	Title
1	Rev. J. P. Smith	The mosaic account of the Creation and Deluge, illustrated by the discoveries of modern science.
2	Rev. F. A. Cox	The scriptural account of human apostacy confirmed by reference to historical facts and ancient traditions.
3	Rev. E. Steane	Historical evidence of the antiquity of a weekly sabbath.
4	Rev. C. Stovel	The principle of propitiatory sacrifices recognised in the religious ceremonies of heathen nations.
5	Rev. J. Burnet	The call of Abraham, and subsequent separation of his descendants as a peculiar people, established on the authority of ancient history.
6	Rev. R. Redpath	The sojourn and slavery of the Hebrews in Egypt confirmed by the discoveries of modern travellers.
7	Rev. J. Fletcher	The divine legation of Moses.
8	Rev. T. Binney	The law given from Mount Sinai suited to the circumstance of man.
9	Rev. J. Young	The Extirpation of heathen nations by the Jews, in the conquest of Canaan, a righteous visitation on the enemies of God.
10	Rev. R. Anslie	The subjugation of the Jews by Nebuchadnezzar, their captivity in Babylon and subsequent return according to the edict of Cyrus, etc.
11	Rev. T. Archer	The fulfilment of prophecies regarding the destruction of Babylon, Edom, and Moab, established on the authority of general history.
12	Rev. J. Blackburn	The prophecy of Daniel regarding the four great dynasties, fulfilled in the rise and overthrow of the Babylonian, Persian, Macedonian and Roman empires.
13	Rev. W. Dorman	The prophecies of the sacred Scriptures concerning the dispersion of the Jews, confirmed by their present state amongst the different nations of the world.
14	Rev. R. Philip	Prophecies relating to the Messiah, and the time of his appearance, fulfilled in the mission of Jesus of Nazareth, and the period of his ministry, etc.

No.	Name	Title
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II

A Course of Fourteen Lectures on Important Practical Subjects, delivered at Well Street in the Year 1838.

1	Rev. H. Burder	The importance of the period of youth.
2	Rev. J. Styles	The right improvement of time.
3	Rev. J. P. Dobson	The choice of companions.
4	Rev. J. H. Hinton	The sin and folly of pride.
5	Rev. R. Vaughan	The meanness and danger of falsehood.
6	Rev. F. A. Cox	The degradation and ruin of intemperance.
7	Rev. J. Woodward	The manifold evils of impurity.
8	Rev. R. Redpath	The value of integrity.
9	Rev. J. Robinson	The mischiefs of sabbath-breaking.
10	Rev. J. Blackburn	The evils of improper books.
11	Rev. T. Binney	Objections to theatrical amusements.
12	Rev. T. Archer	Gaming and its consequences.
13	Rev. J. Bennett	The difficulties and dangers of Infidelity.
14	Rev. C. Gilbert	The certain connexion between holiness and happiness.

III

Course of Twelve Lectures on the Person, Life and Ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, delivered at Bishopsgate Chapel, 1838.

1	Rev. J. Blackburn	The eternal existence and divine manifestation of the Son of God.
2	Rev. J. H. Hinton	The incarnation of our Lord Jesus.
3	Rev. J. Burnet	The circumstances of the Birth of Christ announced by ancient predictions.
4	Rev. F. A. Cox	The early years and private life of the Saviour.
5	Rev. J. Young	The entrance of our Lord upon his public ministry.
6	Rev. A. Fletcher	The leading doctrines which our Lord taught to his disciples.
7	Rev. E. Mannering	The ministry of our Lord addressed to the poor and neglected.
8	Rev. J. Bennett	The miracles by which the Saviour confirmed his doctrines.
9	Rev. A. Tidman	The predictions of our Lord concerning the destruction of Jerusalem.
10	Rev. J. Clayton	The conduct of our Lord a pattern to his followers.
11	Rev. H. Townley	The willingness of the Saviour to die for sinners.
12	Rev. N. Harry	The death of Christ the great subject of the Christian ministry.

IV

Course of Twelve Lectures on the Vindication of the Bible, n.d.

1	Rev. J. H. Hinton	The Scriptures contain a divinely inspired revelation of the will of God.
2	Rev. J. Burnett	The best method of understanding the Sacred Book.
3	Rev. E. Steane	The reasonableness of the prominent doctrines of the Bible.

No.	Name	Title
4	Rev. C. Stovel	The practicability of the leading precepts of the inspired writings.
5	Rev. R. Redpath	The diversity of religious opinions no objection to the use of the Scriptures.
6	Rev. R. Ferguson	The historical facts recorded in the Bible credible and authentic.
7	Rev. J. Blackburn	The social evils of Christendom are not sanctioned by the Bible.
8	Rev. H. Townley	The influence of the Bible conducive to personal happiness.
9	Rev. J. Young	The accuracy of the sacred writers on scientific subjects.
10	Rev. F. A. Cox	The moral impulse imparted by the study of the Bible.
11	Rev. T. Binney	The claims of the Bible on the faith and obedience of mankind.
12	Rev. R. Ainslie	The claims of the Koran and other writers deemed sacred not to be compared with those of the Bible.

V

Twelve Lectures delivered at Hoxton Academy Chapel, 1839.

1	Rev. T. Archer	The condition of the world at the advent of Christ, and the expectation then prevalent of his appearance.
2	Rev. J. Aldis	The nature and necessity of faith in the mission of the Son of God.
3	Rev. J. Bennett	Historical confirmation of facts recorded in the New Testament.
4	Rev. J. Slye	The causes, progress and final consequences of unbelief.
5	Rev. J. Styles	The evidence of the truth of christianity derived from the miracles of Christ and his apostles.
6	Rev. E. Mannering	The doctrine of personal responsibility.
7	Rev. H. Townley	The truth of christianity derived from the resurrection of Christ.
8	Rev. J. Clayton, jun.	The christian atonement the only means of reconciliation with God.
9	Rev. J. Blackburn	The evidence of the truth of christianity arising from its influence in the formation of character.
10	Rev. J. Burnet	A renovation of heart essential to a state of salvation.
11	Rev. S. J. Davis	Internal evidences of the inspiration of the New Testament.
12	Rev. R. Philip	The doctrine of a final judgment and future retribution.

VI

Nine Lectures on the Influence of Religion on Mankind, at Orange St. Chapel,

1	Rev. J. Blackburn	The original constitution of man as a creature of God.
2	Rev. T. Archer	The apostacy of man from his Maker.

No.	Name	Title
3	Rev. R. W. Overbury	The condition of mankind the effect of their apostacy from God.
4	Rev. A. Tidman	The eternal prospects of mankind as alienated from God.
5	Rev. J. Robinson	The remedial character of revealed religion.
6	Rev. J. Fletcher	The transformation of man essential to the favour of God.
7	Rev. C. Stovel	Man alone permanently happy in the belief of the truth.
8	Rev. Andrew Fuller	The influence of true religion on domestic happiness.
9	Rev. J. Styles	The effects of christianity upon human society.

VII

Thirteen Lectures again Socialism, delivered at Eagle Street, 1839-40.

1	Rev. F. A. Cox	The nature and design of moral government.
2	Rev. J. Styles	The supreme power by whom the universe is governed.
3	Rev. J. Robinson	The claim of the Supreme on the homage and worship of his creatures.
4	Rev. J. H. Hinton	The responsibility of intelligent creatures.
5	Rev. J. Woodwark	The reasonableness of a divine revelation.
6	Rev. J. Aldis	The necessity of a divine revelation to instruct intelligent creatures.
7	Rev. T. Archer	The causes which operate to induce a rejection of divine revelation.
8	Rev. J. Blackburn	The divine institution and sacred obligations of marriage.
9	Rev. A. Fletcher	Degraded condition of communities rejecting religious obligations.
10	Rev. S. Green	The adaptation of christianity to the promotion of happiness.
11	Rev. C. Stovel	The necessary connection between sin and suffering.
12	Rev. J. Aldis	The immortality of the soul, etc.
13	Rev. J. Burnet	The doctrine of future and eternal rewards and punishments.

VIII

A Course of Twelve Lectures at Albion Chapel, on Human Happiness, n.d.

1	Rev. J. Aldis	Mankind are generally unhappy.
2	Rev. W. Aitken	Man was made to be happy.
3	Rev. R. Redpath	The primary cause of the misery of man.
4	Rev. C. Stovel	The personal causes of human misery.
5	Rev. J. Woodwark	The domestic causes of human misery.
6	Rev. J. Burnet	False Methods adopted to obtain Happiness.
7	Rev. J. Robinson	The Social causes of Human Misery.
8	Rev. J. Blackburn	The Temptations of those who are Unhappy.
9	Rev. G. Clayton	Happiness attainable in this life.
10	Rev. J. H. Hinton	What constitutes a truly happy life.
11	Rev. A. G. Fuller	Happiness is not dependent upon our external circumstances.
12	Rev. J. Young	On the hope of being happy for aye.

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