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1990 Congregational Studies Conference Papers

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Congregational Studies Conference Papers 1990

John Semper,
Leighton James
and
Ian Rees

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

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Foreword

Once again our one day Congregational Studies Conference covered a variety of topics (the training of ministers, translation work, and the work of the Spirit) and took us to a number of places, England (David Bogue), China (Griffith John), and America (Jonathan Edwards). We are grateful, once again, to the speakers for the stimulation and help provided by their papers. Readers will appreciate that the opinions expressed in the papers are not necessarily those of an Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches.

Our aim, as before, was to create an interest and appetite for further reading and study, both of men and movements which constitute our Congregational history. It is our conviction that the Conference should be 'popular', suited to the understanding of ordinary people, and yet at the same time provide food for more thought.

Those who might like to pursue further the topics covered by this year's papers are recommended to the facilities of the Evangelical Library and the Dr Williams' Library, which now houses the Congregational Library. The Evangelical Library is at 78a Chiltern Street, London, W1M 2HB; and the Dr Williams' Library is at 14 Gordon Square, London, WC1H 0AG.

Next year's Conference will be held at Westminster Chapel on Saturday 16 March when we hope to have studies in the teaching and doctrinal innovations of RW Dale, in the life and ministry of Joseph Parker, and on the lessons for Church growth and development to be gained from an in-depth historical study of one of our own congregations.

Derek Swann

Conference Chairman

David Bogue—A Man For All Seasons

John Semper

David Bogue? Who was he? Most people have never heard of him, though he has experienced a partial resurrection through articles in recent years in the Banner of Truth, Foundations, and in a paper given at this conference in 1982 by Mr David Boorman on the London Missionary Society. Does he merit our attention today, some 165 years after his death? Does he fit the description we have given him, once used of a Catholic Chancellor, 'a man for all seasons?' I would venture to answer 'yes' to both questions. Iain Murray, who briefly touched on some of Bogue's achievements in his book *The Puritan Hope,* has made the very striking comment that David Bogue is: 'one of the greatest of the forgotten figures of Church History'. That is no mean accolade, coming from such a source. He was a man who met and dealt with all the various contingencies of his day with calmness and enthusiasm. I was tempted to call him a Calvinistic activist, simply because of the extent of his interests and concerns, but decided that perhaps activism has an unfortunate connotation in our day. That he was a giant in the land, I trust we shall discover, though there is only time for a broad outline of his achievements. More than that however, I believe that he was a man to whom we can relate, both as Christians and ministers. He does not overwhelm us, as do some of the greats. He has the common touch, and he shows us what may be accomplished for the Kingdom of Christ by one man in the course of his lifetime, in a comparatively obscure corner of God's vineyard.

Background

Bogue lived in stirring times, both politically and spiritually! He was born five years after the 'forty-five' rebellion, and lived through the American War of Independence, the French Revolution and the rise and fall of Napoleon Bonaparte. Incidentally, a translation of some of Bogue's writings was found among Napoleon's possessions after his death, marked with the Emperor's own hand! They were exciting and stimulating days, with the rise and fall of hopes for liberty in France, the real danger of a French invasion (still evidenced by the Martello towers around our coasts), and the strong reaction that set in, both in the public mind and in government, at the excesses of the Revolution, a reaction which could not totally suppress the demands for reform, which culminated in the Reform Act of 1832, just seven years after Bogue's death.

Spiritually, Bogue lived through the days of the Evangelical Awakening and of the Forgotten Revival which Paul Cook has ably documented and which continued well into the nineteenth century. By the time Bogue took up the

charge of the Independent church at Gosport in Hampshire, Whitefield had been dead for seven years, and Wesley was consolidating the Methodist connexion. We need to remember that these were times of the Spirit's blessing and activity in virtually all evangelical churches, and that each year at Gosport there were conversions and admissions to church membership, not perhaps in spectacular numbers but certainly additions. I mention this to draw attention to two matters. The first is that not all Independent churches of the day were of the same calibre as Bogue's. The sad effects of an unregenerate ministry were beginning to be manifested, perhaps even being deliberately encouraged by some. The second matter is the apparent lack of interaction between Bogue's ministry and the ongoing work of revival. He mixed with those who were involved in it in the establishment of the London Missionary Society—Thomas Haweis (the Anglican), Rowland Hill, and the Haldanes. He preached in the great churches that Whitefield had established in London and Bristol, but there seems to be a great dearth of information as to the extent of the revival's influence upon his own ministry. He records that he had heard both John and Charles Wesley preach, but left no comments on their ministry.

Sketch of life

Let me introduce you to David Bogue himself with a brief overview of his life. He was born at Dowlan, in the parish of Coldingham in Berwickshire on 1 March 1750 (18 February according to the old reckoning on the Julian calendar), the fourth son and sixth child of John Bogue of Hallydown, who was both laird (landlord) and Justice of the Peace. The estate had been purchased and the family moved there while Bogue was still quite young. Both sides of his family suffered persecution during the reigns of James I and the later Stuarts, and Bogue refers to them as: 'the accursed government of the Stuarts' in a letter of 26 October 1819 to his sister, describing how his grandfather had been forced to escape the soldiers, and commending the Presbyterian practise of putting wool in their ears when forced by law to listen to the imposed episcopal minister! He seems to have had a happy relationship with his parents, corresponding with them from far away in England and visiting them for holidays whenever possible.

He, like Timothy, had been taught the Scriptures from his earliest days, together with the Shorter Catechism, and he thanked his father in a letter of 1776 for: 'a pious example and a good education, both of which we have had, … the greatest blessing that can be bestowed upon a son'. His education included some time at Eyemouth Grammar School, but probably more at the grammar school at Dunse, under a Mr Cruikshanks who was apparently noted for his ability, severity and success in training up his students. Certainly Bogue

received a solid grounding in Latin and classical literature which was to stand him in good stead later, without however giving him a distracting taste for such things.

He moved to Edinburgh University in 1762, when only twelve years old, but remained there for nine years until he graduated MA in March 1771. It was typical of him that he never made use of the letters he was entitled to add to his name (and this applied to his later DD from Yale too). While at college he delighted in natural philosophy, gave great attention to Latin and Greek, with a view to the ministry, but did not make much progress in Hebrew. He spent the summers at home. Of that period, two theses in Latin survive—one on the primacy of Peter, which maintained the orthodox doctrine of the equality of the apostles, and the second one on the extent of Christ's death, in which he emphasises that the question does not centre on the sufficiency of Christ's death, but rather on whether he died equally in the place of the lost and saved. He goes on to defend the Calvinistic position.

During these years, he came to an experience of salvation which he kept strictly hidden from others. He had probably been converted before leaving home for University, and had been much blessed by attending a small 'fellowship meeting' in the parish which met for prayer. He always enquired about the various members of the meeting, even when far away in Gosport, and actually sent financial support for several years to one of them. As a pastor and teacher, he was quite clear on the necessity of regeneration, and has therefore been criticised for not revealing his own experience. However, he had determined from his earliest days never to talk about himself, and Bennet, his biographer and former student, found that no familiarity or inducement could make him change his mind. When we view the abuse of testimonies in our own day, perhaps Bogue had and made a point in not satisfying our curiosity!

At the end of his studies in Edinburgh, he was licensed to preach in the Church of Scotland, and he might well have been presented to the living of his home parish, Coldingham, by its patron, Lord Marchmont. The difficulty was that both he and his father were totally unconvinced of the validity of patronage, and Bogue accepted his father's advice to move to London. Before setting out, he solemnly consecrated himself and his life to the service and glory of God. In London he became assistant teacher to a school in Edmonton, then in Hampstead, and finally with the Rev. William Smith, who was himself from Scotland. Smith was the pastor of the church meeting in Silver Street, London, and of a work in Camberwell; he also maintained a school in Chelsea. It soon became Bogue's responsibility to take the morning service at Silver Street, and to teach in the school, although he actually preached his first sermon in March 1772, at the age of twenty-two, in a Scots meeting-house in

Wapping. He did not, however, gravitate to the strong Scottish connection in London or to Presbyterianism. After three years at Silver Street, he received a call to Gosport in 1777, and remained with the Independent church there for forty-eight years until his death in 1825.

The other chief events of his life can be briefly told as they will reappear later. From around 1780, he began to act as tutor to a number of young men, including the Haldane brothers, and this developed in 1789 into the formation of an academy for preparing men for the Independent ministry. In addition to his pastoral and tutorial work, he was already actively involved in promoting missionary concern, particularly through his famous Salter's Hall sermon on 30 March 1792 and his article in the Evangelical Magazine for September 1794. This culminated in the foundation of the London Missionary Society in 1795. There were differences with some of the other leaders of this society in the early years over the training of missionaries, but eventually his pleas for adequate preparation prevailed. As the most suitable candidate, he was asked in 1800 to become the tutor of the country's first missionary training college. He continued actively in all this work, despite sad family bereavements, involving the loss of his wife and three of his four sons, until he died in harness, attending missionary meetings in Brighton, on 25 October 1825 at the age of seventy-five.

From Presbyterianism to Independency

We might well ask why such a man, brought up and trained in Edinburgh in the Presbyterian system, spent over fifty years of ministry in Independent churches. It was certainly not because openings were not available to him. It is possible to suggest, tongue in cheek, that perhaps he had a measure of Independency in his genes, since his great-grandmother, Agnes Crooks, was the daughter of one of Cromwell's officers who settled at Dowlan after the campaigns in Scotland. More seriously, are we reading too much between the lines in seeing the little fellowship meeting in the parish of Coldingham, which was so influential in his spiritual developement, as really a kind of 'ecclesiola in ecclesia'. This was the sort of thing that John Newton had to resort to, in order to make a distinction between the godly and his other parishioners who, although unregenerate, still had certain ecclesiastical rights within a parish of the established church. This has always been one of the great problems which evangelicals remaining within an establishment of any kind have had to face.

What we do know for certain is that there was a heated argument between Bogue's father and the patron of Coldingham parish over the question of patronage. This had been abolished reluctantly by William III in 1690, but reimposed on the Church of Scotland by Queen Anne in 1712 without any

consultation with the church. This Act restored patronage as it had been in 1592, and resulted in much controversy over the intrusion of unworthy ministers into parishes against the wishes of the people. Such disputes were of course, going to come to a head in the disruption of 1843 (though not the sole reason for it). If the door into the established church in Scotland now seemed closed on principle, where was a young man, already licensed to preach, to go? I think it is significant that, although Bogue was still corresponding with many of his friends from college days, he did not seek, as some of them were doing, openings in the alternative Presbyterian churches of his day. Some were entering the Secession Church, already divided over the Burgess Oath issue, others the Relief Presbytery, which was looking for: 'serious, well disposed lads'. In the letters which passed between them, there is also mention of further violent settlements of ministers on protesting parishes, of the struggle for the moderatorship of the General Assembly and of the almost political rivalry for a popular Edinburgh church, for which twelve candidates were competing. To a man of Bogue's spirituality and sensitivity, such jostling by ministers for churches, or even by churches for ministers could only be distressing and distasteful.

Thus, when he set out, with his father's encouragement, for London, he did not follow his friends' suggestion, to put himself under the wing of one of a number of Scottish ministers in the capital who were Presbyterian in sentiment. Nor had he accepted the advice given by Mr William Anderson before he set out, that he should 'pass trials at the presbytery, and preach once or twice in public, and then set out for this place'. He maintained his Scottish connections, preached his first sermon to a Church of Scotland congregation, and worked with ministers of the Scottish churches in London in the foundation of the London Missionary Society, but declined the lucrative ofter of the Scots church in Amsterdam. By this time he was a convinced dissenter from both Anglican and Presbyterian establishments. He was firm in his denial of the right of the state to interfere in spiritual affairs. Having known little of the Independents while in Scotland, and having been providentially thrown among them in London, he came gradually to an acceptance of their principles. In particular, he came to differ fundamentally from his many friends in Scotland on the admission of only those who were clearly regenerate to the membership of a church.

If he had any desire to return either to Scotland or to Presbyterianism, he had the opportunity in the offer of the prestigious West Church in Edinburgh, an evangelical stronghold, as the colleague of Sir Henry Moncrieff, but he declined the honour and remained in Gosport. In fact, his support for the principles of Independency or Congregationalism was more positive than that.

He gave every encouragement to the ministry of the Haldanes and others throughout Scotland, which led quite dramatically to the establishing of Congregationalism in that country. By his death there were seventy-two churches in existence, where previously there had been virtually none. As one of the chief supporters of the work, he was invited to preach at the opening of the one-thousand seated Aberdeen chapel in September 1798, but delegated the task to James Bennett, who constituted a church of nine members, the first in northern Scotland.

However, Bogue was not insular in his thinking, or an isolationist in his relationships. He was a strong Association man, never missing the half-yearly meetings of the Hampshire Association (except once through illness), and often making valuable contributions to its discussions, worship and planning. As Bennett puts it: 'he was not wedded to the nick-knacks of any denomination', and he certainly rejoiced in the working together of ministers from many backgrounds in the London Missionary Society. Preaching at the final evening of its enthusiastic inception, he declared: 'We are called this evening to the funeral of bigotry; and I hope it will be buried so deep as never to rise again'. Unfortunately it did!

Pastor and Preacher

After three years of preparatory work at Silver Street, David Bogue spent forty-eight years of pastoral ministry at Gosport, despite invitations to move to London, Scotland and elsewhere. That in and of itself was no mean feat. During his time at Gosport he was preaching three times each Sunday and once midweek right up to the time of his death, although his students helped in the preliminary parts of some of the services.

He came to a church at Gosport which was sadly divided, and which had suffered a secession of some of its members to form another cause in the town. His predecessor, James Watson, had left the ministry to take up a career in law, and Bogue's friends advised him against accepting such a difficult work. This did not discourage him in any way, once he was sure that this was where the Lord would have him labour, but he objected strongly to the idea of 'preaching with a view'. Within a year of his arrival at Gosport the breach in the church had been healed, to such an extent that the minister of the new cause was won over and willing to resign in order to facilitate the return of his members to the parent church. Bogue, with deep understanding of and sensitivity for the man's position, suggested that his own people should make the first advances towards reunion. During his ministry, a large new chapel was built, seating one thousand people. Remember that Gosport at this time had only some five thousand inhabitants!

Bogue had no doubts whatsoever on the inspiration of the Scriptures and he believed absolutely in the primacy of preaching in the ministry at home and for missionary work abroad. This was underlined to his students. His own preaching was noted for its careful preparation, with methodical examination of the commentaries available before working out his own outline. Several courses of sermons were prepared, and apparently he preached from them on alternate Sabbaths to avoid sameness. Quite a novel idea for expository preachers! At one stage he felt he was dealing with passages of Scripture in too much detail, and set about increasing the amount of Scripture that he was bringing before his people. In fact, he was always looking for ways of improving his preaching. In everything there was calculated simplicity. He had a pastor's heart and a concern for the poorest and most illiterate of his hearers. This again he emphasised to his students, and he was the first to practise what he preached. He was criticised by some of his admirers for not exhibiting the elegance and sophistication that might have made him a preacher of distinction, but he preferred plainness. He comments in his diary (which he commenced in 1773, and which is copiously quoted in Bennett), on the eighth anniversary of his ordination (1785), that he sees more and more that plain and serious preaching is the most useful and that much which is elaborate is thrown away. All preachers take note! He does not seem to have had a particular gift for illustration, and only occasionally produced striking thoughts and expressions. He was not gifted in memorising what he wanted to say, and therefore prepared only outlines.

In fact there are few samples of his preaching available, and they are mostly sermons preached on special occasions: before the Religious Tract Society, at an annual meeting of the London Missionary Society, at a meeting to promote the Protestant Dissenter's Grammar School, and so on. We know little of what he preached Sunday by Sunday to his own congregation. What he did preach, with that increasing simplicity and plainness, produced some quite remarkable effects. While expounding: 'How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?' one person became so agitated that she rushed with a shriek from the building. On another occasion, he was requested to come and speak with somebody who was in great spiritual anguish as a result of what was said in the sermon, and who was 'bewailing the guilt of their sin and their want of love to Christ'. These were revival times and the Spirit of God was abroad. How we would love to see such conviction produced by preaching today. The church at Gosport grew, both numerically and spiritually, despite losses to new causes in the town. He admitted thirteen members in his first year and, forty-eight years later, fifteen in his last, but not through any special excitement of the feelings. There was 'no noise, no rant or grimace—all was rational, instructive and

evangelical', says Bennett. 'He was a modest, humble, plain preacher' who desired 'so to present truth as to swallow up the whole attention of his hearers, and make them unconscious of the medium.' His preaching often produced a great sense of the awefulness of God.

That is not to say that there were not dramatic occasions, such as when the husband of a woman who attended the chapel and later became a member, appeared very drunk in the middle of the congregation and took aim with his pistol at the minister! Bogue attended his examination by magistrates the following day, recommended no severity, and spent time in conversation with the man. He was quite affected by this and gave a promise of future good behaviour. He agreed to his wife continuing to attend the chapel and occasionally joined her himself! Special occasions were also used to good effect, as when the Royal George, a large man-of-war, sank at Spithead with between five and six hundred men, women and children drowned in a moment of time. The text on 1 September 1782 was Psalm 36:6, 'Thy judgements are a great deep,' and it created quite an impression.

He was a man of deep pastoral concern, who overcame his natural diffidence, which might have kept him aloof and distant from his people. Strangers felt that he was rather reserved, and the gravity of his appearance contributed to this mistaken conclusion. In a funeral sermon, preached by Robert Winter at Gosport eight days after his death, he is described as a 'wise and faithful counsellor, entering into the situations of his friends', giving advice with readiness, kindness and impartiality. Even allowing for the enthusiasm of funeral sermons, he was noted as a 'tender, sympathising, ardent and disinterested friend', showing on his pastoral visits a real concern for the sorrows of his flock, and also for those who faced serious problems or had been wounded by sin.

The academy at Gosport

The academy of which Bogue was the principal, and for a considerable time the only, teacher come into existence in an almost casual way. At first, from 1780 onwards, he undertook the tutoring of several young men, for their general education, which his experience in three separate academies in London had well equipped him for. His pupils included the Haldane brothers, and with Robert he maintained a lifelong friendship.

A more dramatic and significant development took place in 1789 when, through the generosity of George Welch and two others, he took in his first three students to prepare for the ministry. The course was to last three years and he was to be paid ten pounds per student. It was part of a larger scheme to establish three such seminaries in different parts of the country, under the care of faithful

evangelical ministers, in order to supply the lack of evangelical preachers. Welch, a London banker, had already discussed the serious state of things with William Jay of Bath. They were much exercised about the increasingly 'unregenerate ministry', the kind of dry, scholarly refinement that John Angell James and his mother suffered under at Blandford Forum in Dorset.

They were right to be concerned. In the older seminaries, deliberate efforts were being made to infiltrate the ministry, in much the same way as modernism has done in more recent times. Unitarian sentiments widely prevailed, according to Waddington, in the academies of Hoxton, Carmarthen and Daventry and were the opinion of the majority of students entering the ministry in 1789. The amazing and frightening aspect of all this is that these students were still being invited by some of the leading congregations in the country to become their pastors. James Yates actually proposed the founding of a 'respectable academy, moderately orthodox, to receive all those pupils who would otherwise go to the Independent academies. By this plan, many young men who would otherwise be violently bigoted and enthusiastic (i.e. evangelical!) would be gained to the rational system and make thousands of proselytes.'

So the academies that gathered around the ministry of Cornelius Winter at Marlborough, David Bogue at Gosport and William Roby at Manchester were part of a very necessary provision for the continuance of an evangelical ministry, which was becoming more and more difficult to find in the existing academies. They were there to meet a real need and they did just that. William Jay, who had himself been a student under Winter before the inception of Welch's scheme, comments:

> If … the chief design of the ministry is to preach … should not everything in the preparation be made to bear principally upon it? And is this unceasingly and obviously the case in all our existing institutions?

He goes on to suggest that the emphasis on mathematics and classics may in fact disqualify rather than help in the preparation for the ministry, by leading students into attractive by-paths and making their preaching less intelligible to the majority of their hearers. Bogue and Bennett are saying much the same thing in their joint History of Dissenters:

> Many came out of the new academies with so much attachment to divine truth and such solicitude for the salvation of men, that they proved far greater blessing to the church than the arianised or latitudinarian divines which issued from some seats of learning.

A fight was on to supply Independent pulpits with evangelical ministers, as a 'downgrade' was rapidly overtaking many of the existing seminaries. In an

interesting account of Gosport, in The Life and Letters of John Angell James (who trained there), RW Dale states in 1861 that 'the system of ministerial education has undergone a complete transformation', and that 'Mr James' account of his life at Gosport … has all the interest that belongs to a trustworthy account of customs now almost obsolete'. One detects even in the comments of Bogue's students, Bennett and James, the slight hankering after the elegance, the refinement, the breadth of education which were markedly lacking at Gosport, but which were to be the bane of ministerial training and the death-knell of evangelicalism in many pulpits. It is perhaps surprising to find James writing to his brother in 1811 about where to train for the ministry:

> I must enter my protest at once against Gosport. I have various objections to your going there. The plan of education is, and must be from the shortness of the time and the important engagements of the tutors, exceedingly defective.

He preferred Hoxton or Homerton, and believed that it was not a sufficient objection 'to deter a pious young man from going there, that there have been several of the students who proved Socinian'.

Things at Gosport were very different even when, through the generosity of Robert Haldane, the number of students increased. They still met in the plain vestry adjoining the chapel, measuring thirty by eighteen feet, which was sparsely furnished with a table and principal's chair and with rough benchs for the students. Bogue's own library, which was used by the students, was also housed there. Later he refused compensation from the LMS for the wear and tear on his library due to student use! The students lodged first of all in cottages on either side of the path leading to the chapel and later, when too numerous, with other members of the congregation in the town. This has been criticised by some as disadvantageous to a sense of community and godliness but in fact the herding together of young and impressionable men may, as we well know, have just the opposite effect. It is invidious to make comparison with what we might expect in an evangelical theological college today. Bogue was working in a different age, in different circumstances, with very limited resources but still proving himself a man for all seasons. The content of the courses taught, and Bogue prepared eight of them, comprising 120 lectures, was not superficial or insignificant. Dogmatic theology took pride of place and covered the Divine Decrees, Creation, Angels, Original Sin, the Person of Christ, the Covenant of Grace, the Freedom of the Will, Regeneration, Justification, the General Judgement, Hell and Heaven among other subjects. James arrived when they had reached The Freedom of the Will, for which the required reading was Jonathan Edwards' treatise, and this completely floored him for a time! Bogue was, incidentally, much influenced by the writings of

Edwards. Other courses included Divine Revelation, Divine Dispensations, Church History from the Creation to the eighteenth century(!), Jewish Antiquities, Sacred Geography, Composition of Sermons, the Pastoral Office and eighteen lectures on Homiletics. Bogue was a very practical man, even advising the students on the proportion of a minister's income to be spent on books, a perennial problem, how a minister should dress—according to the place in which he lived—what amusements he should indulge in and what he should shun, and what kind of wife to choose and when to marry. In addition to piety in a wife they were to look for 'good temper' for 'God can dwell in the heart when men cannot dwell in the same home'. They were first to be married to a church and then to a wife, as he himself was.

All this, in addition to training in Latin and Greek, and towards the end of the course Hebrew, cannot have sent out men who were utterly unprepared for the ministry or imperfectly acquainted with the Scriptures. Bogue's aim, above all, was to send them out with a spiritual zeal and enthusiasm for preaching the Gospel. It is significant that none of 200 students trained at Gosport defected from the faith. The same could not be said of Doddridge's academy at Northampton. Some sixty of these were trained alongside the missionary candidates whom Bogue took on board from 1800.

The London Missionary Society and the Training of Missionaries

Although a number of ministers from various denominations played a leading part in the foundation of the society it would be true to say that David Bogue kindled the spark. We have already mentioned the sermon at Salter's Hall on 30 March 1792, which was given before the Correspondent Board in London of the Scottish Society for the Propagating of Christian Knowledge. Its work was chiefly in the Highlands and Islands but it had also sponsored the work of David Brainerd. Bogue's sermon is a moving address, well reasoned and very challenging, which is still worth reading. He is by no means an adherent of the romantic school of the noble savage, which is the ground of modern humanistic attack upon missionaries. He held firmly to the views expressed by Paul in Romans 1. However he is also convinced of the guilt, coldness and lack of zeal of so many Christians for the glory of God and the salvation of their fellow creatures. They have plenty of zeal for parties and modes of worship (nothing changes!) but little for the spread of the Gospel. Rome, he declares, has shown more zeal and sent out more missionaries than the Protestant churches. He reminds them of their obligation to repay what men did in bringing the Gospel to our own shores and urges the emulation of 'Cromwell's plan for a society of the most pious and learned of the land for propagating Christianity among the heathen and mohametan nations', a plan which, of course, died with him.

It is worth noting that Bogue's concern and sermon precede Carey's famous sermon in Nottingham in May 1792 and the formation of the Baptist Missionary Society in the October of the same year. There was obviously an inter-reaction between the two movements but not a dependence of one on the other. For instance Bogue and James Stephen, minister of the Scots church at Covent Garden, were preaching in Bristol, at Whitefield's tabernacle, in the summer of 1794 and met with John Ryland who showed them the first letter that had arrived from William Carey. This stimulated Bogue still further and in September 1794 came the article in the *Evangelical Magazine* addressed 'To the Evangelical Dissenters who practise Infant Baptism'. He writes that everybody else has done something and lists their efforts. 'We alone are idle. It is full time to begin. We are able. Our number is great … Nothing is wanted but for some persons to stand forward, and to begin.' He presents motives for commencing the work, encouragements to do so, and outlines the means by which it might be acheived. 'In every age of the Church the propagation of the Gospel has been by means of the preaching of the ministers of Jesus Christ. By this same method are we to propagate the Gospel now.' Even at this early stage he was arguing that zealous, well-qualified men would still require some instruction before setting out and that it would be necessary to found a seminary to train them for the work. Having done so, 'an able and eminently pious minister, in a central situation, must be sought for to superintend it'. He clearly thought he was not really in that league, and that he was safe in the backwater of Gosport!

There is not time to document all the events leading up to the founding of the LMS in 1795, at meetings in London lasting over three days. This has been well documented by Mr Boorman. Bogue gave the final address on the Thursday evening, based on Haggai 1:2, in which he anticipated ten objections that there might be to the formation of such a society. These included: 'The work is so very arduous!' 'The time for the conversion of the heathen is not yet come'; 'The governments of the world will oppose the plan and defeat it' (there was a measure of truth in this objection as he himself was to find later); 'Where will we find the proper persons to undertake the work?' 'Where will the support come from?' 'What right have we to interfere with the religion of other nations?' (a modern ring); and 'We have heathens enough at home'. He lived for the conversion of the heathen and this was no merely academic interest. He gave himself to the awakening of interest and support, and was still doing this at the time of his death thirty years later. More than that he was willing to go himself, at what was then considered the somewhat advanced age of forty-six! It was only the machinations and opposition of the East India Company which prevented his departure with Robert Haldane and two others to India, to preach the word and to found a seminary to train nationals for the

same purpose. The Lord obviously intended him to escape a massacre of Europeans which followed soon afterwards at the place where they had planned to settle. He also made two visits to France with a view to circulating the New Testament, with an introduction he himself had carefully written, there. He preached in the open air to French prisoners of war at nearby Portchester Castle in July 1798. There were 23,000 such prisoners in the country. He preached and prayed on board ship with the seven attendants of the deceased King and Queen of the Sandwich Islands, who were accompanying their bodies home, to such effect that one of the chiefs was much impressed, and later requested an American missionary to present his grateful thanks to the Bishop of Portsmouth!

However the early years of the society were not happy ones for the supporters of David Bogue. There was an immediate division of opinion among the directors about the sort of training, if any, required by missionaries. Most of the early missionaries were sent with very inadequate preparation and this had disastrous results. This arose from the enthusiasm and optimism with which the society was launched, and from the somewhat idealised picture that most had of pagan life in the South Seas. Richard Lovett, the historian of the LMS, comments:

> Godly men who understood the mechanic arts were by not a few of the fathers placed much higher in the scale of usefulness among uncivilised nations than the student, the preacher, the man of scholarly and disciplined mind.

News of the inadequacy and even unfaithfulness of many of the first men sent out to Tahiti, followed by the capture of the ship on which the next thirty were travelling out which led to twenty-three of them deserting the cause, brought the directors to their senses. Even so they had not found Bogue's wise words of warning, as he preached on board ship to the thirty missionaries at Portsmouth, particularly palatable:

> Some will tell you that you are in no danger of shipwreck because you carry Christ and his Gospel. But you know a certain old missionary who said 'Thrice have I suffered shipwreck; a day and a night have I been in the deep'.

By degrees, at first through a small committee in London and by pastoral care exercised by Bogue and various ministers in the country, they moved towards the establishment of the kind of seminary he had been advocating eight years earlier. This was further expedited by the offer of £500 from Robert Haldane and Robert Spear towards the founding of such a place. In July 1800, the obvious choice was made. Bogue, now aged fifty, was invited to be the tutor. He accepted in the August and from 1800 to 1825 there were 115 missionaries prepared at Gosport. There were no further defections.

As in everything else, Bogue was thorough, preparing sixteen courses containing four-hundred lectures. He was concerned about the suitability of each candidate, about his character and temperament and how these would serve him under the pressure of a totally different culture and in physical conditions never experienced before. He was a pioneer in many ways. He placed great emphasis on the mastery of the native language and told his pupils that there was no other way of reaching the people; tongues had ceased! 'The person who cannot apply himself to learn the language of the people has not the talent or application of a missionary.' It was important to know something of the cultural background and to remember how Paul addressed total pagans. He also had a Pauline emphasis in encouraging his students to go to centres of population to establish a work and then to move on, leaving the believers there to spread the work to the area around. Among the illustrious names of students from Gosport are David Jones and Thomas Bevan whose work in Madagascar has recently been brought to our attention in FG Smith's book Triumph in Death: the Story of the Malagasy Martyrs. There were Robert Morrison and William Milne and their pioneer efforts in China, Joseph Frey who worked among the Jews, and many others who travelled as far afield as the West Indies, South Africa and also South India when the veto of the East India Company was finally overthrown. Bogue followed their progress with interest and prayer. It was said of him that 'to have once had him for a tutor was … to have him for ever as your friend'.

Local Evangelism and Church Planting

Bogue was not unbalanced in his missionary enthusiasm or training. He was only too aware of the many heathen at home. He was able to use his considerable influence in the Hampshire Association of Independent Ministers to spread the Gospel throughout the county and to plant new churches. During the forty or more years he was associated with them he was busily engaged in opening new places of worship and giving charges to new ministers. He often contributed liberally to the building costs from his own pocket, the result of his own frugal way of living. Perhaps this was sometimes taken a little too far—it affected the quality of manse suppers, for which he made the apologia that the students were supping better than their Master: 'who ate worse suppers after preaching better sermons!' Some twenty-one chapels were opened and eleven new churches formed during this period. Seven of these were supporting full-time ministers. This was largely the product of a plan he devised and presented to the association when it met on the occasion of James Bennett's induction at Romsey in 1797. Typically it had been put together during one of the very few periods of illness he experienced in his long life. No

time was to be wasted! The plan was entitled Plan for Promoting the Knowledge of the Gospel in Hampshire. Twenty churches were invited by circular letter to participate and the county was divided into four districts. Every minister was encouraged to make an annual evangelistic tour.

In addition to this, Bogue used his students to good effect in the villages surrounding Gosport. Inexperienced students were sent out with a more experienced man. The practise was criticised by John Angell James, who felt that, at seventeen and a half, he had been sent out at too early an age. It does not appear to have done him a great deal of harm. By his own account he was eased gradually into the work, first of all leading the services at Ryde, Isle of Wight, then giving an address at a prayer meeting in the chapel vestry on a Sunday morning, and later conducting a service at the bedside of a godly old lady. It was in fact at Stubbington that he was unexpectedly called upon to preach by Mr Hunt, the minister.

Robert Haldane modelled his own home missionary society on Bogue's Hampshire one and evangelistic tours were made through the Highlands and Islands. Bogue preached in a number of places in Scotland on his occasional visits to his family and was welcomed into Church of Scotland pulpits. We have already mentioned the encouragement he gave to the establishing of Congregational churches in Scotland through the Haldanes. Two of his students, John Cleghorn and William Ballantyne, returned to their native land to form churches at Wick and Thurso. As if that were not enough he made two visits to Ireland on behalf of the Hibernian Society, in 1807 and 1809, preaching in many places and reporting back to the committee on the state of religion in the country. His subject on the Lord's Day morning in Dublin was: 'No man careth for my soul', which expressed his burning desire to bring the light of truth into the spiritual darkness of that land.

One final comment about his contribution to the work of the Hampshire Association. In the words of James Bennett:

> He always went in the true spirit of Christian fellowship. His prayers were admirably appropiate—entering into all the concerns of the associated churches, and he guarded with jealous care against all attempts at outshining his brethren—choosing those discourses that would edify rather than dazzle or surprise. He took great pains to do honour to his brother ministers, finding some employment for all, and by a thousand little, but endearing attentions, contriving to put more abundant honour on that which lacked.

Political Sensitivity

You may wonder whether a man who was subpœnaed to appear at the trial of Tooke, Horne, Thelwall and Hardy for treason in 1794, and was placed by the

government of the day on a list of those to be kept under surveillance, could be called politically sensitive. In fact he was not called to give evidence at the trial and we do not know whether he was actually followed about. What were the reasons for the government's suspicions?

It must be said immediately that they sprang from Bogue's great concern for liberty in and of itself. This every dissenter of those days, with knowledge of the events of 1662–1688, must have held dear, but Bogue saw, more clearly than most, that liberty was an important requirement for the preaching and expansion of the Gospel. It was for these reasons that he was encouraged by the early days of the French Revolution, as marking the end of a period of despotism and tyranny and opening up the possibility of the effective spread of evangelical Christianity in an influential and neighbouring, but spiritually neglected, state. Hence his visits and his efforts to circulate the New Testament, which we have already seen. Read today, his comments on the neglect of opportunities to evangelise areas that were being colonialised may seem harmless enough. He speaks of countries being discovered, colonised, commercialised, overrun by armies, seized, massacred, sold into slavery, but not evangelised. Such criticisms of government, as the French Revolution began its downhill run into excess and bloodshed, were suspect in the extreme reaction that ensued.

If we link such comments with his previous pamphlet seeking the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts, published in 1790, his closeness at Gosport to the mutiny at Spithead (which his detractors were quick to point out), and his exposé of the weaknesses of the established church and its persecuting spirit in his History of Dissenters, published in 1808, it is easy to see why he was on the list. As late as 1844 he was being branded by the Christian Observer as a 'bitter and somewhat revolutionary political dissenter'. Even John Newton, who recognised him as a very pious man, described him rather uncharitably as: 'bitter against the government as any Frenchman or republican in the world!' Incidentally, although Bogue did not live to see the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, which excluded from many public offices those not willing to communicate occasionally in the established church, he would have rejoiced to see their demise in 1828.

The accusations were false, and distorted by fear and alarm. On various occasions he made his political position very clear. In a letter, to the Rev. Lewis Way of Stansted, he describes his great love of political and civil liberty, and points out that the Gospel flourishes where religious liberty is enjoyed. Despotism has always been a hindrance, as at the period of the Reformation. He states freely that he had hoped that the French Revolution would produce religious liberty and thereby contribute to the spread of the Gospel, but in this

he was disappointed. He admitted reading Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* and every other publication of note concerning the Revolution, and felt that the former stated 'many of the general principles of freedom with peculiar clearness, and some of the miseries of desolation … with singular force'. He had not circulated hundreds of copies around the country as had been claimed. He then declares categorically that:

> have considered myself as restrained by my office from every active interference in the subject: not only was I never present at any political meeting, public or private, but to avoid an appearance of party, though I am entitled to vote for members of the county, I have forborne to avail myself of that privilege.

Of his students, he said:

> I tell them if the kings and great men of the earth kill one half of the inhabitants, it is their duty to save the other half!

Having made his defence let us see the positive side of his approach which perhaps, in our necessary reaction against the 'social gospel', we may have overlooked. For example he and his friend took pity on the ill-educated Hardy and, when he was acquitted, spent an evening in discussion and prayer with him, particularly in view of the fact that his wife died while he was in prison. Bogue had no wild hopes of regenerating the world. He often said 'I am more and more convinced that nothing but the Gospel of Jesus Christ will raise the world from its degraded state'. However he was noted for his sympathy and generosity to the poor, illiterate and afflicted, and also for the unemployed when work at the dockyard dried up at the end of the war. He hated any overbearing treatment of the poor. He also took time and trouble to keep up with contemporary events, both in books like Paine's and in his careful daily perusal of the newspaper. He was in fact very conscious of how events in the world around him impinged on the preaching of the Gospel.

The Educationalist

Is there no limit to this man's interests and activities? The answer is 'not really!' Anything which had a bearing on the spread of the Kingdom was meat and drink to him. In the field of secular education we find him preaching a sermon on 14 January 1808 before the promoters of the Protestant Dissenters' Grammar School, 'lately opened at Mill Hill in the parish of Hendon, Middlesex'. He preached on Proverbs 10:1, 'A wise son maketh a glad father', under two headings: 'What a good education consists of' and 'The advantages it brings'. In the first half he emphasises the value of good principles being instilled into the minds of children through the scriptures and catechisms. In the second, among other reasons, he attacks the cult of ignorance, which had

been critical of Sunday Schools and the instruction of the poor. 'Will ignorance enable persons better to perform any duties?' he enquires.

His contributions to the field of religious education were many. He was one of the first editors of the *Evangelical Magazine* and played an active part in the founding of the British and Foreign Bible Society and the Religious Tract Society, to whom he contributed their very first tract. He also preached at the latter's first anniversary meeting on 18 May 1800 on 'The diffusion of Divine Truth' from Psalm 43:3, 'O send out thy light and thy truth'. He asked Pilate's question: 'What is Truth?', and answered with five points, which I give in brief as a sample of his method. Firstly its origin is illustrious; it describes a better world; it springs from God; it is inspired by the Spirit. It shows what God is, what man is, what Jesus is, and the way sinners may be reconciled to God. Secondly how it is to be diffused: by the living voice—there have been preachers since the age of Enoch—and by writing truth. Thirdly why it should be diffused: its intrinsic excellence; the design, tendency and effects of it in the past, present and future. Fourthly some general observations: it is one great end of man's existence; our failure to do so incurs God's righteous judgement; it will meet with opposition and objections. Fifthly the method of distributing tracts has been remarkably blessed by God, is not a difficult method of doing good, and is adaptable to the different situations of men.

Publications

It will be obvious from the breadth and scope of Bogue's other activities that he did not have a surplus ot time available for writing. We do not therefore expect copious works on the scale of Owen or Edwards, although he used and recommended to his students many of the great minds such as Howe, Owen, Bates, Charnock and Baxter. He was also much influenced by Edwards, especially by his Treatise of the Religious Affections. Despite his advice to his students on book-budgeting he was known to visit the booksellers in every place he visited! He was perhaps more disciplined than most in keeping each volume before him on his desk until he had read it.

Most of his own publications were sermons or pamphlets on subjects or occasions which we have already noted, together with four or five funeral sermons, which seem to have had a particular vogue at the time. That leaves three main works which should be mentioned: his Essay on the Divine Authority of the New Testament, Discourses on the Millenium and the History of the Dissenters, written jointly with Bennett.

The essay began life as an introduction to the French New Testaments which the LMS resolved in May 1800 to produce and send to France. However it proved its usefulness in many fields, being translated into Italian

and German, and the fourth edition was printed in Malacca at the Mission Press in 1817. It must have pleased Bogue to know that it was being widely used in India among the young English officials who arrived there. It is addressed to Deists, 'those holding the principles of natural religion', and it seeks to produce arguments which are obvious from a surface reading of Scripture, without requiring any critical skill in languages or history. This is again typical of Bogue. He always sought to use commonsense arguments and to make his ideas plain and obvious. He seeks, as the preface declares, 'to address deists without bitterness and contempt, without harsh terms or furious invectives'. He seeks to defend the Gospel in its own spirit: 'Their situation is dangerous beyond expression; let them be treated with the tenderest pity: they need it.' Although called an essay it runs to 252 pages and 10 chapters dealing, among other things, with evidence for the New Testament's divine authority, from its own principles, contents and authors; from its miracles, from prophecy and from the success of the Gospel. Being directed to a particular time and situation it is perhaps a little dated but its arguments are basically sound. Were Bogue and the LMS right in thinking that complete pagans need some help in getting to grips with the Scriptures?

His second main work was Discourses on the Millenium, which consists of sermons delivered at various intervals between 1813 and 1816 to his own congregation and was published in 1818. They are practical and devotional and, as usual, simple in style. Happily they avoid much of the speculation and fanciful theories of later writings. Bogue, like most of his generation, was a post-millenialist and, as Iain Murray has shown, this had a direct bearing and impact on their Christian living and particularly on their enthusiasm for missionary endeavour. It would be interesting to examine the influence that the various prophetical approaches have had on Christian activity, leading to optimism or pessimism, and activity or passivity. In Bogue's case they led to anticipation of great blessing attending the church during the millenium. They would not be to everybody's taste today, but we see in them something of the motivation that drove Bogue on.

Lastly there is the History of Dissenters, originally published in four volumes in 1808. It would be fascinating to know how much is to be attributed to each of its authors. We know that they had a policy of not publishing anything with which the other was unhappy, and that Bennett was amazed at the amount of research that Bogue managed to put in on top of his other duties. This was done by working till long after midnight. Bennett was also mildly embarrassed by his former tutor's humility and willingness to defer to his views. The work met with considerable criticism and was claimed to have been written in a bitter and partisan spirit. It is true that it has a cutting

edge, especially when it depicts the weaknesses of the Church of England and its part in the persecution of Dissenters in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This is hardly surprising when the authors were writing only a hundred years after these events. It provides a useful summary of the progress of Christianity in this country up to 1688, in which ancient and doubtful traditions get fairly sharp treatment. It deals in some depth with the development of the Presbyterian, Independent, Baptist and Quaker movements, the establishment of the seminaries, and the external and spiritual condition of the dissenters at the time of writing. It also contains potted biographies of eminent ministers, such as Baxter, Flavel, the Henrys, Howe, Owen, Bunyan and Keach, and of some 'private Christians' including, rather surprisingly, Richard Cromwell and Lady Hewley. The second volume is arranged on much the same pattern as the first, but deals also with Methodists, Moravians, Sandemanianism, Swedenborgianism, controversies and with Religious Liberty. It is certainly a fascinating work and a mine of information on Dissent, as seen through evangelical eyes and written without fear or favour.

Conclusion

I hope that I have said enough to show that David Bogue was a remarkable man, used of God in so many different ways. There are many things which have had to be omitted—his happy married and family life and his humble acceptance of his many bereavements. He is an example of Christian character at its best in his relationships with others, whether they were rich or poor, educated or illiterate, friendly or critical. He sets the highest standards in terms of diligence, capacity for work and study. Although he discouraged his students from burning the midnight oil and then rising early, as he so often did, he was a painstaking man, commenting that: 'we should be always learning because we are always forgetting!' Often he and his family read aloud at meals and, if called out of his study, he went down with his pen in his mouth to remind visitors to be brief. Much could be written about his inner life which in all his business he never neglected. As Bennett puts it, 'He disciplined his own soul and knew himself.' Among his effects was a little book, entitled My faults, in which he had recorded the criticisms of both enemies and friends.

He died, as he would have wished, in harness. A quiet yet confident end, still praising God for the spread of the Gospel and exclaiming, 'That, that is remarkable; I am glad to hear that; that is very pleasing; God is blessing his own work'. Asked if he found the time heavy or lonely, he replied, 'No. I thank you. I prefer it; I am not alone; the Father is with me.' Some of his last words were: 'I am looking to that compassionate Saviour, whose blood cleanseth from all sin. I know whom I have believed.'

Two final comments. The first his own conviction that 'we all underrate our influence, and by that error fling the better half of it away!' The other is the tribute of a fellow founder of the LMS: 'He had ten talents, and he employed them all to the great advantage of the Church of Christ and the souls of men.'

Griffith John—
The Founder of the Hankow Mission

Rev. Leighton James PhD

A brief outline of the Life of Griffith John (1831–1912)

Born in Llangyfelach Road, Swansea on 14 December 1831. During his childhood he was closely associated with Ebenezer Congregational Church. Affectionately known as 'Gito Bach'. Made a church member at the early age of eight.

- Worked for a few years in a shop at Onllwyn. Preached his first sermon in a house at Onllwyn when he was fourteen. Won fame as the 'boy preacher'.
- Entered the Memorial College, Brecon in September 1852—'looking boyish, small of body with a crop of jet-black hair and two black sparkling eyes set deep in his head'. Soon became the pet of the College, proved himself a good student, was 'humorous' and 'always happy', a 'good conversationalist' and much in demand as a preacher.
- Offered his services to the London Missionary Society after listening to an address to the students by David Griffiths of Madagascar. Accepted, he was sent to the Society's College at Bedford for further training and persuaded to make China his sphere of labour.
- Ordained at Ebenezer, Swansea on 5 April 1855.
- Married Margaret Jane, the daughter of David Griffiths of Madagascar, on 13 April 1855. Mrs John was to die whilst returning from furlough in Great Britain, as the ship reached Singapore on 18 February, 1873. She was aged 43.
- Sailed for China on the Hamilla Mitchell on 21 May 1855. Landed at Shanghai 128 days later (24 September). Hankow was made the permanent headquarters of the mission.
- He was made Chairman of the Central Tract Society and became the translator, author and publisher of many of its popular and influential tracts.
- Married for a second time in 1874 to Mrs Jeanette Jenkins, the widow of an American missionary. They visited Great Britain in 1881, the last visit of Griffith John before his retirement in 1912. Mrs John died in 1885.
- Published his translation of the New Testament into the Wen-li dialect in 1885. The Psalms and Proverbs followed in 1890.

- Honoured with the degree of Doctor of Divinity by the University of Edinburgh in 1889 for extensive knowledge of the language and classics of China, and for his literary contributions.
- Celebrated his jubilee as a missionary at Hankow in 1905.
- Left China for the last time on the 17 November, 1911. After 56 years of service. Died in London on 25 July 1912.
- Buried in Bethel, Sketty, Swansea on 29 July 1912

We shall divide our study of Griffith John into four main areas. We shall firstly turn our attention to his early life and training for his life's work. Afterwards we shall consider his call to China and then his eventual settlement in Hankow. Our fourth division will lead us to review his literary achievements. There are several books written on our subject, some in Welsh and some in English. Throughout this paper I have drawn heavily upon these sources but, above everything else, have sought to have Griffith John speak for himself. Fortunately for us Griffith John kept up a most detailed correspondence with the Rev. Elijah Jacob, the minister at Ebenezer, Swansea—the Church from which he was sent on his missionary endeavours. Many of the quotations in this present paper are from these letters.

1. His Early Life and Training

The early years of everyone of us are both interesting and formative. At this stage in our pilgrimage, influences are brought to bear on us which, under divine providence, have a moulding effect and prepare us for those circumstances and tasks we shall have to encounter in after years. What were those influences that most affected the subject of our enquiry and that made him to be that most useful instrument in the hand of God that he later became?

Griffith John describes his early years in the following manner:

> I was born at Swansea on December 14th, 1831. My father was a foreman in the employ of Messrs Vivian and Sons. He was a truly godly man, and highly respected by all who knew him for his uprightness, benevolence and kindliness of heart. He was blessed with a strong constitution, and was equal to any amount of hard toil. He was noted for his tenacity of purpose. Whatsoever he undertook to do he did with all his might, and never stopped till the work was done. As a father he was most affectionate to all his children. To myself, as the youngest and the only boy in the family, he was particularly so.
>
> My mother died of cholera in 1832, when I was only eight years old. The loss of my mother, at so early an age, I have always felt to be one of the greatest, if not the greatest privation of my life. Aunt Mary, my father's sister, undertook the task of looking after me, and I owe her more than tongue can tell. She

loved me with the tenderest love, and strove in every way to do a mother's part. But she was not my mother. Her face was not my mother's face, and that was the face I longed to see!

From the cradle I was brought up in a religious atmosphere. All my relations on my father's side have for ages been known as eminent for their piety. Some of them were giants in stature, and still more so in their spiritual attainments. I have even now very vivid recollections of the prayers offered up at the Saturday evening prayer meetings by Uncles David and Rees. How they used to pour out their souls before God! How they would wrestle with God! Each of them presented to my imagination a living picture of wrestling Jacob. All these godly men took the deepest interest in me. How much I owe to their prayers and loving counsel is known to God only. Then there was the Sunday School with all its hallowed influences. In those days the Sunday School in Wales was a grand institution for imbueing the child's mind with Biblical knowledge and Christian principles. I seem to have been born and brought up in the House of God and among God's people. It may be truly said of me, as it was of Timothy, 'and from a babe thou hast known the Holy Scriptures'.

When about eight years old I became the subject of deep religious impressions. One Sunday morning, in Ebenezer Chapel, Swansea, I was sitting in the gallery, witnessing the Church celebrating the Lord's Supper. Whilst standing there, and watching the proceedings below, I saw my sister Mary walking up to the pulpit pew, to receive the right hand of fellowship. Immediately a number of questions suggested themselves to my mind. Why does my sister desire to join the church in this public manner? If it is her duty to do this, is it not my duty to do the same? Is she right in partaking of the Lord's Supper, am I not wrong in keeping aloof? Should I not consecrate my life to God as she is doing?

These questions, once started, could not be silenced. They kept haunting me and demanding an answer. I spoke to one of the most prominent members of the Church. He encouraged me to persevere in my purpose, gave me some good advice, and promised to speak to the deacons. Among the deacons there were two leading men, Rees and Daniel. These two old men were thoroughly conscientious and good, but the very opposite of each other in their mental traits and disposition. Rees was all love, and very sympathetic; Daniel was stern and disposed to treat each case brought before him very much as a lawyer might do. Rees took me into his arms at once, but Daniel stood aloof. Both however watched me carefully for some months, and at last gave their united opinion that the change in the little boy was genuine, and that he ought to be admitted a member of the Church at Ebenezer when only eight years of age.

There are those who might question the action of the Ebenezer deacons but, looking back at the event from my present standpoint, I do not hesitate to say

that it is my sincere conviction that they were divinely led in their decision. It is true that my knowledge was very limited, and my experience was that of a child, yet I knew that I was a sinner and that Jesus was my Saviour. I loved God, believed in Christ and desired to live the best and highest life. I knew enough to be saved and, this being the case, it is difficult to see why a place among God's people should be denied me on account of my youthfulness.

The fact of my being a recognised member of the Church did much in after days towards keeping me from falling into temptation and sin. My Church membership kept me in vital contact with the best and wisest men in Swansea, and secured for me their daily help in my efforts to conquer evil and grow in knowledge and goodness. Had I not taken the momentous step when I did, it is possible I might never have taken it. Would I have been a missionary today? I cannot say. Possibly not.

There was at that time a mother's prayer meeting held weekly at Ebenezer Chapel, of which my aunt was a member. It was confined strictly to women but an exception was made in favour of 'Gito bach' (little Gito, the name by which I generally went in those days). The first prayer I ever offered up in public was at one of these meetings, soon after my admission to the church. This first attempt was to me a very trying failure. I managed to get out one sentence, and then came utter blankness and a complete breakdown. Not another word could I command, and it felt as if I might sink into the ground. But the dear old ladies were equal to the occasion. They all came around me, spoke appreciatively of that one sentence, reminded me that some of them had passed through a similar experience, and assured me I would do better next time. The next time soon came, and I did much better. I went on attending the meetings and taking part in them. Under the loving care of the mothers, I made considerable progress in knowledge and Christian experience. All of them seemed to have the warmest affection for me and my spiritual interests were to every one of them a matter of personal concern. It is impossible to say how much I owe to the prayers, the sympathy, and the watchful care of those godly women.

About this time a Mr William Rees, of Nantyglo, came to reside in Swansea. He was not only a godly man, but a very able man in many ways. His knowledge of the Scriptures was remarkable, and on most matters he was a well-informed man. He also had the knack of teaching to a very high degree. Mr Rees took a great liking to me, and he became my hero for the time. Amongst those who took a prominent part in the affairs of the church generally, and in the Sunday School in particular, he stood first and foremost. He was asked to take charge of a class in the Sunday School, and I had the great privilege of being one of his pupils, a privilege for which I have never ceased to be sincerely thankful. He taught me to think and was the first who

ever tried to do so. He put me in the way of taking down the heads of sermons, a habit which I kept up for years.

Mr Rees also encouraged me to commit large portions of the Scriptures to memory. During the three years I was under his influence, I must have committed a large portion of the Psalms, as well as Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, and the greater part of the New Testament, to memory. My cousin, the late Rev. David John of Booth Street, Manchester, had a more retentive memory than I had, and he went beyond me in this line of things. The Rev. Thomas Davies, one of the famous preachers of Wales, was our minister at that time. Instead of reading the Scriptures himself, he would often ask me to recite a psalm, or a chapter, or both. This I used to do from the gallery, at a point directly opposite the pulpit. The recitation took place generally at the evening service, when the large chapel was simply crammed with men, women and children. I must have repeated scores of chapters from the gallery; and I have even now a very vivid recollection of the impression made on my own mind, as well as on the minds of others, on some of those occasions. To me it was a most stimulating and inspiring exercise.

When twelve years old, Mr Rees procured for me a situation at Onllwyn, a place distant from Swansea about twenty miles. His friend, Mr John Williams, was the owner of extensive iron and coal mines, smelting furnaces, and a large store, at which the employees were supplied with all the necessaries of life, in the shape of grocery, ironmongery, etc. It was in this store that I spent the next four or five years of my life. Mr Williams was a godly man, and Mrs Williams was a godly woman. They took the deepest interest in the spiritual welfare of the employees, and did all in their power to promote it. They treated me with marked kindness from the beginning, and made me feel that I was regarded by them more as a son than a servant.

It was at Onllwyn that I began to preach. My first sermon was delivered at a prayer meeting held in a private house, when I was only fourteen years old. But I was soon made to feel that I had made a mistake. I felt that I was too young and too inexperienced for the work, and that it would be better to spend years more in reading and thinking before committing myself finally to the work of the ministry. When sixteen years of age, I was induced to begin again; and from that time till now I have been a preacher of the Gospel. My first sermon was preached at Onllwyn, and my text was Romans 1:16, 'I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ'. The invitations to supply pulpits became numerous, and I soon got to be known in that part of South Wales as the boy preacher. I passed through many experiences in those days—some pleasant and some trying. I may give the following as an illustration.

A lay preacher at Alltwen used to supply the Onllwyn pulpit one Sunday in every month. He and I became great friends, and he pressed me hard to go and

preach at Alltwen. I, after a good deal of persuasion, consented, and the Sunday was fixed upon. I arrived at Alltwen about half an hour before the time, and found the elders and the deacons all assembled in the caretaker's house in the immediate vicinity of the chapel. When I announced myself as Griffith John, they looked amazed, and did not attempt to conceal their disappointment. When they beheld that short, slender figure before them, and they looked at his skull cap, unconventional jacket, and unclerical cravat, they must have felt that a practical joke had been perpetrated upon them. They soon made up their minds that they could not ask me to preach, and that some other arrangement must be made for the evening service. But what was to be done? It was almost time to begin, and too late to send for another to occupy the pulpit. They gave me a seat in the corner of the room, and left me severely alone.

Fortunately for them and myself, a well-known preacher made his appearance, and brought instant relief. He had been occupying one of the neighbouring pulpits, and was now on his way home. He thought he would turn in and enjoy the evening service at Alltwen. It was interesting to notice the instant change which the advent of my friend brought with it. They assured him that he was a perfect God-send to them, and that he must preach. He replied that he did not come there to preach but to hear Griffith John, and that Griffith John must preach. 'That will never do,' said the deacons. 'You must preach; let Griffith John, if you wish it, open the service for you.' After some wrangling, I got up and said that I resolved not to preach, but I was quite willing to take the preliminary part of the service as was suggested by the deacons. My friend was sincerely sorry, but he felt he must comply.

I ascended the pulpit feeling sore at heart, and cried to God for strength. I read Romans 8, gave out a hymn, and prayed; and the place had become a veritable Bethel. At the close some of the deacons rushed up the pulpit stairs and begged me to go on. I refused, and said that I had done the work which they had given me to do. Then my friend the lay preacher came to meet me as I was walking down the stair, and besought me to go on, as he could not face the congregation if I declined to preach. I felt I must comply with the wishes of one who had shown so much kindness to me, so l turned back, gave out another hymn, and preached from Romans 8:18. My soul was deeply moved, the vast audience caught the fire and before the close of the sermon the whole congregation was on its feet, shouting 'Glory' and 'Amen'. My friend the lay preacher followed, but the 'hwyl' had spent itself and he brought his sermon to a speedy close. After this the deacons were all delightfully polite and cordial. They put an extra piece of silver in my hands for my sermon, and made me promise that I would allow my name to be put down on the list of their regular supplies. That scene is still vivid in my mind but it is only one of many. I had some strange experiences as a boy preacher.

It will be interesting to note at this stage the estimate of his minister at Ebenezer, Swansea had formed of Griffith John's preaching gift just at this present time:

> His preaching talents are in my opinion of an extraordinary character. His voice is sweet, his delivery easy and fluent. Judging from the present, he will in 5 or 6 years be the most popular minister in Wales. I have heard him talk like an orator for a whole hour, and then in a few moments arouse the whole congregation to a state of astonishing excitement, not by unmeaning declamation but by sound sense and real eloquence.

Everywhere he went it soon became manifest that in Griffith John, God was preparing a mighty witness for himself, and predictions were not wanting of a fame and career of usefulness awaiting him, as great as that of the venerated Christmas Evans, the Apostle of Wales.

Before we close this section, a word concerning his entry on a formal college training:

> I felt at length that it was high time for me to enter on a course of study with a view to preparing myself for college. I mentioned my intentions to Mr Williams. He listened attentively and sympathetically, but expressed a hope that I would not leave him for a time at least. He told me also that it had been his intention to make me the chief manager of the store, and would do so at once if I would promise to remain. I told him that my mind was fully made up, and that nothing in the shape of worldly prospects could have any weight with me. When he saw how matters stood, he offered no further opposition. He gave me his heartiest parting blessing. To the day of his death he followed my career with the deepest interest.
>
> Others, and among them were some ministers, did their very best to turn me aside from my purpose. In those days there was in Wales a strong prejudice against the colleges. They were looked at as places to spoil a man of any promise. 'You have the gift of speech, you have a musical voice, you can move the Welsh hearts. What do you want to go to college for? Let the dry sticks go there. The college is no place for you and such men as you. It will only spoil you.' I have a distinct recollection of one of the most influential ministers in Wales speaking to me in just that way. My mind however was fixed, so in the latter end of 1848 I left Onllwyn, feeling very thankful for all the kindness I had received there, and for the many precious experiences I had gathered there. The business habits acquired at Onllwyn have been of great value to me throughout my whole missionary life.
>
> In 1843 the Rev. Thomas Davies was succeeded by the Rev. Elijah Jacob as minister of the Church of Ebenezer, Swansea. Mr Jacob had become deeply interested in me for some time before I left Onllwyn. When he found out that I had made my mind up to enter college he undertook the task of putting me

through a preparatory course of study, my father paying the fees. I commenced my studies with Mr Jacob in November, 1848. All went on well till August 11th, 1849, when my dear father died of cholera, the disease to which my mother had succumbed in 1832. My father was taken ill in the morning, and died in the evening about ten o'clock.

This was a dreadfill blow to me. All my hopes and prospects were, to all appearances, blighted. I was entirely dependent on my father for everything, and for a moment it looked as if there were nothing left to me but to return to Onllwyn to commence business again. I cried unto the Lord in my distress, and he heard the voice of my prayer. At the very time I was turning over the problem before me, my Uncle John and his wife sent me word to the effect that they were prepared to place two rooms at my disposal, one for a bedroom and one for a study, which I might regard as my own until I entered college. My sisters came forward and guaranteed my food, and Mr Jacob said he would prepare me for college gratuitously, and that I should never know the lack of an earthly father as long as he lived. All these promises were faithfully kept, and I went on with my studies.

I entered Brecon College in September 1850, and there I had for more than three years the advantages of the tuition of the Rev. David Davies, MA, and the Rev. Professor Henry Griffiths. Mr Davies was our classical tutor: a very good, amiable man, but lacking in enthusiasm and stimulating power. The daily portion of food he laid before us was good and wholesome, but very insipid. He had not the gift of making work likeable and attractive. In this respect he was the reverse of Professor Griffiths, who was at the time the Principal of the College. I had not been in the college a week before I began to feel the Professor's inspiring influence. His branches were theology, mathematics, science and philosophy. In each and all these branches he appeared perfectly at home, and in each and all he was an able, energetic, and enthusiastic leader. To hear him lecture was to me a perfect treat, no matter what his subject might be. The driest subject became exquisite poetry in his hands, and the most forbidding became intensely attractive. He stirred my ambition as no other man had ever done, and during the three years I sat at his feet he managed to create within my breast a great thirst for knowledge. If Mr Rees was the first to teach me to think, Mr Griffiths was the first to open up the great fields of knowledge to my vision, and to inspire me with a longing to enter in and possess. It was a great privilege to come under the influence of such a man at such a time in my life.

2. The Call to China

It was comparatively early in his college training that the desire arose in the heart of Griffith John to become a missionary to the heathen.

It was during my stay at Brecon that I began to think seriously of the missionary work and its claims. I entered college with two desires in my mind—a higher and a lower. The higher desire was to serve man and glorify God; the lower was the desire to become one of the great preachers of Wales. At that time, Thomas Rees, John Thomas, Thomas Jones, and several more were at the height of their popularity. The eloquence of these men used to move my soul to its deepest depth, and I longed to take my place side by side with them. The higher desire was there all the time, and occupied, I hope, the highest place; but the lower was there also, and occupying, I am bound to say, no mean place. When, however, the missionary desire came in and took full possession of my heart, the lower desire was driven out, and driven out never to return again. That was a great victory, one of the greatest victories ever won on the arena of my soul, and one for which I have never ceased to feel truly thankful to God.

Several attempts were made to dissuade me from offering myself to the London Missionary Society. Even Professor Griffiths was opposed to it at first. He had planned a university career for me, and was extremely anxious that I should follow it. For the first time he laid his scheme before me, and requested me to take a few weeks to reconsider, in the light of his proposal, my purpose of becoming a missionary. I did so, and at the close of the prescribed time I went to see him again and told him that my mind remained unchanged. He then encouraged me to persevere in my purpose, and assured me that he looked upon the missionary calling as the highest to which any man could devote his life. He told me also that he himself had at one time resolved to be a missionary, and that he had never ceased to regret the circumstances which led him to relinquish the idea.

A large number of my ministerial friends were bitterly opposed to my taking this course. They believed in missions, but they could not see that it was God's will that I should be a missionary. They spoke of my special fitness for the ministry in Wales, and pointed to the offers which I had already received from several churches as a clear indication of God's will concerning me. They loved me sincerely and were extremely anxious to save me from taking a false step. I thanked them all for their kindness, but assured them that my purpose was fixed, and that I must obey the Divine voice. Gradually they became more reconciled to the course on which I had resolved. When I left Wales for China, I did so richly laden with the heartiest goodwill and best benedictions of all.

Madagascar held the first place in his heart, but, through a series of providential circumstances, he was led to consider the possibility of going to China, whose doors were just opening for further missionary work.

It was in March 1853 that I offered my services to the London Missionary Society. Whilst my preference for Madagascar was very decided, I felt it my

> duty to leave the final decision with the Directors. I continued my studies at Brecon till January 1854, when I was removed to Bedford Academy. This step was taken at my own suggestion. It had occurred to me that it would be a great advantage to me in after life if I could spend some time in England for the purpose of acquiring a greater facility in the English language, and enjoying the benefits of English society. I accordingly made known my views to the Directors. They thought the idea a good one, and at once granted my request.

Why Madagascar? Griffith John's thoughts had been turned towards the mission fields in consequence of hearing an address while at College, given by the veteran missionary David Griffiths. Mr Griffiths was one of the two Welsh fathers of the Madagascar Mission. He has gone to the Island in 1821 and had been instrumental in laying the foundations of a great work there. The whole Bible was translated into Malagasy before the two workers were compelled to quit the Island through persecution. Although David Griffiths returned to the island, it was but for a short time and in 1841 he left for the final time.

Griffith John had fallen in love with the daughter of David Griffiths and was engaged to be married. It can be understood how powerful an attraction Madagascar was likely to possess for them both. However, whilst Madagascar remained closed to missionary enterprise, China's doors were opening. At this time Griffith John writes:

> I am willing to submit to the will of God. The question is, what is his will? Oh, may he direct my path and open mine eyes, that I may see the way I should go.

We shall take up the story as he considers the great work that was then opening up before him:

> There is a glorious work before me. When looking at it I cannot but rejoice, but with trembling. It is both humbling and cheering. Oh that I could but feel I am not my own, and that I am thoroughly consecrated to God. How difficult it is to get rid of selfishness. The drunkard may set aside his drunkenness, the blasphemer his blasphemy, his curses and oaths, but it is almost impossible to destroy self and live, to be and not to be at the same time. Self clings to us wherever we go; we find it with us in all our engagements, however sacred they may be. This is the great demon that perpetually speaks within us and drives us from God and goodness. Oh, could I but feel as Paul felt when he said, 'To me to live is Christ'.

3. Early Missionary Days and Eventual Settlement at Hankow

The young missionary couple arrived at Shanghai in 1855 having been 128 days on board ship. This city was to be the centre of his labour for the next five years. It was the great centre of trade situated on the banks of a river which

itself is a tributary of the mighty Yang-Tse-Kiang. Its position afforded an anchorage and shelter for a large fleet of ships.

It also has the advantage of being the centre from which it is most easy to reach the vast interior of the country. On arrival, Griffith and his young bride were privileged to enjoy the company of a group of men of remarkable ability and exceptional spiritual power. The London Missionary Society, which commenced work as soon as the new port was opened in 1843, had as its representatives Dr Medhurst, Dr William Lockhart, Mr Muirhead and Mr Wylie. The Church Missionary Society, whose mission was opened in 1844 by M'Clatchie, was represented by the Rev. JS Burdon, who was conspicuous for his devoted and intrepid evangelistic tours. Bishop Boone commenced the American Episcopal Mission in 1845.

Among other workers there were two whose names have become household words among those who are acquainted with missionary history. Dr Hudson Taylor went out to China a few months before Griffith John as an agent of the China Evangelisation Society, and early devoted himself to evangelistic work in the region around Shanghai; and William Chalmers Burns, the saintly and fervent Scottish evangelistic missionary, was still in Shanghai for six months after the young Welsh missionary arrived. The field was therefore an exceptionally interesting and important one, and the associations in the work were of a most stimulating kind.

To give us some idea of Griffith John's voluminous reading, we need only reflect on some words he wrote while on board ship during the voyage from the homeland:

> The life on the ocean wave is not the most favourable for hard study. Yet I managed to do a little in that way. I read nearly the whole series of the Congregational Lectures, so that I have a pretty good stock of theology in my brain, Henry Rogers' Essays in three volumes, Macaulay's Essays in two volumes, Barnes' Notes on the Revelation, Herschel on Astronomy, Mitchell on Astronomy, a large volume on the steam engine, Carpenter's Physiology, books on chemistry, electricity, magnetism, mechanics, and other branches of science. Several other books of a lighter character I read. I read some portions of my Hebrew Bible and Greek Testament, studied some of the higher branches of mathematics. So my time, as you perceive, was not altogether spent in vain. I believe I know a little more now than when I saw you last. All this will be of some use in future.

In correspondence with Elijah Jacob, he informs his friend and pastor:

> In taking a retrospective view of the past nine months I find I have not spent my time altogether in vain nor my strength for nought. I have read nearly all the books printed in the Shanghai dialect, a considerable portion of the New

> Testament in the higher style, any quantity of tracts. I shall soon get through four of the Chinese principal books. The others shall follow. For some months I have been in the habit of going into the temples, the tea gardens, and other places to distribute tracts and preach in my humble way. I am able to speak for half-an-hour or three-quarters with considerable ease and fluency. To my great satisfaction, I find I am very well understood. This is a very great thing in speaking to the Chinese, because so much depends on the tones, a mere raising or falling, shortening or lengthening of the voice makes all the difference imaginable in a word that is in every other respect the same, that is if written in the Roman character.
>
> This makes the acquisition of the spoken language both a tedious and difficult task. The language is a colossus. It is decidedly difficult to acquire, as appears from the fact that no European has hitherto completely mastered it. I like to study it very much; it is no tiresome work to me. Its difficulty only intensifies my desire to grapple with it and finally to lay it prostrate at my feet. The conquering of this language is worth a long and manly struggle. Who would feel it a burdensome task to learn a language which is intended by the providence of God to be a channel through which divine truth like a life-giving stream is to flow into four hundred million thirsty but immortal souls.

Again, writing three months later, he says:

> I told you that I intended to be able to preach in Chinese before the end of the year. I am happy to inform you that my anticipations have been realised in this respect. I have been in the habit of preaching in the chapels for more than two months. I have also paid considerable attention to the characters. I mention this because I know that any success of mine gives you as much pleasure as it does to myself. I wish to conquer the language to the extent it is capable of being conquered by a foreigner. Nothing short of this will satisfy me.
>
> You may say this is an ambition. Confessedly it is. But is there anything sinful in such an ambition? I wish and long to be an efficient missionary of the Cross in this land, and I am convinced that a thorough knowledge of their literature is essential to this. There are two classes of missionaries here, those who devote themselves entirely to the spoken dialect of the place, and think it not worth their while to pay any attention to the literature of the people. The other class do, and they are able to meet the Chinese on their own grounds, confound them in their own territory. The latter are respected and the former despised. Nothing gives the missionary greater power over the Chinese than a conviction on their part that he is well up in their books, and knows their contents and meaning as well as they themselves do.

It was in October 1856 that he undertook his first evangelistic tour into the country entirely alone. Many such were to follow:

> The first year should be given almost entirely to the acquisition of the language; the future progress of a missionary depends very materially on the foundation which he lays in the first year. I acted in this conviction, and therefore have had but little time to write much. It is because of this determination that I am now able to go into the country alone to distribute books and preach the glorious gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. This is my first journey alone into the country. On previous occasions I only accompanied one or the other of my brethren in the mission. I have now ventured for the first time to go alone, with the intention of spending the chief part of the winter in itinerating, in penetrating the country in every direction from Shanghai, for the purpose of proclaiming the one true God and Jesus Christ whom he sent. What glorious work! Can there be anything more worthy of the powers which God bestowed upon us? To a believing Christian no idea can be more noble or ennobling than that he is a co-worker with God in the salvation of the world.
>
> I left Shanghai this morning for Sung-Kiang, a large city about fifty miles distant. The annual examination is held here this week, hundreds of the first scholars in the whole country round have met to be examined. We have anchored within four miles of the place, it being too dark to proceed further this night. Tomorrow morning early I hope to appear in the midst of these aspirants after worldly honours with the everlasting Gospel in my hands. I have brought two large bags fuII of Christian books with me, which I hope to distribute among the students.
>
> November 1st, 1856. This morning when I woke, I found myself at the west gate of the city of Sung-Kiang. After breakfast, Wong, the colporteur, and myself proceeded to the place where the examination was held. We took along with us a good supply of books. We had glorious opportunities of preaching, which we availed ourselves of and of satisfactorily distributing our books. These were eagerly sought and gladly received. Our preaching was listened to attentively by some, by others in a very indifferent manner; no marks of displeasure or ill-will were manifested by any party. In the afternoon we enjoyed the same fine opportunities of preaching and distributing our books among the graduates. After this we returned to our boat for the night.
>
> November 2nd, 1856. This is the Lord's Day. Alas! there is no Sabbath in China. On this day, as on any other there is nothing but noise, tumult, confusion, impiety.

A year later he writes:

> The Chinese are sunk in gross materialism. The world, the seen, is everything. It is with the greatest difficulty they can be got to think for one minute on the spiritual, the unseen, the eternal; these are substanceless inanities to them. Confucius, the most holy of their holy men, says, 'Respect the gods, but keep

them at a distance'. From this you will see how difficult it is to bring the truths of the gospel to bear upon the minds and conscience of this people.

Shanghai, September 1st, 1857. The good work in China is moving, but very slowly. The people are as hard as steel. They are eaten up, both soul and body by the world. They don't seem to feel that there can be reality in anything beyond sense. To them our doctrine is foolishness, our preaching contemptible, our talk jargon, our thoughts insanity and our hopes and fears mere brain phantoms. We discuss with them, we beat them in argument, we reason them into silence and shame, but the whole falls upon them like showers in the sandy desert. Think of the conversion of four hundred millions of the most proud, superstitious, and godless people of the human race. Sometimes I am ready to give up in despair and think that China is doomed to destruction, that to raise it out of its state of moral and spiritual degradation is a matter of impossibility. However, the promises of the Bible soon dissipate the gloom. We are told there that those 'from the land of Sinim' as well as those from afar are to come, and this promise is yea and amen in Christ.

You see, my brother, that I write now in a very different tone from what I did on my first arrival in Shanghai. Then my ignorance of the language and habits of this people prevented me from forming a just and righteous judgement. I saw, but did not perceive. For some time, however, I have been able to take somewhat deeper than a mere surface view of things, to break the shell and discern a real glimpse of the kernel, to go behind the scene and catch a glimpse of matters within. Don't imagine I am faltering in my work; I trust these difficulties in their influence upon my mind are impulsive rather than dejective. 'What is impossible with man is possible with God.' This is my stay.

The letters are full of references to his burning desire not to build on other men's foundations, but to be permitted and used of God to carry the Gospel to those who have never yet heard.

The year 1861 found Mr John still unsettled as to his permanent location as a missionary after six years in China. We shall let him tell us in his own words of his eventual arrival in Hankow:

The Treaty of Tientsin, which came into full operation in 1860, added nine new ports to the preceding five, and threw the whole country open as far as the right of travel is concerned. Both the missionary and the merchant were transported with joy when it became known that the Yang-tse was thrown open to foreign merchant ships, and that Hankow was included among the ports open to foreign trade. My own mind was soon made up. I had heard and read much about Hankow, and many a time longed to visit the place. Now that it was actually open, I felt I had no alternative but to be off, and to be off at once. I well remember with what transport of joy, on July 9th, 1861, I stepped on board the *Hellespont,* the steamer that was to take my colleague, the

> Rev. R Wilson, and myself to Hankow; and I well remember how I felt when ascending the mighly Yang-tse, as if a new world was bursting on my vision, and how thankful we both were that that magnificent stream had become a highway for the messengers of the Cross.
>
> It would be impossible for me to describe my feelings when I found myself actually at Hankow. I could hardly believe that I was standing in the very centre of China that had been closed till then against the outer barbarian, and that it would be my privilege on the very next day to appear as a missionary of the Cross in the streets of the famous city. I thought of the great and good men who had been longing to see what I was seeing, but did not see it. I thought of Milne, who, on his arrival at Canton, knocked earnestly for admittance, but was ruthlessly driven away. I thought of Morrison, who knocked for twenty-six years, but died without having received the promise. I thought of Medhurst, and remembered the last prayer I heard him offer up at Shanghai: 'O God, open China, and scatter thy servants.' I thought of these and many others, who had laboured long and well in days gone by, and felt as if they were present on this occasion and rejoicing with me in the triumph of Divine providence over China's exclusiveness. I felt that I had got at last to the place where God would have me be, and my heart was at rest.

Many years later he reflects:

> My work has been largely that of the pioneer—the work of preparing the ways, of breaking up new ground. This kind of work has many attractions, and I can never forget the gladness of my earlier efforts in that particular line of things. The early days at Shanghai, as the early days in Central China, were golden days in many respects. The joys of early missionary touring; the joy of opening the cities to missionary effort; the joy of establishing new mission stations; the joy of receiving one's first converts; the joy of preaching in a new language, and to congregations of hundreds and thousands of people who have never heard the gospel before; the joy of facing dangers and getting out of them unhurt; the joy of writing your first tract or translating your first book; the joy of seeing visions of the coming glory, such as are specially revealed to the young and youthful missionary—such was the joy of those earlier days, and a great joy it was.
>
> The work before us now is that of teaching, training, consolidating and building up. This is a work as great and as important as the other, and in some respects more difficult. It will require all the wisdom and grace that we can command. But I am confident that the God who has so richly blessed the mission in the past will continue to bless it in the future. My own days of service are drawing to a close; but the work is God's Work and its success depends upon his presence, guidance and blessing. The workers pass away, but Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today—yea, and for ever.

4. Literary Achievements

The Hankow Tract Society was formed in 1876 by the missionaries there on a modest capital of fifty pounds granted by the Religious Tract Society. Griffith John had written tracts and booklets before this period but this venture marked the beginning of a new stage in his missionary activity:

> At first no more was expected from it than that by its aid its members would be able to circulate tracts without personal pecuniary loss.
>
> The supply soon gave rise to a greater demand than had ever been anticipated, while the number of new tracts which the Committee in time added to the Society's catalogue found acceptance wherever they became known, and orders for them were sent in from all parts of China, notwithstanding the fact that non-members had to pay full price.

After eight years, the work of the Society had been so greatly increased that it was deemed wise to change its name to the 'Central China Religious Tract Society'. The report of that year (1884) mentioned that the circulation of tracts and books had grown from nine thousand in 1876 to three hundred and forty thousand in 1883. In 1904 the report reads 'the circulation has reached the record figure of 2,711,655 publications'. Seventy Colporteurs were employed in Hupeh and Hunan who sold 328,766 books and tracts that year. Not only had Griffith John been the President of the Society almost without break from the outset, but to him more than to any other it owed the literature for which it had so large a demand. In the report for 1884 already quoted, there is a list of flfty new publications which had been issued, and of these, thirty-one were written by Mr John. After this, his busy pen seldom rested, enriching the Christian Church in China with a very large amount of its most popular and valuable Christian literature, which has found its way wherever Chinese are to be found. Dr Hudson Taylor told the Committee of the National Bible Society of Scotland in 1884 that Mr John was

> the author of the Hankow series of tracts, which in the judgement of many of us were far and away the best prepared and best adapted Christian tracts we have ever had in China.

Mr Hoste, the successor of Dr Hudson Taylor as the Director of the China Inland Mission, wrote:

> It will not be out of place, however, for me to refer to his work both as a translator of the Scriptures, and as an author of a large number of books and tracts setting forth the truths and doctrines of the Christian faith. These latter works are used universally by the missionaries of the China Inland Mission in our stations throughout the interior, and it is found by all workers of competent experience that they form a Christian literature of unique value,

> both for circulation amongst the more thoughtful Chinese outside the Church, and for the use and instruction of Church members and enquirers. Many years of experience in a district where there is now a large Church impressed upon me the great value of Dr John's tracts as a means of instructing converts and enquirers in the leading doctrines of Christianity. As is well known, he has written a series of small booklets, expounding, with such clearness, the great fundamental truths of our holy religion, such as 'The Need of Repentance', 'The Doctrine of the New Birth', 'The Forgiveness of Sins', 'The Doctrine of the Resurrection', and so on. It is no exaggeration to say that this particular branch of Dr John's work has provided China with a clear, concise statement of sound, evangelical doctrine, the value of which cannot be over-estimated.

The London Missionary Society was to hold a conference in the year 1888 to which Griffith John was invited. In declining the invitation, he wrote of the pressure of work that was presently on him respecting a 'piece of work I am anxious to finish'. 'I am revising my Wen-li version of the New Testament and turning it into Mandarin. This I must finish before I leave China.

The original work was begun in 1883 when Mr John commenced a translation of the four gospels into what is known as easy Wen-li. This eventually led to the translation of the whole New Testament. All this was done in conjunction with his other literary work, with daily preaching, occasional itineration, and the customary occupation of time in seeing and talking to Chinese visitors. Throughout many years, this same amazing power for work and strength of will, characterised Mr John in his service for his Master.

5. Considerations Arising from this Brief Sketch

There are two matters that both deserve and demand our attention before we leave the subject for our enquiry.

i. The Centrality of Preaching

We have but briefly considered the amazing and far-reaching influence by the work of his pen but he never wavered in his belief that the presentation of the gospel by the living voice is the most efficient agency in evangelisation:

> This has been a preaching mission from the beginning. Preaching is the work that we love best, and depend upon most for results. We believe that God can change the heart of the grown-up heathen and it is by no means necessary to get hold of the child in order to make a Christian of the man.
>
> Much however will depend on our aim in preaching, and the spirit in which we convey our message. In no period of my life have I sought the immediate salvation of men with an aim so direct as I have done these two years.

> Formerly my immediate aim was the enlightenment of men, hoping that they might be converted some day. Of late my aim has been their conversion there and then. I have gone to the chapels day after day expecting to see men brought to God whilst speaking to them, and God has given me to see wonderful manifestations of his saving power as a result. Some of our warmest, happiest, and most consistent members are men who have been brought to an immediate decision in the course of a single conversation. This directness of aim in regard to the immediate salvation of men has changed my mode of preaching, I know not whether you would call it preaching at all. Formerly I used to harangue from the platform or pulpit for an hour or an hour and a half. Now I sit or stand among the people, question them and requestion them, till a few ideas are clearly and firmly deposited in their minds, and then, with all the energy and earnestness I can command, I try and impress their minds with the importance of the things they have heard. If any one seems to be somewhat impressed I take him to the vestry, where I can explain things more fully to him and pray with him. In this way some have been enlightened and won to Christ on the same day, whilst many have received impressions which cannot be effaced. During this coming year I hope to see much of the seed sown in this manner springing up to the praise and glory of God.

Seventeen years later he expressed the same opinion. His report for the year 1893 contains the following paragraph:

> Our evening congregations are magnificent. On these occasions the chapels are often crammed from the pulpit to the front door. I have often been greatly struck with the amount of knowledge possessed by some of our hearers, and very much rejoiced to learn that the knowledge has been acquired by listening to the daily preaching at our chapels. After thirty-eight years of experience in the mission field, and having tried various methods of work, I do not hesitate to say that here in Central China the method 'par excellence' is the daily heralding of the Gospel in the chapels and the streets. Two candidates for baptism came before us this morning and both of them have been brought to Christ through the daily preaching. Several of the sixty-eight adults who joined us this year have been brought in through the same instrumentality. But what cheers my heart most is the vast amount of leavening work that is going on everywhere around us in connection with this method. This work cannot be reduced into statistics; and yet it is work to which I attach most value. Its worth cannot be estimated now, but its importance will become apparent by and by.

He hungered for the conversion of souls, and his correspondence with his most intimate friend contains many expressions of his deep dissatisfaction and trouble of heart because so few really receive the message. Notwithstanding this, his advice to everyone was 'Preach the Word'.

The Rev Gilbert Warren, the Chairman of the Wesleyan Mission in Central China wrote:

> No one will have a right view of Dr John who selects anything out of his varied life-work to put before his preaching. He preached the first day he landed in Hankow, and continued to preach day after day—out of doors till he could get a place fitted up for a preaching-hall; and after that out of doors as well as indoors. Before long, not only had he gathered around him a congregation—in those days any one hailing from distant land was sure to draw a crowd, indeed he was unable not to draw one—his preaching had been owned of God, and the nucleus of the first Church in Central China had been formed as the result of this preaching.

What was a typical service like? Happily an acquaintance of Griffith John for more than thirty years, the Rev. Joseph Adams of the American Baptist Missionary Union, has supplied a most graphic picture of the great preacher-missionary at work:

> The visitor to the London Mission, Hankow, picked his way gingerly along 'Pig Street', avoiding rushing coolies, busy trades-people, sedan chairs, and the puddles 'en route'. Turning aside into a wide gateway, he sees a large and handsome brick building, enclosed in a compound with high protecting fire-walls. A pleasant looking gate-keeper smiles welcome. You notice the characters, 'Fuh ying huei tang', 'Gospel Meeting Hall', over the doors, and entering the building you are surprised to hear the low hum of voices, and to see that you have entered by the platform end of the church. You are the cynosure of all eyes. The other end of the building opens onto the wide clean streets of the foreign settlement of Hankow. You are waiting for the service to begin. The women sit on the right side looking towards the platform, men in the centre and on the left. Your entrance excites some attention; but every service sees visitors, either a young missionary, note-book under his hat, waiting to pick up phrases of illustrations for future use, or a stranger looking for the first time upon a large and devout congregation of Chinese.
>
> As we seat ourselves we notice that the other end of the church is so far away that features cannot be distinguished, and we can hardly tell if the people in the great gallery at the end are men or women. The windows give abundant light, coloured as it passes through them, and just where the sun falls the Chinese are painted red, yellow or blue in patches. There is a distinct smell of Chinaman, of Chinaman's clothes, although Boyle's ventilators are groaning in the roof and many windows are open. We have time to study the congregation to which Dr John is going to preach. Many are aged men and women, old pilgrims to Zion, who will soon see the King in his beauty. There are bright boys with hymn books and Bibles tied up in their handkerchiefs, looking very important. The inevitable babies with their devoted mothers (who have several

ways of keeping them quiet when the service proceeds, such as pinching their legs, compressing the windpipe, etc., etc., all of which are Chinese and quite orthodox, although sufficiently horrifying to the lady missionaries who are keeping the female crowd in order). The men's side does not require such attention. There is a hush, as a short man, with a healthy, bright face, keen eyes, white beard, and black hair, comes to the platform. He wears an Inverness cloak which he throws back as he bends his head in prayer. The silence of communion with God is broken a few minutes after as he stands forth with a look on his face which announces that he has been on the mount with God. The hymn is announced, and a rustle of leaves follows. Then the singing! At first an indistinct roar, it gradually shapes itself into a well-known tune, and all sing with the voice of many waters: not very musical, but all in time, swaying to and fro, mouths well open, heads thrown back. Said Mrs John long years ago, 'Griffith, those Christians will never learn to sing properly'. 'Never mind, my dear, they do their best. They will sing better in Heaven.' 'I hope so,' was the quick reply; 'if they do not, they may get expelled for disturbing the harmony.'

When the sermon comes it is good to see the audience expect to listen. There is no settling down in easy corners behind convenient pillars. The converts sit, Testaments open, ready to find the text or the references, showing by the facility with which they read that they know whether 'Timothy' comes before or after 'Hebrews'. Dr John keeps his Bible in one hand, with a sheet of note-paper containing the outline of his sermon; with the forefinger of the other hand he enforces his points. Sometimes he forgets his book and notes, and in the fire of his earnestness he speaks with vehemence, pacing to and fro on the platform; yet always carefully repeating and illustrating and applying his sermons in every possible way. It is a grand and impressive sight to see his power over these people. Here is a nursing mother, her child fractious and troublesome, but she has forgotten the babe in the keen attention of the preacher.

As one listens to the impassioned words, we notice several things—Dr John's intense sympathy with the brothers and sisters to whom he speaks. They are beloved of his soul, and they know it. We notice, too, his knowledge of their trials, their persecutions, their stumbling blocks, and a starting tear here and there shows that his beautiful and resonant voice has carried a comforting and softening message right to the heart. Then comes a change. The speaker is dwelling on sin and its character in the sight of a pure and holy God. How keen is the analysis of a Chinaman's self-deception; how scathing the exposure of duplicity, falsehood, and cunning; how terrible the picture of the wreck and ruin which are the wages of sin. We forget we are listening in Chinese. We feel the preacher is as grandly eloquent as he could be in his native Welsh or his adopted English tongue. The scholars, merchants, working men and women of

> his audience listen breathlessly, often giving little expressions of amusement or sorrow, as their feelings are touched in one way or another. What a royal preacher is Griffith John, and how magnificently he has for fifty years revelled in the joy of preaching one who is mighty to save. To God be the glory! How faithfully God, the Holy Spirit, has owned and blessed the plain preaching of the Gospel. There are 'signs following' on every hand.

ii. The Necessity of the Anointing of the Holy Spirit

In an Article in *The Life of Faith* in 1894 occurs the following statement:

> I was eight years old when I joined the Church, I preached my first sermon when I was fourteen and yet I was a missionary twenty years before I had a full vision of Christ as an ever present Saviour from sin. This vision of Christ is absolutely necessary for success.

What was that 'full vision' that he spoke of? Not regeneration of conversion but a fresh and mighty anointing of the Spirit: A Divine Unction from Above.

Early in 1877 he wrote to his life-long friend, Mr Jacob:

> My soul is going out in strong desires towards God these days. Read Ephesians 3:16–20, and you will see what I am praying for, 'filled with the fulness of God'. I long to be filled with divine knowledge, divine wisdom, divine love, divine holiness, to the utmost extent of my capacity. I want to feel that 'all the currents of my soul are interfused in one channel deep and wide, and all flowing towards the heart of Christ'. I hardly begin to know what treasures there are for us in Christ. It seems to me that everyone of us might be spiritually and ought to be unspeakably mightier than we are. It is the Holy Ghost in us that is everything, and the Father is willing to bestow him upon the weakest if he will but ask in the spirit of implicit faith and entire self-surrender. My cry these days is for a Pentecost, first on myself and missionary brethren, and then on the native Church, and then on the heathen at large.

At a Missionary Conference held in Shanghai, he took up as the subject of his address 'The Holy Spirit in Connection with Mission Work' based on Luke 11:13, 'Ye then being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?' The exposition of the subject was followed by three questions: 1. Are we and our converts filled with the Holy Ghost? 2. Is a new Pentecost possible? 3. How is the fulness of the Spirit to be obtained? The address ended:

> I want to return from this Conference, not only stimulated in mind, and enriched with a store of valuable information, but filled with the Holy Ghost. China is dead—terribly dead. Our plans and organisations can do very little for this great people. They want life. Christ came to give life; and he is not the I was, but the I am. 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.' The secret of the success of the Apostles lay not in what they did and said, but

in the presence of Christ, felt with his heart and worked with his energies. They were nothing; Christ was everything. Christ was living, breathing and triumphing in their personalities. Their entire nature being replete with his life, their spirits bathed in his Light, and their souls kindled with the fires of his love, they moved in the midst of men as the embodiments of supernatural power. They spake with the demonstration of the Spirit; when they came into contact with men a mysterious energy went out of them, and under their vitalising touch dead souls started into life. The Spirit had taken hold of the highest faculties of their nature, and was working with them according to his own will. Brethren, this is what we must be, if this mighty Empire is to be moved through us. But to be this, the throne of grace must be our refuge—the secret place of the Most High must be our daily and hourly habitation. We must take time to be holy. Let us put our desires into one heart-felt petition for a baptism of the Holy Ghost, and not cease to present it until we have prevailed. So Elijah prayed; he threw himself onto the ground, resolved not to rise again till his request was granted. So Jacob wrestled with the angel. So Daniel set his face unto the Lord his God. So the disciples continued with one accord in prayer and supplication.

Jonathan Edwards on the Work of the Holy Spirit

Ian Rees

Let me make a few comments by way of introduction. It is with a fair degree of apprehension that I approach this subject. This paper is the only directly theological paper of the day and such papers are naturally 'heavier' than biographical accounts because they lack the witty anecdotes to spice up the allotted forty minutes. Secondly the title may sound grand and expansive, but I am going to confine myself to just two pieces of Edwards' writings. I have elected to analyse each in turn, following Edwards' own points, rather than flit between the two. The first describes more particularly the work of the Spirit in individuals; the second, his work in groups of people. Learned brethren who have read more widely than this will have to be patient, at least until I have finished.

In his introduction to The Institutes of the Christian Religion, John Calvin remarks, 'I count myself one of the number of those who write as they learn and learn as they write'. That has been my experience in writing this.

SECTION ONE Jonathan Edwards' teaching on the work of the Holy Spirit in individuals.

The first piece of Edwards' writings we are going to examine is a sermon entitled 'A Divine and Supernatural Light immediately imparted to the soul by the Spirit of God, shown to be both a Scriptural and rational doctrine' (Works, Vol. 2, pp. 12–17), although we will not concern ourselves with his rational proofs. It is a useful summary of Edwards' thinking on the nature and necessity of a work of the Spirit if there is to be true faith.

The sermon is an exposition of Matthew 16:17, which is Christ's response to Peter's affirmation of faith, namely that Jesus is: 'the Christ, the Son of the Living God'. This, Jesus says, is no mere human deduction or the product of a sharp mind at work; rather it is what God has revealed to him. Mere flesh and blood had no part to play in the relaying of such information. How else can it be explained Edwards asks, that ignorant fishermen should perceive a divine truth, while the nation's scholars remain in darkness? He answers the question for us: 'This could be owing only to the gracious distingishing influence of the Spirit of God.' And from this he draws his doctrine which he states as follows: 'That there is such a thing as a spiritual and divine light, immediately imparted to the soul by God, of a different nature from any which is imparted by natural means.'

What the Divine Light is not

The sermon then sets about demonstrating this proposition, first of all by showing what the divine light is not. He gives four examples, all of which people assumed were automatic signs of the Spirit's work ('He must be converted because') when Edwards maintains that they are not necessarily so.

The first example he describes as 'Those convictions that natural men have of their sin and misery …' These do not fall within the scope of this spiritual and divine light, he says, because 'Men in their natural condition may have convictions of the guilt that lies upon them, and of the anger of God, and their danger of divine vengeance'. Now to this he adds that 'Such convictions are from the light of truth, … and this light and conviction may be from the Spirit of God'.

But this is not enough. There is an extra dimension to the work of the Spirit in a believer, not present in an unbeliever, however enlightened he may be about sin.

> The Spirit of God, in those convictions which unregenerate men sometimes have, assists conscience to do this work in a further degree than it would do if they were left to themselves. He helps it against those things that tend to stupify it, and obstruct its exercise. But in the renewing and sanctifying work of the Holy Ghost, those things are wrought in the soul that are above nature, and of which there is nothing of the like kind in the soul by nature.

Thus, the Spirit infuses a new principle into human nature when this divine light is given, and does not merely make use of what men are naturally capable of perceiving by themselves. Edwards continues on this tack:

> The Spirit of God … may indeed act upon the mind of a natural man, but he acts in the mind of a saint as an indwelling principle. He acts upon the mind of an unregenerate person as an extrinsic occasional agent; for in acting upon them he doth not unite himself to them … But he unites himself with the mind of a saint, takes him for his temple, actuates and influences him as a new supernatural principle of life and action. There is this difference, that the Spirit of God, in acting in the soul of godly men, exerts and communicates himself there in his own proper nature. Holiness is the proper nature of the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit operates in the mind of the godly, by uniting himself to them, and living in them, exerting his own nature in the exercise of their faculties.

The second example is of vivid impressions made on the imagination. Spiritual light does not consist in such impressions, however vivid that impression may be. In other words, it is not some mystical experience that forces itself on a person's mind. Edwards observes that

> when the mind has a lively discovery of spiritual things, and is greatly affected by the power of divine light, it may and probably very commonly doth, much affect the imagination; so that impressions of an outward beauty or brightness may accompany these spiritual discoveries. But spiritual light is not that impression upon the imagination, but an exceedingly different thing.

Thirdly, this spiritual light is not a suggesting of new truths not contained in the word of God already. This we know as inspiration, but

> This spiritual light that I am speaking of is quite a different thing from inspiration. It reveals no new doctrine, it teaches no new thing of God, or Christ, or another world, not taught in the Bible, but only gives a due apprehension of those things that are taught in the word of God.

Finally, it is not what he calls 'every affecting view that men have of religious things', since men can be moved by reading an account of the sufferings of Christ as much as by any other tragic account. It may be mere human emotion that brings this about, and not true spiritual light.

These four things then can often be attributed to human nature and must not be taken as automatic signs of grace. From these, Edwards turns to a positive consideration of what this spiritual light actually is.

What this Divine Light is

Basically it does not consist in believing certain things to be true about God, but rather knowing them to be true and rejoicing in them. To use his own words it is

> A real sense and apprehension of the divine excellency of the things revealed in the word of God. A spiritual and saving conviction of the truth and reality of these things arises from such a sight of their divine excellency and glory.

Edwards therefore sees two elements to this divine light. The first is what he calls

> A true sense and apprehension of the divine and superlative excellency of the things of religion; a real sense of the excellency of God and Jesus Christ, and of the work of redemption, and the ways and works of God revealed in the gospel.

The stress that he is laying is upon a real knowledge of these things, or an experiential knowledge. He continues

> He that is spiritually enlightened truly apprehends or sees it [the divine glory of religion, etc.], or has a sense of it. He does not merely rationally believe that God is glorious, but he has a sense of the gloriousness of God in his heart. There is not only a rational belief that God is holy, and that holiness is a good thing, but there is a sense of the loveliness of God's holiness … Thus there is a difference between having an opinion that God is holy and gracious, and

> having a sense of the loveliness and beauty of that holiness and grace … So there is a difference between believing that a person is beautiful, and having a sense of his beauty. The former may be obtained by hearsay, but the latter only by seeing the countenance.

The difference lies in the personal experience of God that Edwards has defined for us at the beginning. This 'spiritual and divine light' brings a man to see the glory of God and embrace it. He does not merely acknowledge God's glory and greatness; he loves it and is thrilled by it.

The second area he states as follows

> There arises from this sense of divine excellency of things contained in the word of God, a conviction of the truth and reality of them.

Out of this sense of the glory of God comes the conviction that God's word is true, and that the things of which it speaks are real. By conviction Edwards means more than a grudging assent or nod in the direction of Scripture; he is talking of certainty about and complete acceptance of what the Scripture says.

He says that this divine light removes the prejudices of the heart towards the truth, and helps men to see the truth more clearly. This is just what man needs but cannot do for himself, for he is naturally at emnity to God and what he has to say. The Spirit, however, shines light into his darkness, removing the barriers in his mind and heart and causing him to see that there is nothing to compare with God and his word.

These two elements, he maintains, are essential to saving faith, but cannot be produced by human effort, whether religious or otherwise. Men are capable of giving assent to the idea of God as the one who is glorious, but they cannot produce a sense of God's glory in their hearts unless the Spirit shows it to them.

Before making application to our own situation, we must briefly consider what Edwards has to say about the way in which this divine light is imparted to us, if we cannot produce it ourselves. He makes three points. Firstly that God uses our natural faculties and does not by-pass them. He speaks to our minds and understanding. Secondly that he makes use of outward means, namely the Gospel. The Spirit gives an understanding and 'apprehension of the same truths that are given in the word of God; and therefore is not given without the word'. Thirdly the means that God uses do not have power in themselves; they are simply instruments that God employs.

Application

Edwards makes his own application, which we will begin with. In the first place, he says, such a doctrine puts a saving knowledge of God in everyone's reach. Not that everyone can save themselves, but that anyone, whether

learned or ignorant, can be taught by the Spirit of God. He points out that, in fact, it is often the Spirit's way to show such things to the unlearned in order to humble those who pride themselves on their own powers of understanding, cf. 1 Corinthians 1:26–27: 'Not many of you wise by human standards …' Secondly, he asks all of us if we have known this spiritual light in our own souls, and in consequence he (thirdly) urges all to seek it. Edwards was not locked in an ivory tower; he was an evangelist at heart.

His words also speak directly to our own times. Firstly, we would do well to learn to trust God in our evangelism. Edwards is speaking of a sovereign work of the Spirit, imparting spiritual light to those in darkness, a work in which we are only instruments, not agents. Our responsibility is to preach the Gospel; but it does not extend to converting the soul. God does this, and he is well able to do it. With this assurance upholding us, we shall find no temptation to employ emotional and psychological pressure to persuade people to make a decision for Christ. We should preach with conviction and earnestness; but we will not twist their arms with tear jerking stories and deliberate technique to pull at the heart strings; we will counsel and speak with them, but will, at the same time, be able to leave the matter of their conversion to the Spirit.

Such trust in God should shape our evangelism and counselling of 'enquirers'. Instead of taking them mechanically through a prayer of commitment and then finding it necessary to convince them that they have become Christians (which they may not have), we will be able to advise them to simply seek God until they find him, until he gives them the light they do not have.

Secondly, Edwards challenges us in the area of discernment. What is the difference between conviction and conversion? And what should we look for in true conversion? The church would be spared multiple agonies if she heeded his words on this subject since Edwards was trying to describe the Spirit's work in this area for us.

Consider the great claims that are made on God's behalf when folk profess conversion, or simply come under conviction. It is not generally acknowledged that professions can be nothing more than that—an empty claim without substance or foundation. Nor is it even suspected that conviction of sin can be nothing more than an emotional response to a powerful message. Not that we should reject claims to faith on the grounds that they might be spurious, but an awareness of all that Edwards has been saying would at least make us tread more cautiously.

Or what of the evidence of true conversion? Should we be telling those who profess faith that they have become Christians as long as they have

sincerely prayed a prayer? Edwards looked for that sense of the beauty of God's holiness and a consequent conviction of the truth and reality of the things contained in God's word or, in other words, he was looking for a positive assurance of faith. And this is not too much to expect of a young convert, because they are things which the Spirit gives in his sovereignty, irrespective of human abilities.

Thirdly, there is the question of the means God uses. The Bible says that the sword of the Spirit is the Word of God, so Edwards says that the Spirit never imparts new truths, but brings people to understand and apprehend those truths already spelled out in the Word, a factor which groups in every age, including our own, have ignored. In their search for a powerful work of the Spirit, they set aside the one thing he will always employ, namely the Word.

If the Word is important, so is preaching. Preaching communicates divine truth under the unction and power of the Spirit. Of course, what Edwards has said to us will convince us that it will be futile to trust in our own good preaching. Preaching is just the instrument that God uses and has no inherent power. It will bring divine light to the hearers only as the Spirit uses it.

SECTION TWO. Jonathan Edwards' teaching on the work of the Holy Spirit in groups of people

The second piece of Edwards' writings which we are to consider is *The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God* (*Works,* Vol. 2 pp. 260–277). The full title informs us that what was written was 'applied to that uncommon operation that has lately appeared on the minds of many of the people in New England'. In other words the awakening of 1735 had caused a stir, with those defending it and those attacking it. Many thought it fanatical (and there were fanatical elements), and too noisy for a true work of the Spirit, so Edwards is seeking to define a true work of the Spirit, putting into practise what we have just considered, and thereby defend the awakening. This is how he defines his purpose:

> My design therefore at this time is to show what are the true, certain and distinguishing evidences of a work of the Spirit of God, by which we find we may safely proceed in the judging of any operation we see in ourselves, or see in others.

The paper is an exposition of 1 John 4:1, 'Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone into the world'. In his introduction he observes that, firstly, there have always been (and always will be) false teachers and those who, under the devil's influence, counterfeit the work of the Spirit of God, so guidelines for

identifying such fakes are needed. Secondly, this chapter (1 John 4) provides such guidance by concentrating on what the work of the Spirit is. Edwards expresses his amazement that more reference to this chapter is not made when 'there is so much talk about the work of the Spirit'. A complaint which rings true in our own day. Thirdly, he tells us that the apostle was not only aiming at discerning extraordinairy circumstances, such as prophecy and miracles, but also the more ordinairy influences on the minds of Christians. Fourthly, he states that the Scriptures alone are sufficient to guide us on these matters, and this chapter in John's first letter is particularly useful.

Negative Signs

The first section in the work is devoted to what are called 'negative signs'. In it, Edwards describes some of the events of the revival which reactionary elements had been using against the revival. His opponents reasoned that events proved that the revival was not a work of the Spirit of God. Edwards, on the other hand, argues that the events described do not prove anything either way, for extra evidence is necessary.

It is interesting to observe the way in which each generation perceives events around them. Opponents of the revival took the amazing happenings of 1735 as a sign of God's absence; our 'signs and wonders generation' would take the events as a sign of his presence; but Edwards says that such events on their own cannot be taken as proof either way, for they are neutral, although he does use some of them to bolster his case. What sort of events is he talking about then? He gives nine sets of examples.

Firstly, he answers those who complain that the work is out of character with what God has done prior to this. 'There is a great aptness in persons to doubt of things that are strange, especially elderly persons, to think that to be right [wrong?] which they have never been used to in their day, and have not heard of in the days of their fathers' which sounds familiar. Edwards points out that newness should not necessarily be equated with a departure from the truth, because God has done new things before, and may therefore do new things again. As long as that work cannot be shown to have directly contravened Scripture, we should not cavil:

> No deviation from what has hitherto been usual, let it be never so great, is an arguement that a work is not from the Spirit of God, if it be no deviation from his prescribed rule. The Holy Spirit is sovereign in his operation; and we know that he uses a great variety; and we cannot tell how great a variety he may use, within the compass of the rules he himself has fixed. We ought not to limit God where he has not limited himself.

Of course, whether you agree with his reasoning or not on this point, and the next, will depend on what stance you take concerning the Scripture. Does Scripture need to expressly forbid something, or is it merely sufficient to say something is not mentioned to mean it should not be accepted?

Secondly, he answers those who judge the revival by the effects it had on people, such as 'tears, tremblings, groans, loud outcries, agonies of body, or the failing of bodily strength'. 'Over the top' is the way we would put it today, but Edwards answers:

> We cannot conclude that persons are under the influence of the true Spirit because we see such effects on their bodies, because this is not given as a mark of the true Spirit; nor on the other hand, have we any reason to conclude, from any such outward appearances, that persons are not under any influence of the Spirit of God, because there is no rule of Scripture given us to judge of spirits by, that does either expressly or indirectly exclude such effects upon the body, nor does reason exclude them.

He then proceeds to demonstrate that it is quite reasonable, also giving Biblical examples, that such things should be experienced, as people have suddenly come to appreciate their lost state and woeful condition. In fact, it would be rather surprising if they did not feel this way: 'No wonder that the wrath of God, when manifested but a little to the soul, overbears human strength.'

Thirdly, he deals with the question of noise. Edwards' contemporaries evidently thought the revival undignified and uncouth. It is to be supposed that they wanted no disturbances and unseemliness, but Edwards replies:

> Spiritual and eternal things are so great, and of such infinite concern, that there is a great absurdity in men's being moderately moved and affected by them … When was there ever any such thing since the world stood, as a people in general being greatly affected in any affair whatsoever, without noise or stir? The nature of man will not allow it.

He notes in concluding:

> What a mighty opposition there was in Jerusalem, on the occasion of that great effusion of the Spirit! And so in Samaria, Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, and other places! The affair filled the world with noise, and gave occasion to some to say of the apostles, that they had turned the world upside-down, Acts 17:6.

The fourth area is related to the third, that there were those who objected that many people had great impressions made upon their imaginations. By this, Edwards means

> a kind of ecstasy, wherein they have been carried beyond themselves, and have had their minds transported into a train of strong and pleasing imaginations, and a kind of visions, as though they were rapt up even to heaven, and there saw glorious sights.

Edwards points out that God has given us imagination and, at a time when the people are engaged in what he calls 'intense thought and strong affections about invisible things', it would be strange, he says, if there were not such happenings.

Fifthly, he answers those who objected to the fact that many were being converted because they had been influenced by others (Edwards calls it 'the use of example'). Presumably his opponents argued that people should be drawn by God's Spirit unaided if a work was to count as a genuine moving of the Spirit, but Edwards replies from Scripture that there has never been a time when God does not use the good example of the godly to influence others.

The next three sections of Edwards' answer we can combine into one, since all are related. The revival produced, as any work of God will, a crop of enthusiasts who were guilty of 'imprudencies and irregularities in their conduct', but which of us has not slipped up in this way at some time? Such happenings in revival are hardly surprising, when great things are going on, when lukewarmness has been forsaken, and many are being saved. Edwards cites examples of hot-headness in Scripture—the chaos at Corinth for instance—and shows that the apostles sought to temper it, and not dismiss it.

Likewise, problems arose when people, having professed faith, fell into gross sin, or even showed themselves as heretics. The world used such an event as a convenient brush with which to tar the whole revival and reject it, but Edwards will have none of it:

> That there are some counterfeits, is no arguement that nothing is true: such things are always expected in a time of reformation … Instances of this nature in the apostles' days were innumerable; some fell away into gross heresies, others into vile practises, though they seemed to be the subjects of a work of the Spirit—and were accepted for a while amongst those that were truly so, as their brethren and companions—and were not suspected until they went out from them, … Therefore the devil's sowing such tares is no proof that a true work of the Spirit of God is not gloriously carried on.

The last part of this section on 'Negative signs' concerns the objections raised about the severe preaching the revival produced. It was evidently felt that there was too much about hell and the terrors of the Law, and too much ranting and raving on the part of those who preached it. The order of the day was decency and decorum, so the new emphasis on the revival would have offended against good manners, but Edwards' answer is that it would be wrong to neglect preaching about hell, because that is preparatory to the Gospel, and wrong to preach about hell in a cold, unconcerned manner, because that would contradict the message being given.

These, then, are what Edwards considers to be neutral signs; the opponents of the revival were attempting to use them as evidence to discredit it, but Edwards is pointing out that they are not evidence either way, although, as we have seen, he was quite happy to make use of them and show that such happenings were not unreasonable under the circumstances.

Positive Signs

The second part of the work is concerned with showing what are evidences of the work of the Spirit. We will notice a similarity with what we have seen in 'A Divine and Supernatural Light', which is not surprising since Edwards is being consistent with himself and with Scripture.

First of all, he says that a true work of the Spirit raises the esteem that people have for Jesus, 1 John 4:2–3. These verses imply a confession of faith in Jesus as Lord and Saviour and not merely agreeing or allowing that it is so. He says:

> If the spirit that is at work among a people is plainly observed to work so as to convince them of Christ, and lead them to him—and to confirm their minds in the belief of the history of Christ as he appeared in the flesh—and that he is the Son of God, and was sent of God to save sinners; that he is the only Saviour, and that they stand in great need of him; and if he seems to beget in them higher and more honourable thoughts of him than they used to have, and to incline their thoughts and affections more to him; it is a sure sign that it the true and right Spirit.

Secondly, he looks for a corresponding hatred of the things of the world. He uses 1 John 4:4–5 to show that there is a stark contrast between the Spirit of God and other spirits, in that the true Spirit overcomes the world, whereas the others 'speak and savour the things of the world'. If we need a definition of worldliness, we only have to turn to 1 John 2:16, 'cravings of sinful man, etc.'—and see what the Spirit turns people away from. Edwards notes:

> We may safely determine from what the Apostle says, that the spirit that is at work among a people, after such a manner, as to lessen men's esteem of the pleasures, profits, and honours of the world, and to take their hearts from an eager pursuit of these things; and to engage them in a deep concern about a future state and eternal happiness which the Gospel reveals—and puts them upon earnestly seeking the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and the spirit that convinces them of the dreadfulness of sin, the guilt it brings, and the misery to which it exposes; must needs be the Spirit of God.

The third proof concerns, as we might expect, the Scriptures. The Holy Spirit always causes people to have a greater regard for the Bible, 1 John 4:6. The result of his work is always that men become more solidly founded on the truth and reject false doctrine. The spirit of error never leads men to the

Scripture to revere and to obey it and rest upon it as God's truth. Rather, it supplements, replaces or misuses the Bible. This test of truth and error is very useful:

> Another rule to judge of spirits may be drawn from those compellations given to the opposite spirits, in the last words of the 6th verse, 'The spirit of truth and the spirit of error'. These words exhibit the two opposite characters of the Spirit of God, and other spirits that counterfeit his operations. And therefore, if by observing the manner of the operation of a spirit that is at work among a people, we see that it operates as a spirit of truth, convincing them of those things which are true, we may safely determine that it is a right and true spirit.

Finally, he says that a sure sign of a work of the true Spirit is the presence of love for God and man. John speaks of this from verse 6 onwards, but describes it particularly in verses 12–13.

In these verses love is spoken of as if it were that wherein the very nature of the Holy Spirit consisted; or as if divine love dwelling in us, and the Spirit of God dwelling in us, were the same thing … Therefore this last mark which the apostle gives of the true Spirit he seems to speak of as the most eminent; and so he insists much more largely upon it, than all the rest. Therefore when the spirit that is at work amongst the people, tends this way, and brings many of them to high and

> exalting thoughts of the Divine Being, and his glorious perfections; and works in them an admiring, delightful sense of the excellency of Jesus Christ; representing him as the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely, and makes him precious to the soul; winning and drawing the heart with those motives and incitements to love, of which the apostle speaks in that passage of Scripture we are upon, viz., the wonderful, free love of God in giving his only-begotten Son to die for us, and the wonderful dying love of Christ to us, who had no love to him, but were his enemies; must needs be the Spirit of God, as verses 9, 10, 16, 19 … The spirit that excites to dwell on those motives, and makes the attributes of God as revealed in the Gospel, and manifested in Christ, delightful objects of contemplation; and makes the soul to long after God and Christ after their presence and communion, acquaintance with them, and conformity to them—and to live so as to please and honour them; the spirit that quells contentions among men, and gives a spirit of peace and good will, excites to acts of outward kindness, and earnest desire of the salvation of souls—and causes a delight in those that appear as the children of God, and followers of Christ; I say that when a spirit operates after this manner among a people, there is the highest kind of evidence of the operation of a true and divine spirit.

Edwards points to these signs as true evidences of the Spirit's presence and work. They are reliable because they are things that the devil neither will do, nor can do. On the contrary, he says that they 'plainly show the finger of God'.

Application

Once again, Edwards make application for his own day. He says, not surprisingly, that these points clearly demonstrate that the revival was a work of the Spirit of God. He therefore urges his opponents not to hinder the work, but to promote it; and to friends of the revival he gives an exhortation that they should do nothing to blacken the work or damage it by their careless conduct or zeal. He urges them not to fall into extravangancies of belief—such as following the first gifted leader ('a jack-with-a-lantern' to use his words) who came their way—and not to despise human learning or the study of the Scripture.

It is interesting that Edwards should have had to deal with such a matter in his concluding paragraphs, but it is not altogether unexpected. With great and amazing happenings come the extreme and way-out, and one could almost say that Edwards even invited such things. In his list of 'Negative Signs' he cites the extraordinary events going on, saying that they do not prove anything about the revival, but not also that they should be stopped. The door to extremism is therefore left open at this point, and so has to be closed later on.

We know, in our day, what such extremism is like: wild claims to prophetic inspiration are made in the name of a work of the Spirit, accompanied by a rejection, or merely a downgrading, of the Scriptures; and exuberant and noisy worship is taken as a sure indication that the Spirit is at work. What Edwards has to say should help us evaluate all such phenomena.

Edwards's paper tells us to guard against judging a work by what we see outwardly. We may be tempted to do this—and feel justified in doing so—but we must dismiss the temptation. For instance, noise, emotion (tears, crying out, fainting etc.), great impressions upon people's minds, even irregular conduct in worship (all of which Edwards saw in the revival) are features of today's style of worship and these are often the criteria by which the spirituality of a work is judged, with the outcome depending upon which side of the line you already stand.

But Edwards will not let us do that. There are other features we should look at first of all, and they are spiritual characteristics. We need to be asking ourselves about the four 'Positive Signs' Edwards has given and assess whatever we see as negative in that light. Let us consider the questions he asks.

- Is there an increased love for Jesus Christ? An awareness of his majesty and glory?

- More reverence towards him? An appreciation of his work, past and present? Or is the fervour nothing more than a sticky sentimentalism, content to mouth the name of Jesus, but with no solid understanding of who he actually is?
- Is there a corresponding hatred of sin and worldliness, drawing people away from pride, greed, or jealousy (sins of the heart), as well as from outward sinfulness? Or do these things remain unrebuked and therefore unchecked?
- Is there a true demonstration of love for God and men? Or is there a coldness which turns away outsiders, a lack of love towards fellow believers and an uncaring spirit towards those in need?
- Is there a love for the Word of God and a desire to understand and follow it? This is most important, since the other three categories rest upon this one. Can there be a true love for Christ if there is no reference to the Word? If there is no care for the Word, how will you know what sin is and how to deal with it? And what of love? If there is no regard for the Bible, how are we to know whether love is not just another example of dead works that do not save?

It is probably at this point that most of the stumbling and falling takes place in Christian circles. There is, sadly all too often, a wedge driven between the work of the Spirit and the Bible. The former is presented as what God is doing now, and the latter, as what he did in the past. Some put it even more strongly, twisting the Bible: 'The Spirit gives life, and the Bible is dead letter.' Either way, the effect is the same, there is a divorce between Spirit and Word, which should not take place.

And the end result is the same, too. The Bible is slowly (or very quickly) pushed out of its central place. Sometimes it is regarded as more or less redundant and only appears for personal use. Other times it becomes a text book or convenient peg for a message. Elsewhere, a sermon will be tested or 'confirmed' by prophetic words. All of this may be compounded by an anti-intellectualism which frowns upon study and preparation and takes pride in ignorance, or alternatively looks for exciting and new interpretations of texts and looks down on expository and systematic teaching of the Bible. Under these circumstances, exuberant worship may be nothing more than a smokescreen. The noise covers the spiritual emptiness; 'prophetic words' have replaced the Prophetic Word, and spiritual immaturity prevails.

But where there is a love for the truth that is centred upon the Christ of the Scriptures, Edwards urges us to suppress our feelings about external (and secondary) matters and rejoice that the Spirit of God is at work. If there are

problems and excesses, these will be dealt with in the teaching of the Word. Only let such teaching be in the power of the Spirit.

And Spirit-empowered teaching and preaching of the Scriptures is precisely what we need. If Edwards could only say one thing to us today, it would be that the Spirit of God does work from time to time in glorious power and that we should look to God for it. Edwards gives us glimpses of the amazing events of 1735 (and later) that should make us yearn for God to come again in our day. Let us make that our prayer.

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