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EDITORIAL

Richard Baxter's call to Kidderminster is explored very properly by a Kidderminster man who is also a lecturer and tutor in continuing education for the W.E.A. and the University of Birmingham. Mr. Gilbert's article heralds Professor Lamont's review of the outstandingly important Keeble and Nuttall *Calendar* of Baxter's Correspondence.

Leslie Cooke became both Dissenting Primate in London and ecumenical statesman in Geneva. He is here recalled by one whose faith was formed in Cooke's first pastorate. That sort of local formation is also a theme of the article on English Presbyterian Missions in China. Like John Morris, George Hood writes from an involvement which colours his subject. Detached observers may come to different conclusions, but they will not be more authoritative.

As on previous occasions the Society is indebted to E. Alan Rose, Editor of the Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society, for compiling the Index to Volume Four of this *Journal*.

NOTES

F. KEAY, M.A. A.C.I.S. 1915 - 1992

Fred Keay, our research secretary for the last fifteen years, died at Easter 1992. He was born in Madras, where his father was a banker. He was educated at George Watson's Boys College in Edinburgh, where he was School Captain when the new building opened in 1932. At the time of his death he was involved in planning the celebrations for the sixtieth anniversary of that new school. He played rugby and cricket for his school and continued to play for the Old Watsonians when at university. In latter years he kept up his interests from the pavilion at Lord's where he was a member of the Middlesex Club. In 1937 he graduated in mathematics.

He then joined Standard Life Assurance until 1939 when he became an RAF officer in the meteorological section. When the war was over he joined the Heinz company and then Ferranti Computers. From there he went to Ashridge Management College as Assistant Director, retiring in 1970. While at Ashridge he wrote books under the titles *The Numerate Manager* and *Marketing and Sales Forecasting*.

He was a member of St. James's United Reformed Church, Edgware, serving as a Sunday School teacher for many years and as an Elder from 1957. He edited the church magazine and compiled the Silver Jubilee Brochure. With Arthur Macarthur in membership at St. James's and Gordon Esslemont an elder in the same presbytery and a colleague at Heinz it was inevitable that Fred Keay would be invited to help at Tavistock Place, where there was a tradition of volunteer assistance with the former Presbyterian Church of England's library and archives. For many years the two worked in tandem and when Mr. Esslemont moved to Suffolk Mr. Keay continued to deal with the queries and visitors while other help was found on the library side. For many people he was the face of the History Society and he was held in regard and affection by the staff at Tavistock Place. He built up an enormous store of knowledge on matters such as churches whose names had changed, leading ministers of the Presbyterian Church of England, the holdings of local archives and the standard reference texts in the Library. All that is lost, but there remains his newly created card index for all ministers since 1972 to add to the lists of ministers in the constituent parts.

Fred Keay had been working recently on religious aspects of the life of Bertrand Russell and had written articles for *The Times* and *The Scotsman*. He gave talks and illustrated lectures on themes in Nonconformist history and had begun a series of historical pieces in *Reform*. One suspects that a great deal of his work in latter years is hidden in the pages of those local church histories for which he prepared material in response to enquiries. He carried out genealogical work for private clients and found time for holidays in Scotland, where he had inherited a house, and, more recently, in Canada where his daughter lives.

He put himself and his gifts at the service of the Church and his neighbours after the manner that Christian disciples should.

STEPHEN ORCHARD

Mr. ALAN TURBERFIELD of 75 Hurst Rise Road, Cumnor Hill, Oxford OX2 9HF is writing a study of the thought and action of *John Scott Lidgett (1854-1953)*, theologian, educationalist, social servant and public figure, President of the Federal Council of the Evangelical Free Churches and President of the Methodist Conference at the union of 1932. He has been described as “the William Temple of Methodism” and “the greatest Methodist since John Wesley”. He became both Vice-Chancellor of London University and Warden of Bermondsey Settlement. He led the Progressive Party on the LCC and took a prominent part in debates on national issues of his time.

Mr. Turberfield would like to hear from any readers who have personal reminiscences of Scott Lidgett, letters received, notes on and reactions to his sermons and addresses, and indeed any record which would help to throw light on a man whose influence was felt not just on the national scene but at the local level also: he served at Tunstall, Southport, Cardiff, Wolverhampton, Cambridge and Bermondsey.

WHEN RICHARD BAXTER CAME TO KIDDERMINSTER

The circumstances under which Richard Baxter was invited from Bridgnorth to Kidderminster in April 1641 are set out in his autobiography, and his biographers¹ have, by and large, been content to tell the story much as he does, with a few additional details. Yet, even though Baxter has not, I believe, deliberately suppressed anything, documents in Dr. Williams’s Library enable us to add to the account which he gives.

After the dissolution of the Short Parliament in May 1640, a tense political situation developed in England. The presence of a Scottish army in North East England meant that Charles I was forced to call another Parliament. The Long Parliament, as it would come to be called, assembled on 3 November 1640. It was more militant and more confident than its predecessor, and was able to carry through various changes in church and state. In Baxter’s words²,

This parliament, among other parts of their reformation, resolved to reform the corrupted clergy and appointed a committee to receive petitions and complaints against them; which was no sooner understood but multitudes in all [counties] came up with petitions against their ministers..... Among all these complainers the town of Kidderminster, in Worcestershire, drew up a petition against their ministers. The Vicar of the place they articulated against as one that

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1. The principal biographies of Richard Baxter are: G.F. Nuttall, *Richard Baxter* (1965), henceforth Nuttall; and F.J. Powicke, *A Life of the Rev. Richard Baxter 1615-1691* (1924; henceforth Powicke), with its sequel *The Rev. Richard Baxter under the Cross* (1927).
 2. *Reliquiae Baxterianae* (ed. M. Sylvester, 1696) 1,i,19-20, 29 (henceforth *Rel. Baxt.*)

was utterly insufficient for the ministry, presented by a Papist, unlearned, preached but once a quarter, which was so weakly as exposed him to laughter, and persuaded them that he understood not the very substantial articles of Christianity; that he frequented alehouses and had sometimes been drunk; that he turned the table altarwise etc., with more such as this. The Vicar had a curate under him in the town, whom they also accused, and a curate at a chapel in the parish, a common tippler and a drunkard, a railing quarreller, an ignorant, insufficient man... .

The Vicar whom they intended to report to the Committee for Scandalous Ministers, as it was called, was George Dance, a Cambridge graduate³ from the village of Castle Ashby in Northamptonshire, who may, in 1627, have been recommended to Sir Edward Blount of Kidderminster (the "Papist" who presented him) by the Earl of Northampton, the President of the Council of the Marches who had a seat at Castle Ashby and was a friend of Sir Edward Blount.⁴ The curate in the town was a man called John Dide and the other curate was John Turner, chaplain at the Chapel of Lower Mitton within Kidderminster parish. Like at least one previous chaplain of Lower Mitton, Turner supplemented his income by conducting illegal marriages.⁵

Baxter writes as if the dissatisfaction with Dance and his curates were universally felt in Kidderminster. However, it is more likely that a Puritan minority in the town was unhappy with the spiritual sustenance it was receiving. One of the things which characterised the Puritans within the Church of England was the demand for powerful preaching. In some places this demand had been met by the appointment of Lecturers (preachers), paid for by a private benefactor, a body of trustees or a corporation. Archbishop Laud had taken an unfavourable view of these Lectureships and had had several of them suppressed. However, the Long Parliament imprisoned Laud in 1641 and there was now no difficulty about appointing Lecturers, if the money could be found.

This is what happened in Kidderminster. In Richard Baxter's words,⁶

The people put their petition into the hands of Sir Henry Herbert, burgess for Bewdley, a town two miles distant. The Vicar, knowing

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3. J.A. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses*. That Dance came from Castle Ashby is shown by his 1670 P.C.C. will.
 4. The P.C.C. will of Sir Edward Blount (1630) has a bequest to William, Earl of Northampton, "Lord President of the Principality of Wales", of "my lanneret [falcon], my foxhounds and other hounds".
 5. On John Dide and John Turner see Nuttall pp.25-6. The previous curate of Lower Mitton who is known to have performed illegal marriages was Richard Pritchard in c.1610 (P.R.O.: STAC 8/260/12). Turner had been at Lower Mitton since at least 1624. Baxter in *A Second True Defence of the Mere Nonconformists* (1681), p.72 says that John Dide was even "more offensive..... than the Vicar to the religious people" of the town.
 6. *Rel. Baxt.* I,i,20, 29.

his insufficiency and hearing how two others in his case had sped, desired to compound the business with them, and by the mediation of Sir Henry Herbert and others it was brought to this: that he should, instead of his present curate in the town, allow £60 per annum to a preacher whom fourteen of them nominated should choose; and that he should not hinder this preacher from preaching whenever he pleased, and that he himself should read the Common Prayer and do all else that was to be done; and so they preferred not their petition against him, nor against his curates, but he kept his place, which was worth to him near £200 per annum, allowing that £60 out of it to their Lecturer. To perform this he gave a bond of £500.

Kidderminster had no M.P. of its own in 1641. In the petition of 1633, which led to the grant of a royal charter to the town in 1636, a request had been made for "a burgess for the parliament",⁷ but it had been refused. Hence the Kidderminster Puritans turned to Sir Henry Herbert, the member for Bewdley in the Long Parliament.⁸ Sir Henry was in many ways a surprising ally for them. The brother of the poet and divine George Herbert, he was a staunch Anglican, though not, as far as is known, a Laudian. He was also an official in the court of Charles I, holding the post of Master of the Revels. Yet Sir Henry Herbert was not a man of limited or narrow views. Richard Baxter, as a promising young man from Shropshire, who was (no doubt) also recommended by Herbert's cousin Sir Richard Newport,⁹ had stayed with Sir Henry in London for about four weeks in late 1634, and there seem to have been occasional friendly contacts between the two men thereafter, up to Herbert's death in 1673.¹⁰ There is no reason to suppose that Sir Henry felt any great sympathy for the Kidderminster petitioners, or any antipathy to George Dance and his curates. He would have been approached in the first instance as a local M.P. who could present their petition. Later, as Baxter says, his role became that of a mediator.

George Dance's bond still exists.¹¹ It is dated February 26th 1640-41 and records that George Dance is bound in the sum of £500 to two lawyers, Henry Pytt of Clifford's Inn and William Pynson of Clement's Inn, to perform certain actions, in particular to allow "a godly, learned preacher of the Word of God" to preach in the church of Kidderminster "without interruption or contradiction" for "the instructing of the parishioners in the knowledge of their duties to God and man". The Lecturer is to be chosen by sixteen named Feoffees and Dance commits himself to obtaining a licence for the Lecturer and his successors "from the Ordinary [the Bishop] to preach in the said church". The bond is signed by

7. The quotation is from the petition, now at Longleat House, Wiltshire.

8. On Sir Henry Herbert see *D.N.B.*

9. Nuttall p.4.

10. *Ibid.* pp.4-5.

11. D.W.L., Baxter Treatises, IV, no.128(i).

Dance and was "sealed in the presence of" the following five men: (Sir) Henry Herbert, Edmund Boylston, Anthony Hungerford, Edward Richards and Francis Bowyer.

The sixteen Feoffees¹² are named as the following (in order): Daniel Dobbyns esquire, Richard Pitt gent. [the High Bailiff], Adam Hough gent., John Freeston, John Doolittle, Robert Greene, John Corbyn, Edward Richards, Thomas Ware, Edward Walderne, Thomas Read, Francis Bowyer, Thomas Longmore, Robert Whittle, Abraham Plimley and Simon Harrington. Those sixteen, with eleven other parishioners, would appoint Richard Baxter as their Lecturer on 5 April 1641. Two of them (Edward Richards, mercer, and Francis Bowyer, gent.) were among the witnesses in whose presence George Dance's bond was sealed. The other three witnesses were not Kidderminster men.

Let us consider what is known about these three non-Kidderminster witnesses and about the two lawyers who were involved in these transactions. *Sir Henry Herbert* has already been discussed. Born at Montgomery Castle in 1595, he had lived at Ribbesford House near Bewdley since 1627. *Edmund Boylston* belonged to one of the leading families in Bewdley. He was Bailiff of Bewdley in 1635-36, the first year that Ship Money was collected. It seems likely that Sir Henry Herbert and Edmund Boylston worked together to get Bewdley's Ship Money assessment (of £70) reduced.¹³ Edmund Boylston and his brother Thomas were captains in the Parliament army in the Civil War. That leaves *Anthony Hungerford*. The Bewdley Bridgewardens' accounts¹⁴ relating to 1637 have the following entries:

Pd. in going to the High Sheriff concerning the town about Ship Money, 16/2d.

Pd. to Mr Hungerford wch was disbursed by him at London abt. Ship Money, £1-15-0.

Pd. Sir Hy Herbert wch he disbursed at London for the town, £7-3-8.

I suspect that "Mr Hungerford" is our Anthony Hungerford, who may have been a lawyer. He was possibly the man of that name who was born c.1585, the son of Sir John Hungerford of Down Ampney, Gloucestershire and attended Oriel College, Oxford and Lincoln's Inn. He was in the Parliament army in the Civil War, serving in (among other places) Worcestershire and Shropshire. He died in June 1657.¹⁵

What of the lawyers, *Henry Pytt* and *William Pynson*? It is clear from the 1670 will of William Pynson that Henry Pytt was his cousin. He may possibly have

12. On the Feoffees see T.W.A.S., 3rd Ser., Vol.11(1988), pp.39-42.

13. J.R. Burton, *A History of Bewdley* (1883), App.p.xxx; C.S.P.D. 1637, pp.149, 284.

14. Burton, App.p.xii ff.

15. On Anthony Hungerford see *D.N.B.* (the article is chiefly about his Royalist namesake); J. Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses*; "Sir William Brereton's Letter Books", no 717n. (Rec. Soc. of Lancs. & Cheshire, vol. 128).

been related to the Pitt family of Kidderminster (most notably to Richard Pitt), but there is no proof of this. Henry Pytt died in 1673. Thanks to the researches of G.P. Mander,¹⁶ we know a great deal more about Pynson than about Pytt. He was a Wolverhampton man and a solicitor. In the years 1627-32 he lived at Kinner near Kidderminster and may have become known to the Kidderminster Puritans at this time. He was in any case the cousin of Edward Richards of Kidderminster, mercer. By c.1637 Pynson, who seems to have been prepared to go to almost any lengths to hear stirring Puritan preachers, was living in Birmingham as a parishioner of the fiery preacher Francis Roberts. Pynson is reported to have remarked about this time that "none belonged to the [Church of England] but drunkards and whoremasters".

The fact that three of the five witnesses were men whose main connection was, it would seem, with the town of Bewdley points to the crucial role of Sir Henry Herbert at this time, and he may then have enlisted the assistance of two men with whom he had collaborated on behalf of the town over Ship Money. This goes some way to confirm what Richard Baxter says about the "mediation" of Sir Henry. On the other hand, the fact that two of William Pynson's cousins (Henry Pytt and Edward Richards) were involved in the transactions of 26 February 1640-41 indicates that Pynson too played a key part in these events. The alliance of Herbert, the Master of The Revels, and Pynson, the Puritan lawyer, is, to say the least, a surprising one. Pynson may be seen as representing the interests of the Kidderminster Puritans, whereas Herbert was, it would seem, genuinely a mediator. His religious views were probably close enough to those of George Dance for him to win Dance's confidence in his impartiality.

That Richard Baxter was not the first person to be considered for the position of Lecturer at Kidderminster we learn from his autobiography: "These things being thus finished some of them desired old Mr. Laphthorne (a famous man, turned from Nonconformity by King James) to come and preach with them on trial to be their Lecturer. Mr. Laphthorne's roughness and great methodicalness and digressions so offended the intelligent leading party that they rejected him somewhat uncivilly, to his great displeasure". Who was Anthony Laphthorne?¹⁷ Born c.1570, he was appointed by James I Rector of Minchinhampton, Gloucs. (this was presumably after the King had "turned" him from Nonconformity). In the 1620s and 1630s he was associated with Bishop Morton (Bishop of Lichfield and, from 1632, of Durham) and gained a reputation for evangelising such areas as Cannock Chase in Staffordshire and, later, the wilder areas of Durham and Northumberland. He was constantly in trouble with the Court of High Commission, who regarded him as a "man incorrigible" and who finally silenced him in 1640. Puritans from Newcastle were accused during the court

16. G.P. Mander, *Wolverhampton Antiquary* no.1,p.260 ff.

17. On Anthony Laphthorne see C.S.P.D. 1638-39, pp.434-5 and 1639-40, pp.65,174,322, 384-5,402,542; W.H.D. Longstaffe (ed), "Act of the High Commission Court" (*Surtees Soc.*xxxiv(1858)pp.190-93); R. Howell, *Newcastle-upon-Tyne and the Puritan Revolution* (1967), pp.105,111,138,226,345.

proceedings of "gadding abroad every Sunday to the place where Mr Laphorne preaches and other like places". Laphorne, we are told, would refer to non-preaching ministers in traditionally forthright Puritan terms as "dumb dogs" and "blind guides". One witness mentioned his "very furious and earnest manner", presumably the very manner which failed to please "the intelligent leading party" in Kidderminster. One wonders how the Kidderminster Puritans came to consider Anthony Laphorne. A possible link is that "gadder after sermons" William Pynson, who may have heard him preach while Laphorne was in Lichfield diocese. Laphorne died at a great age in 1657 as Rector of Sedgfield, County Durham.

George Dance's bond was signed on 26 February and the trial sermons of Anthony Laphorne at Kidderminster were probably heard in the second week of March 1641. It was not, it seems, until about the middle of March that the Kidderminster Puritans were able to consider whom they should approach next. As is well known, they approached a young Shropshire curate (he was twenty-five years old), Richard Baxter, who was then at Bridgnorth. How did they come to approach him? Baxter's own account is silent on this point:¹⁸

Hereupon they invited me to them from Bridgnorth. the Bailiff of the town [Richard Pitt] and all the Feoffees desired me to preach with them, in order to a full determination. My mind was much to the place as soon as it was described to me, because it was a full congregation and most convenient temple; an ignorant, rude and revelling people for the greater part, who had need of preaching and yet had among them a small company of converts, who were humble, godly and of good conversations, and not much hated by the rest, and therefore the fitter to assist their teacher; but, above all, because they had hardly ever had any lively, serious preaching among them.... As soon as I came to Kidderminster and had preached there one day, I was chosen 'nemine contradicente' (for though fourteen only had the power of choosing, they desired to please the rest)....

The question about how he came to be chosen can be at least partially answered from a letter written to Baxter in August 1658 by John Corbyn of Eymore in Kidderminster, one of the sixteen Feoffees of 1641.¹⁹ Corbyn's letter drew from Baxter a stinging retort which tells us a great deal about his relations with the people of Kidderminster in the years since 1641. F.J. Powicke, who first drew attention to the importance of Baxter's letter to Corbyn, ignores Corbyn's letter to Baxter, though it is scarcely any less important.²⁰ John Corbyn was the Keeper of Eymore Wood, the property of the Dean and Chapter of Worcester Cathedral.

18. *Rel. Baxt.* I,i,20, 29.

19. Corbyn's letter and Baxter's reply are at D.W.L., Baxter Letters, IV.124-26 (= *Calendar*, nos. 478-79).

20. Powicke pp.84-6.

When this was confiscated by Parliament in 1650, Corbyn bought the estate for £3173/16/8 (he was a Parliament supporter in the Civil War).²¹ His letter to Baxter of August 1658 is an angry one. He accuses him of ignoring the wishes of the "religious party" who worshipped at the church of Upper Arley (they included Corbyn himself) in the appointment (for which Baxter seems to have been ultimately responsible) of a minister there. He also accuses him of lacking in "respect and gratitude" to a former "patron".

The relevant part of Corbyn's letter is the following:

Worthy sir, I thought it better to write my thoughts than to speak to you in words..... Could Mr. Dide, your predecessor, have done worse than this, whom we thrust out to put you in his room [place]..... [I] was your first patron, as it will plainly appear by this I shall write. When myself and about three or four of [the] Borough of Kidderminster and as many of the Foreign, did join to get us a godly minister and put out Mr. Dide, it was for the good of Kidderminster and not for myself, who lived remote. After we had brought Mr. Dide to leave off and Mr. Dance to give £60 a year, we sought out for a godly minister but could not agree about it. Some were vehement to have Mr. Cross. After there had been some thoughts about this business, myself, sitting at Mr. Ware's house [Thomas Ware, clothier, was one of the sixteen Feoffees] as chief of that council, told them I would motion one to them, and named you. They had never heard of you before. I told them I had heard you preach at Bewdley and that you had been at my house and had preached a Sabbath at Arley. And, whilst we were advising about it at Mr. Ware's house, there came in Sergeant Hubball of Bewdley [possibly Henry Hubball, who may have been a Sergeant-at-Mace to the Bewdley Corporation]. I told them he had heard you preach at Bewdley and asked him if he did not remember you. He answered he did, and that you were a man without exception. Yet, for the love they had to Mr. Cross, this would not take with them. After further study at another meeting, I pressed on the business and said I had found out a way, I hoped for the best good, to have you and Mr. Cross both, and said I could remember a Thursday lecture, and that we would restore it by having it kept by Mr. Cross and you. This motion did take and then order was taken to call you to Kidderminster, which I left to them, the work being done I intended.....

Baxter does not challenge this account in his letter to Corbyn. Though he accuses him of "ostentation and seeking your own glory", he admits, "Possibly

21. For John Corbyn see *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum* (ed. C.H. Firth and R.S. Rait, 1911)II,pp.1083,1334,1380,1444. His will of 1671 is at H.W.R.O., as is his inventory which lists goods to the value of £219/3/4.

you might contribute, with the rest, to deal against Mr. Dance and his curate.....". Several details in Corbyn's account have the ring of truth. It is entirely credible that Baxter should preach at Bewdley, where William Madstard, the minister at St. Leonard's Bridgnorth, whose curate Baxter then was, had formerly been both chaplain and schoolmaster. Moreover, the affection of many Kidderminster people for a "Mr. Cross" looks like an authentic detail. Baxter later wrote,²² "There lived at Kinver an ancient, prudent, reverend divine, Mr. John Cross, (who died since pastor of Matthew's, Friday St., in London). This godly man had been the chief means of the good which was done in Kidderminster before my coming. When I came I got him to take every second day in a weekly lecture". This passage, especially the last sentence, goes a considerable way towards corroborating one part at least of John Corbyn's story, and his account is, I think, to be believed, though there are clearly minor memory slips (e.g. over the number of Feoffees).

Having decided that Baxter was the man they wanted to approach, the Feoffees (in fact only eleven of them) wrote to "our worthy good friend and faithful preacher of God's word, Mr. Baxter at Bridgnorth" on Friday 19 March 1640-41.²³ The letter told him of George Dance's bond and added: ".....we therefore, having both heard a good report of yourself, and some of us having had experience of your abilities and godly conversation, would entreat you to take upon you this service and labour and, with what convenience you may, to come over for your further approbation and trial, that satisfaction (so near as possible) may be given to all.....". The text of the letter asks him to come over to Kidderminster on "Thursday next in the morning" (25 March).

However (and here the plot thickens), if the Feoffees as a whole were now in a hurry to conclude the business, some were in a greater hurry than others. A scribbled note on the letter (between the main text and the signatures) asks Baxter to "be hear to morow night at farthest, for your comeing doth much conserne us, and if you give 20s for suple[?] for Sabot day it shal be payd you. In hast....."²⁴ He is here being asked, on Friday 19 March, to preach on Sunday 21 March, whatever the formal text of the letter says. Bridgnorth is some twelve miles from Kidderminster and there would be no problem about a messenger on horseback taking a message there and returning within a few hours. Even so, the haste is extraordinary. Baxter obviously returned a negative reply and on the next day, Saturday 20 March, fourteen of the Feoffees wrote to him again,

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22. *Rel. Baxt.* I,i,24, 37. John Cross was a graduate of Trinity College, Cambridge (B.A.1617), and he was a Lecturer at Kinver by 1621. See *V.C.H. Staffordshire* XX, 155. He died in 1660 as minister of St. Matthew's, Friday St. London.
 23. D.W.L., *Baxter Letters*, I,f,212. (= *Calendar*, no. 2) Powicke, p.295 gives the date as 18 March but it is 19 March.
 24. The note is very difficult to read, and for that reason I have here retained the original spelling; "suple" is possibly "supply" (i.e. substitute), the meaning being that Baxter would have to pay 20/- to someone who preached in his stead at Bridgnorth on the Sabbath.

repeating the request to come over on the following Thursday.²⁵ This letter repeats the wording of the previous day, with the addition of a passage explaining that "Thursday next" is "the first day of the quarter specified in Mr. Dance's covenants, and a day wherein is offered the advantage of a public assembly and also our market day and also a day wherein we desire a weekly lecture.....[we] entreat your resolution herein by the bearer hereof that so we may give notice beforehand". One of the fourteen names this letter carried is that of the High Bailiff, and it is possible that Richard Pitt had objected to the dispatch of the letter of the previous day, which he had not signed.

Richard Baxter was not able to come to Kidderminster on Thursday 25 March. However, it is clear that he sent a speedy response to the letter of 20 March from the fourteen Feoffees (it was no doubt because of this letter that Baxter always speaks of only fourteen Feoffees, whereas it is evident that sixteen had been appointed). Although this letter from Baxter has not survived, we can guess something of its contents from the letter²⁶ which was written to him from Kidderminster a few days after (it was written between the 21st and 24th, because of the reference to the administrative New Year, which began on 25 March and was still in the future when the letter was written).

This third letter is the most interesting of those sent to Baxter at this time. It is signed by five Feoffees and ten other men, and says,

The tender affection of love you bear towards us and also those seasonable lines you wrote to us in answer to our longing desires (which most rejoiced our hearts) give us an invitation to write a few lines to you. We are very cordially thankful to you that you deny yourself of so many great tenders, and willingly accept of so small a competency with us. We, upon serious consultation with our friends, do cheerfully with willingness subscribe our hands, engaging ourselves to the performance thereof and to provide a house convenient for you and also endeavour (to the utmost of our power) to make good the rest of the conditions specified in your letter, earnestly desiring the enjoyment of you as soon as conveniently you can (if it may be, the first Sabbath in the New Year). Thus, desiring the Lord to bless you, to bear you up in the arms of his dearest love, we commit you to his gracious protection and ever remain your engaged friends in all Christian respects....

The language is florid and emotional and the letter may be said to mark the beginning, even before Baxter was formally appointed, of a close relationship between him and at least a part of the Kidderminster congregation. John Corbyn's is the first signature on the letter, and it may have been he who drafted it. What the "many great tenders" were which Baxter had rejected is not known

25. D.W.L., Baxter Letters, VI.f.4.5r (= *Calendar*, no. 3). For the full text see Powicke, pp. 294-5.

26. *Ibid.* III.f. 111r (= *Calendar*, no. 4). The text is given by Powicke, pp.295-6.

but he says in his answer of 1658 to John Corbyn, "When I came first I forsook the motion of the best place in Shrewsbury.....to come hither".

The "first Sabbath in the New Year" would be Sunday 28 March. Baxter found himself unable to come then (this was the third invitation he had rejected). However, he preached on Sunday 4 April, after which, as we have seen, he was chosen "nemine contradicente", a form of words which might, as Powicke²⁷ suggests, be "suggestive of some neutrals", a notion which is not incompatible with what we learn from John Corbyn's letter. On the next day, Monday 5 April 1641, the sixteen Feoffees and eleven others issued a declaration²⁸ that they

by these presents choose, elect and nominate Richard Baxter of Bridgnorth in the county of Salop to be our preacher and Lecturer, and to preach unto us and the rest of our parishioners in our parish church and to instruct us out of the word of God,... And therefore we heartily desire the said Mr. Baxter to accept the place of Lecturer, and we do by these presents request and desire.....Mr. Dance that he will be pleased to give free consent, way and liberty unto the said Mr. Baxter to preach in our parish church of Kidderminster when and as often as to him, the said Mr. Baxter, shall seem meet....

Powicke says, "This, of course, was not the 'call' itself. That would be presented in a private letter of a more intimate character which (unfortunately) is missing....."²⁹ This may be so, but it is equally possible that there was no other letter. The declaration of 5 April (which is with the other Baxter papers at Dr. Williams's Library) includes a sentence which urges Baxter to accept the position of Lecturer and this may have been thought enough. In any case, if there had been another letter, Baxter would surely have preserved it with the other letters from Kidderminster.

Kidderminster had what Baxter calls "a small company of converts", to whom he looked for assistance. In fact, from other passages in his autobiography, it looks as though this "small company", or some of them, wanted at one stage to form a separate, "gathered", church with Baxter as their pastor. In a letter which he wrote to the Independent John Owen on 16 February 1668-69³⁰ Baxter says, "The doubt was, when I came to Kidderminster, whether it were better to take twenty professors for the church and leave a Reader to head and gratify the rest, or to attempt the just reformation of the parish. The professors would have been best pleased with the first and I was for the latter.....". He also says,³¹ "When I came to Kidderminster some inclined that way importuned me to take a few professors of zeal for my flock, and let the rest follow their ignorant Readers. But when I renounced their counsel [and was successful], they told me they had

27. Powicke, p.296.

28. D.W.L., Baxter Letters, III,f.112r; Powicke, pp.296-7.

29. Powicke, p.297.

30. *Rel. Baxt.* III,67, 143.

31. *Ibid.*, App.p.76.

been undone if I had followed their counsel”.

In a sermon which is printed in the *Saints Everlasting Rest*,³² Baxter said to his Kidderminster hearers,

....I beseech you, as you take me for your teacher and have called me thereto, so hearken to this doctrine....Do you not remember, when you called me to be your teacher, you promised me under your hands that you would faithfully and conscionably endeavour the receiving every truth and obeying every command which I should from the Word of God manifest to you? I now charge your promise upon you.... If I knew you would not obey, what should I do here preaching? Not that I desire you to receive it chiefly as from me but as from Christ, on whose message I come....

In discussing this passage G.F. Nuttall³³ says, “It would seem that the parishioners also gave [in 1641] an undertaking of a more personal nature” (i.e. that they would “faithfully and conscionably” etc.). Once again we are bound to ask, if there was such an undertaking, why is it not among the Baxter papers? It is more likely that the undertaking was given in the third letter to him from Kidderminster, in which fifteen men “....subscribe our hands engaging ourselves....and also to endeavour....to make good the rest of the conditions specified in your letter”.

It is reasonably clear what kind of undertaking Baxter was seeking. He thought in 1641, and continued to think, of a “covenant” or “engagement” between himself and the religious people of Kidderminster (both individually and collectively). He had an obligation to instruct his parishioners “in the knowledge of their duties to God and man”, as George Dance’s bond puts it. They, on their part, had a duty to hear and obey, provided he could provide convincing arguments, “out of the Word of God”, for what he called upon them to do. It is also clear that the “covenant” continued, in a different form, during the Civil War. Baxter told John Corbyn in 1658, “.....I had many score of my neighbours with me in the wars ... it was they that stuck to me and I to them, resolving then in the wars that, if ever our God restored us, I would not forsake them, if now they forsook not Him and me”. They went with him in the wars “to engage me not to leave them”. During his absence from the town Baxter felt “reserved” for Kidderminster: “I durst not fix in any other congregation”.³⁴ When he returned to the town in late 1647, he saw to it that the promise of pastoral obedience was renewed.³⁵ With the birth of the Worcestershire Association in 1652 the covenant became more formal and more personal. To take just one example, Baxter told his drunken parishioner George Nichols in

32. *The Saints Everlasting Rest* (1650), pp.601-2.

33. Nuttall p.26.

34. *The Saints Everlasting Rest*, preface; Nuttall p.40. In the *Saints Rest* he says “I was sent into this world especially for the service of your souls”.

35. *Rel. Baxt.* li,79, 128.

January 1658-59 that he had broken his covenant "to God and us".³⁶ Even after he had finally left the town in 1661 some of his parishioners in a longing letter to him still called themselves his "engaged friends".³⁷

"I never went to any place in my life, among all my changes, which I had before desired but only to those that I never thought of, till the sudden invitation did surprise me."³⁸ This applied to his going to Dudley, to Bridgnorth and most of all, to his move to Kidderminster. It hardly needs saying that, for him, the move to Kidderminster was part of the divine plan by which he was enabled to carry out the most important work of his life: "And thus I was brought, by the gracious providence of God, to that place which had the chiefest of my labours and yielded me the greatest fruits of comfort". By the time Baxter wrote this part of his autobiography, in 1664, he had no doubt forgotten John Corbyn's 1658 letter to him. At the time he clearly believed that this, as he saw it, vainglorious and recalcitrant parishioner had, to say the least, exaggerated his own role in the events he was describing. However, the irony is that, if Corbyn's account is basically correct (and there is no reason to doubt that it is), but for the initiative which he (Corbyn) took in March 1641, the association, now so famous, between Richard Baxter and the town of Kidderminster would almost certainly not have occurred.

C. D. GILBERT

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Calendar</i>	= <i>Calendar of the Correspondence of Richard Baxter</i> (ed. N.H. Keeble and G.F. Nuttall 1991)
<i>C.S.P.D.</i>	= Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series.
<i>D.N.B.</i>	= Dictionary of National Biography.
<i>D.W.L.</i>	= Dr. Williams's Library, Gordon Square, London.
<i>H.W.R.O.</i>	= Hereford and Worcester Record Office (at Worcester).
<i>P.C.C.</i>	= Prerogative Court of Canterbury.
<i>P.R.O.</i>	= Public Record Office.
<i>T.W.A.S.</i>	= Transactions of the Worcestershire Archaeological Society.
<i>V.C.H.</i>	= Victoria County History.

36. Powicke p.112. The letter to George Nichols is dated January 28th 1658-9 (= *Calendar*, no. 547). Cf. his letter to another parishioner, Simon Harrington, of 26 November 1656 (D.W.L., Baxter Letters, IV,114(6) = *Calendar*, no. 335): "Being engaged by the Lord through your own consent to the oversight of your spiritual state.....".

37. Powicke p.312 (= *Calendar*, no 691). The date is 28 January 1661-62.

38. *Rel. Baxt.* I,i,20, 29.

ALMOST ALL THEIR EGGS... SOME PROS AND CONS OF A CHINA CONCENTRATION¹

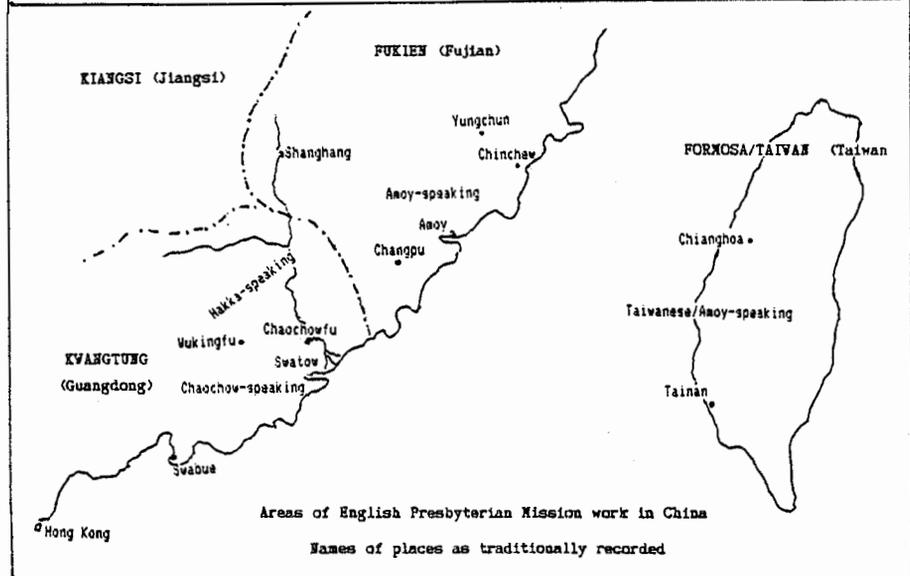
I

The English Presbyterian Mission (EPM), or more correctly the missionary work conducted through the Foreign Missions Committee of the Presbyterian Church in England, and later of England, was almost wholly concentrated in China.² So far as mainland China was concerned, that work terminated in 1951, and it is that which suggested the title of this paper. The predominance of China in the missionary interest of English Presbyterians from 1847 to 1947 is most clearly illustrated by the number of missionaries employed there compared with the two other areas of activity, Bengal and Singapore, the latter in many ways an extension of the work in China. Looking at the missionary service we find that of the total number of missionaries, men and women (but excluding wives), 302 in all, 261 were appointed to China (including Taiwan), thirty-two to Bengal and ten to Singapore/Malaya. That means ninety per cent served in China, including Taiwan. If we look at the length of service of those appointed, the impression is of an even higher percentage of missionary service in China. Thus of the twenty women missionaries appointed to Bengal, from the first in 1879 to the year 1947, the total in years of service of eighteen of them amounted to eighty, an average of just over four years each. There were two outstanding exceptions to this very low average, Mary Miller and Phyllis Vacher, who had already in 1947 clocked up fifty-four years and went on to give more, but the total remains very small. The average length of service of male missionaries was longer, especially the small number of doctors, but even so it only amounted to fourteen years, and of the total of twelve men, only eight served over ten years.

With China the position is very different. There thirty or forty years was almost the norm and less than twenty the exception. In the case of the women missionaries more served for a shorter period, but this conceals the fact that many continued their service as missionary wives. There is, therefore, no doubt from the figures available that the missionary contribution in service years was even more weighted in favour of China and Taiwan than the proportion of 261 to forty-two suggests.³ Of course it may be argued that the determination to maintain the work in Bengal, in spite of the rapid turnover of missionaries and

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1. The substance of a paper presented at a United Reformed Church History Society Study Day on 16 March 1991 in Dr Williams's Library, London.
 2. In referring to China before 1895 Taiwan is included. From 1895 to 1945 it was a Japanese colony, and since then its status has been unresolved.
 3. Edward Band, *Working His Purpose Out*, London, 1947, pp 588-594 provides all the names and dates of missionary service.

Map of China: Provinces and their capitals



the lack of numerical growth, indicates a high level of commitment. That is true but we must also admit that from time to time the Home Committee seriously considered the possibility of handing that work over to another Mission, something that was never suggested in regard to their work in China.⁴

II

The basic reason for this concentration in China was the coincidence in 1843 of two events, one ecclesiastical and the other political, military, and commercial. The ecclesiastical event was the "Great Disruption" in the Church of Scotland and the withdrawal from it of those who formed the Free Church, to which nearly all the existing Scottish missionaries attached themselves. The Disruption influenced the cause of Presbyterianism in England, and in 1844 the Synod which had been formed in 1836, and increased significantly in 1842, declared the Presbyterian Church in England to be an independent Church, albeit in friendly alliance with the Free Church of Scotland. That same year, 1844, it resolved to undertake foreign missionary work.

The other historical event, which I have called political, military and commercial, was the Treaty of Nanjing. It brought to an end the First Opium War, and in accordance with what would later be known as the first of the *Unequal Treaties* ceded Hong Kong to Britain and opened up five Treaty Ports. For the first time it was now permitted for foreigners to reside and carry on their business in a limited number of cities and to travel in their immediate hinterland. This treaty opened the first door of legitimate missionary opportunity for which the societies had been impatiently waiting, not least the London Missionary Society, almost all of whose Ultra Ganges staff left Malaya and Singapore to make their way to China and Hong Kong.⁵

Scotland had its full share of enthusiasts for a China mission.⁶ But the newly-constituted Free Church was faced with such a load of tasks, building churches, manses, and mission stations, establishing theological colleges, and supporting its ministry and the existing missionaries, that it was in no position to respond to this new opportunity. Great as was the desire to extend missionary work to China, with all these pressing needs to be met it was clearly beyond their resources. For men like G.F. Barbour, linked to both the newly-formed

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4. A comparison of the number and size of institutions, medical, educational and for theological education is equally convincing. In the case of Singapore and Malaya, before World War II, there were rarely more than two men and two women and often less.
 5. "Ultra Ganges" was the term used by the London Missionary Society for East Asia. While Morrison worked in Macao, Milne and other colleagues were in Malacca and Singapore.
 6. David Livingstone might never have gone to Africa! Like many others he had been fascinated by Charles Gutzlaff's highly coloured claims to successful missionary forays into China, and hoped to go there until the outbreak of war intervened.

Presbyterian Church in England and the Free Church of Scotland, and wholeheartedly promoting the missionary concern of both churches, it could hardly appear other than divine providence that here was the means to hand of extending a Presbyterian Mission to China. Presbyterian congregations in England had previously made contributions to Scottish missionary work. Now they could undertake a China mission with help from north of the Border. This is indeed what happened and for the first fifty years of its history the EPM drew heavily both financially and even more in personnel upon the resources of the Free Church of Scotland.⁷ For the first fifty years almost the whole body of missionaries were either the products of or had close links with the Free Church. Even after the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland began work in China and joined the Irish Presbyterians who had been in Manchuria from 1869, the strong link continued. And after the further union of the United Presbyterians and Free Church in 1900 to form the United Free Church, this historic link was so strong, and the commitment so great that both the Scottish Auxiliary and the source of mission staff continued, albeit reduced in numbers.

In choosing China the newly established Presbyterian Church in England was one with other missionary bodies to whom that country presented both challenge and attraction. There was also a strong element of guilt about the opium trade, comparable with that for the slave trade, which strengthened the sense of obligation to send something better than opium to China. Edward Band quotes a pamphlet published in 1842 by an anonymous Presbyterian who urged,

Let Britons resolve to send something better than deadly opium and violent war to her coasts. Let us thus infinitely more repay her for the refreshing beverage her industrious sons provide to all classes of our nation. No Christian people is so variously and closely connected with China as the British. Hence our duty is particularly strong.⁸

An even stronger appeal was made thirteen years later, in 1855, by G.F. Barbour, when he wrote,

If Britain has inflicted such an injury upon China in the past by the opium trade, how can she repair it? By henceforth washing her hands clean of all participation in it in her East India possessions, and by declaring the importation of it into China an illegal and contraband trade. But what a debt she owes for the past! How can she discharge the heavy arrears? Only by sending faithful and godly

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7. From 1853 a very successful Scottish Auxiliary operated throughout the presbyteries and congregations of the Free Church of Scotland. Its backbone during four generations was the Barbour family and its supporters included many of the most distinguished members of that Church, especially in the universities and theological colleges.
 8. Band, *op. cit.* p.3.

men to preach the glad tidings of the kingdom to the poor Chinese. This seems to be the only way left to her of making restitution for the injury she inflicted; as it is the only way by which the wasted strength of China may be restored - her oppression removed - her political rights respected - her liberties established - and a place secured to her among the nations of Christendom.⁹

The time was ripe; at last China appeared an open door; the enthusiasm was there, not only in the young Church south of the border but even more in its big brother to the north; the will was there, expressed in a decision of the Synod and its appointment of a Foreign Missions Committee (FMC) to carry out the task. Only one essential was missing, a missionary for the purpose. For nearly three years the committee, and in particular James Hamilton, its convener, and Barbour, searched for a suitable candidate to go to China as the first missionary of the Presbyterian Church in England. Finally William Burns, already with an established reputation as an evangelist in Scotland, Ireland and Canada, made his offer, and was ordained the very next day by the Newcastle Presbytery in the presence of the Synod, meeting in Sunderland. No *Book of Order* regulations caused delay. The FMC had no doubt they had the right man. They accepted him primarily as an evangelist rather than the organizer of a mission. Although the freedom he claimed to be an evangelist, and that alone, took him the whole length of China, and in many ways he was a law to himself and very different from those who followed, he retained to the end the high reputation with which he had begun his missionary service and the confidence and affection of both those who had sent him and his colleagues in China. Burns was *different* but never the odd man out, an inspiration rather than a model. He holds a unique place in the whole story of the EPM.¹⁰

III

The EPM was not only concentrated in China. It was concentrated in a comparatively small area of China. Like most other missionaries of that time Burns made Hong Kong his first base, and Cantonese his first language. His initial attempts at evangelism were in the direction of Canton (Guangzhou), and together with James Young, a medical colleague whom he recruited in Hong Kong, he got as far as prospecting the possibilities of medical work. But they were not encouraged by their reception, and in the end they made Amoy (Xiamen) their first base in China proper, in 1850. Amoy commended itself as a

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9. G.F. Barbour, *China and the Mission at Amoy, with Notice of the Opium Trade*, Edinburgh 1855, p.78.
 10. After gracing the Library walls of Westminster College, Cambridge, for many decades, the large portrait of William Chalmers Burns in Chinese dress has been rescued from the basement of Regent Square URC and now hangs outside the World Church and Mission office, 86 Tavistock Place, London.

populous area, with less hostility towards foreigners than there was in Canton; the Amoy Chinese had not borne the brunt of the First Opium War. It was one of the first Treaty Ports where houses could be bought for schools and accommodation, and one in which missionaries of other Societies, the LMS and the American Dutch Reformed, were comparatively few.

The Amoy field was the first, from 1850 onwards; the second was Swatow (Shantou), not yet a Treaty Port, 100 miles to the south in East Guangdong. In this area Rudolph Lechler of the Basel Mission had worked in the village of Iam-tsaou from 1848 till 1852, till forced to leave in the face of increasing opposition from the authorities. Burns and Hudson Taylor went there in 1856, but the mission officially began in 1858, still two years before Swatow became a Treaty Port.¹¹ That was with the arrival of George Smith, from Amoy, where he had heard from Burns the opportunity and need which the Swatow area presented. The third field was Formosa (Taiwan), also pioneered by a missionary from Amoy, J.L. Maxwell, in 1865. The fourth was the Hakka field, first prospected by missionaries from Swatow as they extended their work inland into the more mountainous areas beyond the coastal plain and up the Han River. The first missionaries designated for the Hakka mission and supported by Barbour generosity, were appointed in 1879.

Thus within thirty years the final area of the EPM work was already largely determined, in the Amoy-speaking field of South Fujian, the Chaozhou speaking field of Swatow, the southern half of Taiwan in which the Amoy dialect also predominated, and the Hakka-speaking inland area which included parts of East Guangdong, South-west Fujian and Jiangsi. Three different versions of the Chinese language had thus to be learned, Amoy and Chaozhou, generally regarded as two of the most difficult in China and very different from both Mandarin and Cantonese but with some similarity to each other, and the third, Hakka, closer to Mandarin and Cantonese than to Amoy or Chaozhou. The EPM had thus no work in Mandarin-speaking areas in spite of the fact that Burns spent much of his time in north China and died in Newchang, from which, successfully, he appealed to the Irish Presbyterians to found what later became the Manchuria Mission they shared with the Scots.

This concentration of one small area of China but with three different versions of the spoken language to contend with was unique among the Mission Boards working in China. The most obvious contrast is with the China Inland Mission which ranged over most of the country but excluded the two provinces of Fujian and Guangdong from their operations.¹²

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11. Burns and Taylor had met when they were itinerating in the hinterland of Shanghai and felt a joint call to prospect mission possibilities in the Swatow area. Although their time of working together was brief, and they did not see each other again, their friendship continued till Burns's death.
 12. I have heard two reasons for excluding Guangdong and Fujian; the first is related to the fact that Gutzlaff, "the grandfather of the CIM", had made them a prime target and the pioneer work of preaching had been done; the second and more likely relates to the policy of mobility, to be able to move missionaries in response to opportunities without needing to learn very different forms of Chinese.

IV

So far I have stressed the concentration of missionary effort, the one basket, but what about the eggs? It is not practicable to describe individual personalities or what happened in each area, but it is useful to suggest characteristic methods and policies. These were not unique to Presbyterian missions but they certainly represent the style of the EPM in its four China fields.

First it was methodical, realistic, concentrating on a limited area and seeking within that area to evangelise it thoroughly. That was largely done by missionaries itinerating within the area, accompanied by Chinese assistants, and, wherever there was evidence of some response, seeking a place in which those assistants might remain to carry on the work. Their purpose, sometimes but not always achieved, was so to cover an area that anyone who wished to hear the Gospel would not have to travel more than five miles to do so. It entailed as much itinerant evangelism, within a limited area, as in the case of those who travelled much further afield.¹³ For example, within a radius of thirty miles from Swatow the missionaries might be away for weeks on end, going from one village to another, in early days staying at the local inns, but later at the chapels which were built and in the "prophet's chamber" with which these were provided. In the early decades the Gospel Boat was the most convenient form of transport where roads were non-existent and only paths designed for human burden-bearers linked one place with another. The Boat also offered the best form of accommodation, and on occasions a refuge from a hostile crowd. The response in the early years was very sparse. In December 1853, Burns, according to James Johnston, the second ministerial missionary, told him with tears in his eyes, "I have laboured in China for seven years, and I don't know of a single soul brought to Christ by me". It was a hard experience for one who had proved himself so effective an evangelist before he became a missionary. However, a few months later, in 1854, at Peh-chuia, something happened, and eventually the first congregation was born. The second characteristic was the stress laid on developing the Church. Burns from first to last was an evangelist, and horrified his younger colleague, Johnston, with the suggestion that the first fruits of his work, long delayed as they were, should be handed over to the care of another mission, the American Dutch Reformed, because the latter had already gathered a congregation into which they might be baptised. Burns was not without a due sense of the Church but had a strong sense of his personal calling to be only an evangelist. Those who followed him gave as much attention to church development as to preaching. Being a denominational mission, Presbyterian, there was little hesitation about establishing the Church on

13. cf J. Campbell Gibson, *Mission Problems and Mission Methods in South China*, Edinburgh and London, 1901, pp.138-168, for a full account, based on his own and his colleagues' experience, of how the itinerant evangelist should work.

Presbyterian principles, but it was also a pragmatic decision.¹⁴ Stressing its practical suitability rather than claiming a sacrosanct tradition allowed the Church more freedom to develop its own life and characteristics. Both locally, in co-operation with the American Dutch Reformed and the LMS missionaries, and later on a national scale the goal of the united Chinese Church was pursued.

The Three-self principle appeared very early on the scene, first in Amoy, where the first Presbytery was formed in co-operation with the American Dutch Reformed missionaries in 1863, and then more explicitly in 1881 in Swatow. The record of that first meeting of the Presbytery in Swatow has survived. When it was formed the ordained ministers were still all missionaries, but along with them there were ordained elders representing congregations and, having been constituted as a Presbytery, one of its first acts was the ordination of Tan Khai-lin, the first Chinese minister in that area. Minutes were kept in both Chinese and English, and in the third of three resolutions it is explicitly stated,

....the native Church ought to be self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating; therefore in the future, when the Church becomes stronger, and its members more numerous, all matters must revert to the native-office-bearers, as their own charge, that they may lead the people of our native country to turn to the way of salvation.¹⁵

While recognizing that the Three-self principle was affirmed at this early date, it must also be admitted that the unofficial authority exercised by the missionaries, the financial dependence of the Church, and the existence side by side with it of a Mission Council, made up of missionaries and missionaries alone, compromised its independence. Even so, the example of the first congregation at Peh-chuaia whose members undertook very active self-propagation was a good omen for future growth.

A third characteristic was the significant role of medical work. Although preaching, teaching and healing have been the normal pattern of missionary work, there have been few mission bodies in which the medical missionary has played such an important role. We have already noted that Burns's first colleague, by his own choice, was a doctor, James Young, and it was Young who was the first EP missionary to take up work in Amoy. A few years later, in 1856, when Burns paid that visit to Swatow in the company of Hudson Taylor, after a period in which they had made little progress, they agreed that Taylor should

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14. *Ibid.* p.198, "The Chinese have been Presbyterians before they became Christians". Gibson was not the first, nor has he been the last, to claim that the ecclesiastical tradition to which he belonged was peculiarly suited to the customs and social structures of the people among whom he worked.
 15. *Ibid.* pp.221-222. A copy of the original Chinese statement, dated 1881, is to be found in the EPM Archives at the School of Oriental and African Studies Box 31, File 1, piece 3.

return to Shanghai to collect his medical equipment, believing "that it may be necessary to have recourse to medical efforts the more effectively to open the door".¹⁶ When Taylor failed to return - his equipment had been lost when the LMS go-down burned down - Burns, out of his own pocket, enlisted the part-time service, two days a week, of Dr. de la Porte, who served the foreign community then still largely engaged in the opium trade. It was through de la Porte's healing work that not only was the goodwill of the local official obtained which led to acquiring better accommodation, but that Burns also had a more willing, or at least a captive audience, to hear his preaching. Burns records the dilemma with which he was faced, between taking the evangelistic opportunity now opened up in Swatow or travelling further afield. When the mission was established by George Smith in 1858 his first colleague was another minister, Huw Mackenzie, in 1861, but the second, in 1863, was a doctor, William Gauld. Very soon after his arrival Gauld opened the Swatow Mission Hospital which has claimed to be the first Christian Hospital in China. In the course of the next eighty years it can be shown that the healing ministry was directly responsible, in one way or another, for establishing well over half the congregations in the area. More than that the doctors trained in the Hospital played a major role in both the lay leadership and financial support of very many churches - only perhaps comparable with that given by those involved in the drawn thread industry, another missionary initiative.¹⁷

Significantly, and the fruit of past experience, the first missionary to Taiwan was a doctor, J.L. Maxwell, the first of a family of missionary doctors covering two generations, and giving service in South Fujian, Taiwan, Beijing and Shanghai. When the Hakka mission was effectively established in 1879, within two years, the appointment of Dr. Riddell, equipped with both theological and medical training, opened up the way for a healing ministry, and the beginning of a hospital in 1883. During the missionary era it became mission policy to establish a hospital in virtually all the places of permanent missionary residence.

The fourth characteristic, educational work, was broadly speaking of two kinds. The reason for this lies in the changing attitude of China towards the West throughout the missionary era. So far as the Presbyterians were concerned earlier educational work was primarily intended for building up the Church. It was to produce a literate Christian community which in turn would produce a

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16. Quoted in George A. Hood, *Mission Accomplished? The English Presbyterian Mission in Lingtung, South China*. Frankfurt 1986, p.34. From a letter in the Overseas Missionary Fellowship Archives, numbered 224, written by Hudson Taylor to the Chinese Evangelization Society, dated 10.7.1856, from on board the "Wild Flower" on the way to Shanghai.
 17. There was a long embroidery tradition in the Chaozhou area. Mrs Lyall, wife of the Swatow Mission Hospital superintendent, had learned the art of drawn thread embroidery in Switzerland and taught it to a poor widow who was a patient in the hospital. From this developed a vast industry with significant effects in the economic life of the area and of the Christian community.

future ministry and lay leadership as well as strengthen Christian family life.¹⁸ From these local primary schools attached to chapels the brightest might hope to go to the boarding schools located in the mission compound at which the children would come under a firm Christian discipline. Almost all who attended were from families at least partly Christian. Those who acquitted themselves well in this school had the opportunity for further training in either the theological college to be preachers or in the hospital to be doctors. This was education for boys but, at least in Swatow, the education of girls had preceded that of the boys in the mission compound. The first missionary wife to appear there was Mrs. Gauld and it was she with Mrs. Mackenzie and Mrs. Duffus who began the first girls' school, in a building designed for that purpose alongside the missionary houses.

The other kind of educational work followed China's humiliation in the Boxer Rising and the consequent openness to Western ideas which resulted in the abolition, in 1905, of the old educational system, designed for the training of the civil service, the mandarinat. This other kind of mission-directed education was broadly speaking society rather than church orientated, and its religious motivation evangelistic rather than pastoral. Its heyday was the first decade of the twentieth century and English Presbyterians along with other mission bodies shared in a vast extension of high schools and colleges, sometimes bearing the name Anglo-Chinese, through which they hoped to commend the Gospel by the quality of their western-inspired education. In some cases the older schools developed into this new style of institution, in others they existed side by side. When a new spirit of nationalism took hold of China in the 1920s and foreign influence over education became a major issue, these Anglo-Chinese Schools and Colleges were deeply involved. This put an end to their hopes of developing even further into tertiary education, but their products, both Christian and non-Christian, because of the quality and content of their education - including a much better level of English - played an important role in China's earlier attempts at modernization.

Apart from the formal types of education provided in the institutions there was another programme of informal education at the local level, in chapels and homes, most of it among women and carried out by the women missionaries. The first of these was Catherine Ricketts who went out to China as an honorary missionary in 1878, and served for nearly thirty years. Others followed and for their support the Women's Missionary Association (WMA) was formed in the same year as Catherine Ricketts's appointment. Although the EP male missionaries looked askance at the large number of women missionaries employed by the China Inland Mission, and doubted the wisdom of its policy of appointment in the early days, partly for the danger to which the women were exposed, and partly for the offence they were presumed to give to Chinese cultural sensitivities, they were not slow to welcome this addition to their

18. For those with a Scottish education background the dual role of the Chinese village preacher/teacher was a natural one.

strength - and to share the tasks in which their wives had been engaged. It was William Duffus who had been one influence in the recruitment of Catherine Ricketts, and as a pioneer, like Burns, she had redoubtable powers and experience before she offered for missionary service. She was the first of a great company, some of them the daughters of other missionaries, some offering their services without salaries, some following in the footsteps of brothers and sisters. And as it had been the wife of a medical missionary, Mrs. Lyall, who had introduced drawn thread work to Swatow, so it was the wife of a ministerial missionary, Mrs. Wales, who pioneered kindergarten education, the first of its kind in China, in the Amoy field.

The last chief characteristic of the EPM is Romanization, the use of a romanized alphabet in which to write and read the Bible in the living, spoken language of the ordinary people. This was the tool by which they tried, not without success, to build up a literate, Bible-reading, Church. It comes in appropriately after reference to the women missionaries, who used it to great effect in so much of their work among Chinese women.

The use of a romanized script was strongly advocated by missionaries in many parts of China, because the Chinese Bible, especially its translation in the most classical form, High Wen-li, was beyond the capacity of all but the well educated. Even Easy Wen-li, and the later Union version which followed the Literary Revolution in the first two decades of this century, required a much longer education than was feasible for the great majority of Chinese people. In the case of the several dialects spoken in South East China where the EPM was at work, there was an even stronger case for a romanized script. The Chinese character version of the Bible, even when close to spoken Mandarin, was a long way from the dialects of Amoy, Taiwan, Swatow and Hakka. Moreover some of these had many words, commonly used, for which there was no equivalent Chinese character. Among the missionaries, Gibson of Swatow and his brother-in-law, Thomas Barclay in Taiwan, were two of the strongest protagonists for the use of romanized script. Although fully aware of the arguments against its use, and not least the prejudice against its foreign appearance, Gibson, the pragmatist, who had seen old Chinese women after a month's course in romanized able to read, argued the case for it with typical thoroughness in a twenty-four page essay which he presented to the Shanghai Missionary Conference of 1890. Barclay promoted its use so effectively in Taiwan, both before Japanese colonization and in the more favourable climate which prevailed under Japanese rule, that it became central to the life and growth of the Taiwanese Church.¹⁹ The Mission Presses, set up in three out of the four fields, were the means by which Christian literature, in both Chinese characters and the romanized script, and the essential dictionaries compiled by the missionaries and their assistants, were published.

19. Enthusiasm for romanized script went hand in hand with the wider work of translating the Bible into "Easy Wen-li" in which Gibson and his colleagues were deeply involved. In Taiwan the Romanized Bible has continued to be used in the face of strong opposition from the government.

Before leaving the broad consideration of characteristics, and in preparation for an appraisal of the pros and cons of such concentration in China, something must be said about the way in which the missionary chapter ended - about what the missionaries left and where the missionaries went.

Earlier experiences of war and revolution were part of the missionary heritage. South Fujian had seen something of the Taiping Rebellion; in 1895 missionaries had acted as go-betweens to negotiate surrender to the Japanese on Taiwan; and although largely unaffected by the Boxer Rebellion of 1900, they had been very much in the thick of conflict during the period of the warlords, following the 1911 Revolution, with armies marching to and fro throughout the area. In 1917 missionaries in the Swatow field had helped to negotiate a local truce between armies which had threatened the destruction of Chao-chow-fu. In the anti-foreign feeling, and specifically the anti-British boycott in the mid 1920s, some had been in great danger, physically assaulted, and their mission stations occupied by both Kuomintang and Communist forces. The first Chinese Soviet was at Haifeng, in East Guangdong, within the Swatow mission field and a large number of churches had been destroyed and Chinese Christians killed both there and further inland. From time to time, on consular advice, the missionaries had been withdrawn to the safety of the Treaty Ports, and for a number of years there was something akin to a closed and open season for missionaries to live and work in the Hakka field. After full-scale war broke out between China and Japan in 1937 it was not long before Japanese forces first bombed and then occupied the ports and coastal areas. This divided the mission fields throughout the war into an occupied and a free area. When the Pacific war broke out those who had been living in occupied China were interned and subsequently exchanged, while those living in free China continued their work under constant threat that the Japanese might advance across the ten or twenty miles by which they were separated. In Taiwan, during 1940, anti-British feeling greatly increased so that the missionaries decided that their presence was more of an embarrassment than a help to the Church they sought to serve. With the approval of the home committees they formally brought the mission to an end, and before leaving handed over their remaining powers, responsibilities and property to the Church and its related institutions. When the Sino-Japanese War and World War II ended in August 1945, a reduced number of missionaries returned, and much time, energy and money went to the work of relief and rehabilitation, rebuilding and re-opening of institutions, in the few years before the final withdrawal.

Most of the missionaries by then were in work related to institutions, medical, theological and educational, with varying degrees of responsibility for running them. There were rarely more than two or three missionaries in any single institution. Training courses at the local level were still being run, mainly by WMA missionaries among the rural churches. The Church had already in its history experienced a variety of forms of missionary withdrawal and was not dependent for its functioning on missionary personnel. Most missionaries who left the South Fujian, Swatow and Hakka fields in the years 1950, 1951, were not

pessimistic about the future life of the Church, though at times they wondered if more should and could have been done to prepare it for the radical changes taking place. They were however very concerned when it became clear that the financial grants would no longer be permitted. The devastation of the war years, greatly exacerbated by the appalling inflation that accompanied and followed it, had undermined much of the earlier progress towards self-support, and the rural churches were especially vulnerable.

When it became clear in 1950 and 1951 that there was no hope of being able to remain on the mainland or to return there after furlough, the missionaries, apart from those who elected to return to Britain were deployed according to qualifications and needs for staff. For those who had worked in the Amoy field of South Fujian, Taiwan was the most obviously suitable choice. But there was caution about reverting to anything like the pre-war level of staffing, and at first additional missionaries were only appointed to help the theological college in Taiwan, the re-opening of the Changhua Hospital, and for Women's work; that is, three couples, of whom two were ministerial and one medical, and two WMA staff. From the Swatow and Hakka fields three ministers transferred to Malaya, one to work as a government re-settlement officer, one to serve a predominantly European congregation combined with some Hakka speaking work, and the other to work in the Chinese-speaking Presbyterian Church. Two WMA staff from the Swatow field made up the number of the transferees to Malaya and Singapore. Of other EP medical missionaries in South China, one was appointed to the EP mission in East Pakistan, one seconded to the Welsh Presbyterian Mission in Shillong, and the third to a Church Missionary Society hospital in Nigeria. Partly by reason of the small number involved, partly because Taiwan, Singapore and Malaya were already EPM fields, and partly because the Chinese languages they already knew fitted them for these new locations, most of those who so wished were able to continue their work among Chinese people. The only exception was medical staff because there were no suitable openings for them in Singapore and Malaya, and plans for re-opening hospitals in Taiwan were still tentative, and did not appear to justify the appointment of more than one medical couple.

V

So far we have been mainly dealing with fact. When we discuss the pros and cons of such a concentration, there is room for variety of interpretation. In the first place there is the standpoint of the senders. What effect did this concentration have on members of the Presbyterian Church of England, on their understanding of mission, the fervour of their support, their ability to face the changes and challenges of China, and finally the end of the era which a missionary of another, Anglican, tradition described as the *débauche* of Christian missions in China? We are not discussing the general principle of concentrating missionary effort in one place, or among one people, but rather this particular

case of concentrating in China and in one small area of China. These are not principles which can be universally applied for they are restricted to a particular historical balance sheet.

The decision of the newly-constituted Presbyterian Church in England to concentrate its missionary work in China made good practical sense. It matched the hour and from the beginning its appeal north of the Border provided both the personnel and a significant part of the financial support with which to get the work started. Without such backing it is very doubtful whether the Presbyterian Church of England would have been able to do more than serve as an auxiliary to other fraternal missionary bodies, such as the Free Church of Scotland, or the London Missionary Society.²⁰ We may also claim it as a "pro" that riding the Scottish tide of interest in China and accepting the model for carrying out missionary work which operated in Scotland, enabled the newly-formed Church to make missionary work central rather than peripheral to the life of the Church: a committee rather than a voluntary society. The virtues of that are still debatable: it might be argued that an undue dependence upon Scotland, especially for the personnel of its missionaries during the first fifty years, puts a question mark against the commitment of the Church as a whole to the mission carried out in its name. But this dependence also extended to other areas of the Church's life, notably a large part of its ministry as well as the college professors in Queen's Square, and later at Westminster College, Cambridge, who trained its home-produced students.

In his brief history of Westminster College, W.A.L. Elmslie, a former principal, stressed how "In the very week of its inception in 1844 the nascent Church showed Christian insight in two momentous ways. Firstly it resolved to undertake foreign missionary work.... Secondly it resolved to create a Theological College for the training of the ministers of the Church".²¹ It was the same group of men, ministers and laymen, who were involved in both, and equally in the extension of the Presbyterian Church in England. James Hamilton of Regent Square had a very strong sense of the role of Home Mission which that Church had to play in England; he was also a leading figure in the founding and recruiting of staff, from Scotland, for the theological college; and at the same time the first convener of the FMC, his service extending over twenty years. Similarly the generous support of the Barbour family extended to both the theological college in England, to funding the building of colleges, hospitals and churches in China, and to guaranteeing the support of several missionaries. The death of David Sandeman, Mrs. G.F. Barbour's brother, after only two years' service in Amoy, added a deeply personal sacrifice. Hamilton and

20. Both Morrison and Milne, the LMS pioneer missionaries among Chinese, came from a Presbyterian background: Robert Morrison was a member of the High Bridge Presbyterian Church in Newcastle where his father was an elder, and it was Milne's son who urged the Synod in 1845 to consider China as its sphere of missionary work.

21. W.A.L. Elmslie, *Westminster College, Cambridge 1899-1949*, London 1949, p.3.

Barbour shared responsibility for recruiting William Burns - if such a word may be allowed in the case of someone who was very much his own man - and together with Hugh Matheson, treasurer and then FMC convener for over fifty years, and James Mathieson, made up a quartet with a common passionate commitment to China. When the WMA was formed it was similarly the wives of Hugh Matheson and James Mathieson who were respectively the first President and Secretary for Foreign correspondence. For the first fifty years Hugh Matheson, a major figure in the City of London, conducted most of the mission business from his office there.

I have already suggested that such concentration upon China was influenced not only by the broad evangelical inspiration of the modern missionary movement, but also by the sense of guilt for the opium trade and desire to make some amends, and by the open door of opportunity which had finally come about following the Treaty of Nanjing. This link with China's history and with Britain's relations with China in the next hundred years had its pros and cons in the ways in which mission was understood and supported. The ambiguity of Britain's position vis-à-vis China, the priority given to trade, while at the same time exercising power without responsibility, made it different from so many areas of the world in which missionary work was done under the British flag, hopefully offering an acceptable face of imperialism. Throughout the nineteenth century missionaries in China, and the Gospel they preached, were compromised by the historical circumstances through which their presence had been made possible. They were also faced by a strong cultural resistance which was only undermined by successive military defeats, enforcing concessions. After the humiliation of the Boxer Rising, in which China's reputation sank to its lowest point throughout the world, there was a greater openness to Western ideas but it was primarily the twin cure-alls of Science and Democracy to which she turned rather than to the Christian faith. There has yet to be a deeply creative encounter between Christian faith and Chinese culture, and a resultant Chinese Christian tradition and outlook.²² It must be recognized that western missionary work, although undertaken with great devotion and commitment, was never blessed with great success. It was a hard struggle, and perhaps the total figure of 700,000 Protestants out of such a vast population, following a hundred years of extensive and sustained missionary labour, is the clearest evidence.

The Presbyterian Church, committed so exclusively to China, and such a task, could not rely on success stories to sustain its efforts, and neither could it derive encouragement from elsewhere when progress was slow in China.²³ The mingling of evangelical zeal, of the need to make amends for the great wrong done to China by reason of the opium trade, of confidence in the benefits to be offered, were sometimes strengthened, sometimes weakened by the changing

22. cf R. Whyte's book, *Unfinished Encounter*, London 1988.

23. The most remarkable numerical growth was among the mountain people in Taiwan, and significantly this was neither initiated by missionaries, nor was it among people who were Chinese in race or culture.

pattern of events and relations between Britain and China. Of such an experience it is not easy to draw up a balance sheet of pros and cons. It might be claimed that it puts a high value on commitment, on tenacity of purpose, on faithfulness and hard work. On the other hand it must be admitted both that Chinese resistance to the Gospel (though it might be argued that it was resistance to the messenger rather than the message) and a general recognition that Chinese culture contained high moral teaching, meant that many, perhaps a majority, in the Church were, for varying reasons, lukewarm in their support. Moreover, locked into the China field, missionary interest was a hostage to a century of apparently continuous disasters, of which the south-east corner seemed to have more than its fair share.

However some of the conditions which made missionary work difficult among Chinese people also played a positive role in the Presbyterian missionary policy of establishing a Chinese Church and recognizing the authority of its courts at an early date. We have seen that in the Amoy field it was less than twenty years and in Swatow just over that period between the beginning of the work and the formation of a Presbytery. From an early stage therefore the intellectual, moral and spiritual qualities were appreciated, and no long period of tutelage was seen as necessary. Missionaries of the EPM like Gibson were in the forefront of those at the 1910 Edinburgh Conference who urged their missionary colleagues from all the other societies and nations represented to listen to the demand of the Chinese present for independence and unity. That Chinese delegation may fairly be said to have represented the most advanced position achieved by the so-called "Younger Churches". When the missionary era in China came to an end, and the missionary societies were criticised - and criticised themselves - for not having gone further along the road of a Three-self Church, some of the pain experienced by the missionaries derived from the knowledge that although in China they had gone further than elsewhere along the road of devolution, they had not gone far enough, nor moved at the pace of their forebears.

This concentration on China, and the particular area in which the EPM had worked, had therefore the benefit of keeping the thinking of those responsible for the mission, and for interpreting conditions in China to the home constituency, constantly alive to change. The constituency within the home Church who were supporters of the work, and in particular the Women's Missionary Association, had had the advantage of learning from childhood about a compassable area, larger than but still comparable in extent to their own country, the British Isles. Names of places, of schools and hospitals, and of people, were familiar. "China's Millions", the favourite appeal of the China Inland Mission, had become domesticated, reduced to a manageable proportion. So when the time came for withdrawal, sad as it was for those most directly involved, it was accepted with a high degree of understanding; perhaps the earlier experience of withdrawal from Taiwan had given some reassurance. In any case I find it not without significance that towards the end of 1950, while other mission bodies were still wrestling with the problem of how to explain the

Christian Manifesto to their supporters, it was the Foreign Mission secretary of the EPM who felt sufficiently confident of his constituency to be the first to publish it in full in the Church's missionary magazine.²⁴

This is at least part of the picture: the Presbyterian Church of England, in spite of the concentration of its missionary effort in China, and because of the way in which it had previously operated, was not wholly unprepared for such a development, and was prepared to see a new stage had been reached. But there is another aspect. We have seen that some of the missionaries were re-deployed, and that some went to Taiwan. From a small beginning there developed a growing commitment to Taiwan, not only in money and personnel but even more in identification with the Church's political stance. The increased commitment to Taiwan was undoubtedly in response to the appeal of the Presbyterian Church there. The force of that appeal was partly in turn the need felt by the Church in Taiwan to have some support or counterbalance to the scores of missionaries of various kinds who flooded into Taiwan after the withdrawal from China. From the EPM point of view it provided an outlet for the interest and support which could now no longer be applied to the other traditional fields in China. The former concentration on China, on a small corner of China, was now focused on Taiwan. Known to most by its foreign name, Formosa, it had been the children's field, - a large and permanently anchored "John Williams" - and now, in a sense, it became the only surviving "child" of the "Mother Church" among its four "children", Amoy, Swatow, Formosa and Hakka, and the missionary interests previously concentrated in those four fields were re-focused in Taiwan. The identification of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan with the cause of self-determination, its defence of its own rights and those of the Taiwanese people against Kuomintang authoritarianism, the witness and worldwide reputation of leaders like Kao Chun-ming and Shoki Coe, the remarkable achievements both in numerical growth and in the quality of its institutions, educational, medical and theological, all of these have enabled the EPM, as one of the two founding missions, to feel some pride in what has been achieved. It has provided encouragement to compensate for the thirty years of silence from the other three China fields.

That said, we should also appreciate that the FM and WMA officers and their respective committees were alive to the dangers of such a concentrated focus of missionary interest. Contemporary with this special concern for Taiwan there began the development of relationships in Africa and Asia, specifically Ghana and South Korea, with which there had been no previous missionary relationship. This was on a church-to-church basis and did not involve the sending of missionaries. It also helped the churches concerned to experience a

24. *Presbyterian Messenger*, February 1951. The Manifesto was the outcome of a meeting between premier Zhou Enlai and Chinese Christian leaders in May, 1950 in which, *inter alia*, missionary bodies were explicitly linked with imperialism, and Chinese Christians were called upon to break those links.

wider freedom from their traditional links. It was through such a process that the former missionary concern represented in the Presbyterian Church of England played a constructive role in the United Reformed Church's concept of a World Church and Mission department, and later in the restructuring of the Council for World Mission.

A second standpoint from which to look at the pros and cons of the China concentration is that of the missionaries themselves. What kind of people were they? I have been told, though it is something one is unlikely to see in print, that among some of the bigger Mission Boards, with work in many parts of the world, there was a general understanding that, other things being equal, those who were brightest or best-trained academically should be sent to China. If true, one can understand possible reasons for this. Even in its nineteenth-century period of decline, Chinese culture and civilization continued to present a challenge to the West, and mission boards in general acknowledged that some intellectual competence was necessary as well as religious zeal. Learning a difficult language, both spoken and written, was one obstacle, and the three distinctive variations of Chinese spoken in the EPM fields were even more difficult than that used in most of China. Band quotes James Legge of the LMS, admittedly a Scot and very much from the same stable: "It would be very difficult to pick out in the English Presbyterian Church or in the Free Church of Scotland ten men before whom your ten men now on the Mission field in China would have reason to hide their heads."²⁵ This is not surprising because they were equally qualified, and equally trained, and on top of that they were sometimes chosen before they were called. When Burns came on his first leave and recruited Carstairs Douglas to take on the work in Amoy, he set an example of looking for the best students the Free Church College in Glasgow could produce. Such head-hunting continued throughout the missionary era. Whether or not they were head-hunted, men like Swanson, Gibson, Barclay, Maclagan and Wallace, all of whom while still serving as missionaries were elected as Moderators of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of England, proved outstanding both at home and abroad.

For those who could not match up to the difficult conditions facing the missionary in China, the EPM was not in a position to offer alternative spheres of service, in another culture, in which those less academically qualified might be employed. At an early stage, and partly in reaction to Hudson Taylor's early recruits, the EP missionaries were arguing this point. They even felt they had to defend Burns from being associated with the idea that the standard of qualifications of missionaries ought to be lowered. Carstairs Douglas declared that Burns had stressed that the China field specially needed not mere men who can "preach a little simple truth, but men full furnished with the *gifts and learning*, as well as the piety and zeal, necessary for wisely watching over the infant churches and native assistants, and for the great work of teaching and

25. Band, *op. cit.* p.98.

training the future ministry of China. Over and over he decidedly refused offers of that very kind of under-educated labourers which the 'Inland Mission' so largely employs".²⁶ Certainly there is little doubt that for most of the time concentration on China meant concentration on sending out those who were well qualified. One or two disasters among those less qualified were seen as a warning, and confirmed suspicion of the "evangelist" in distinction from the ministerial missionary. The missionaries had the good and bad points of the Victorian, professional middle-class, and those who came from Scotland, and largely provided the model, were not even coloured by Nonconformity. Sometimes they appear to have been very adaptable, at other times very rigid in their life-style. Living, as many did, either in or not far distant from the Treaty Ports, and the foreign communities they contained, they tried, not always successfully, to adapt equally to the life-styles of their fellow-countrymen and of their Chinese colleagues.

The fact that they were as well-qualified as their counterparts in the home ministry, and that as missionaries, ministers and elders, they were members of the General Assembly, thus avoiding any idea of inferior status, may be regarded as a "pro". It also ensured that there was no deep theological division between the home and missionary service. Those serving as missionaries were not imprisoned in a rigid theological position but were affected in ways similar to their contemporaries in the home ministry. There is, however, another side to that. While high academic qualifications were desirable for those involved in theological training, not least to enable them to communicate effectively through another culture, the training provided for entering the home ministry was not necessarily the best for those spending their lives facing different challenges in China. The contemporary concern over maintenance and mission is nothing new. It is a tribute to the versatility and adaptability of many of the missionaries that they were so effective in mission in spite of having been first trained for the maintenance ministry of the home church. It is also true that success as a missionary was no guarantee of equal success in the home ministry. And even those who gave valuable service overseas were not always successful in inculcating a strong sense of mission in their Chinese colleagues.

Among much that is speculative, the concentration with which we are concerned, and the restrictions imposed by the languages they had learned limited the mobility of the missionaries. In contrast to Burns the pioneer, almost all the others spent their whole lives within a very limited area. This meant that they knew it well, geographically and culturally as well as often developing close relations with those among whom they lived and worked. Transfers from one area to another were rare and only when there was a staffing crisis. This close association with a limited area had therefore a positive side. But there was also a negative. On the national scene they were a declining influence because of the

26. Islay Burns, *Memoir of W.C. Burns*. London, 1870, p.588. It may only have been after the Moody and Sankey Mission which produced the "Cambridge Seven" that the China Inland Mission rid itself of this image.

languages they spoke. It is noticeable that during the nineteenth century when national conferences were almost entirely gatherings of missionaries, and English the medium of communication, the EP missionaries played a prominent role. But the impression I have received is that the more the Chinese national language, the Mandarin spoken in most areas, came into use, the smaller the role they and the Chinese Christian leaders from the dialect-speaking areas played on the national scene. Even for those who spoke Mandarin there was diffidence about using it as their second language among those for whom it was their first. For those missionaries who had great proficiency in the languages of their area, and who believed with some justification that these areas were ahead of most others in church development, it was frustrating to become virtually deaf and dumb in the national assemblies of the Church.

On the negative side there was also the risk of parochialism and suspicion of the central bureaucracy. Keenly aware of local conditions it was much easier to identify with the Presbytery or the Synod than with the policies of the General Assembly or of the National Christian Council. In the light of China's size and variety of conditions there was perhaps no alternative, but we should not be unaware that missionaries' loyalties were more inclined to be local than national.

In spite of this and for all the inevitable limitations of their times, their background, their opportunities, and their successive discouragements, the China missionaries in that hundred years were a remarkable company. They may not easily fit into a romantic image of missionary life. None died a violent death at the hands of others, although three women died in Japanese prison camps, two men were lost at sea and others died early deaths from cholera and typhoid. Some deplored the highly coloured ways in which missionary work was presented, showing great sensitivity both towards Chinese feelings and those who read their reports in Britain, while others had more than a fair share of human failings. Their gifts were many, and concentration in that small area of a vast country did not produce a narrowness of outlook or of interests.²⁷

There is a third standpoint from which the pros and cons of concentration might be considered, and that is the standpoint of those to whom the missionaries were sent. Had the concentration of the EPM any noticeable or specific effect on the churches which grew out of the missionaries' labours? Any answer to this question must be even more tentative than those already offered with reference to the senders and the sent. Clearly the issue of *concentration* makes this a different question from the more straightforward one of the effect

27. As an indication of their variety of gifts and interest I commend a lecture which one of the most distinguished of them, P.J. Maclagan, gave to the Presbyterian Historical Society of England, the Annual Lecture in the Centenary year of the Mission, 1947. His subject was *The Literary Productions of English Presbyterian Missionaries*. The lecture is a delight to read, and its bibliography, listing all their productions, when read with a little imagination, tells us much about the missionaries of the first hundred years.

of the EPM in the areas where it worked. After the withdrawal from the China mainland, the experience in Taiwan, Malaya and Singapore suggests that the historical link with the EPM was significant. Until the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan felt sufficiently confident of itself to enter into relations with the various new mission boards, mostly American, which offered their help after their withdrawal from China, the English Presbyterian "Mother Church" in the southern half of the island enjoyed a special trust and confidence. This was increased by the way in which the missionaries who came from the former South Fujian field of the EPM identified themselves not only with the life of the Church but also more and more with the cause of the Taiwanese people.

In Singapore and Malaya the political circumstances were very different. During the Second World War the small number of EP missionaries had been interned and the Church had emerged from the wartime experience with a heightened sense of its independence, and also felt drawn towards linking up with the Church of Christ in China. The communist-led insurgency which began in 1948 ranged Britain, the imperial power, against guerrilla forces largely Chinese. With the withdrawal of missionaries from China the Presbyterian Church in Singapore and Malaya, at that time under the name of the Malaya Synod of the Chinese Christian Church, extended a wide invitation to those missionaries from China who were prepared to co-operate with it. In responding to that invitation the English Presbyterians who had worked in the Swatow area and the LMS missionaries from South Fujian were at a linguistic advantage compared with the Mandarin-speaking China Inland Mission. Among the congregations and the Chinese leadership both EP and LMS missionaries proved again the *entree* provided to Chinese feelings by the personal relationships which linked the churches in China from which they had come to those in which they now served. Working in Singapore and Malaysia left little doubt in the minds of those concerned that the concentration in that one corner of China had earned an unforeseen dividend.

And what of the Chinese Christians in the former EP fields, South Fujian, Swatow and Hakka, as they look back on their history? How do they evaluate the EPM concentration? To this question even the most tentative answer is hardly possible. I would only suggest that in the total experience of Chinese Christians there during the past 140 years this matter of concentration is very peripheral and almost irrelevant. One impression has remained with me from a first return visit in 1983, and that is of a great interest shown in the circumstances and wellbeing of all the former missionaries, but no reference to the mission organization to which they belonged. There is also a great interest in the part they played in the opening up of work, and the history of the congregations in whose founding they had a share. That appears to be the current mood, and that is where, for the present, the question may be left.

GEORGE HOOD

LESLIE E. COOKE (1908-1967)

I

The 22nd February 1992 marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the death of Dr. Leslie Cooke, by common consent one of the outstanding leaders, not only of English Congregationalism, but also of the Ecumenical Movement in the present century. He was a preacher of great power, a devoted servant of the Gospel, and a capable administrator. It is timely to recall him.

Leslie Cooke was a Sussex man, a native of Brighton. He was born into a humble home, but one in which both father and mother were guided by a deeply-held faith. What they lacked in worldly goods was more than compensated by the wealth of Christian character which was manifest in their lives and which was their precious endowment to their sons. In the words of Norman Goodall written at the time of Leslie's death, "courage, determination, loyalty and integrity were the riches bequeathed by the father to the son".¹ Mr. Cooke, Senior, recalled from the early 1930s as a "rather portly, cheery gentleman", was converted from an original formal Anglicanism to a fellowship of Plymouth Brethren, and for some time worshipped at the Pool Hall Mission in Brighton. But in due course he discovered a spiritual home in Congregationalism where he found it possible to integrate his broad sympathies with his firmly held convictions. Constant in her support of her life's companion was "the unswerving Christian devotion of Leslie's mother".

A recollection of Leslie's boyhood appears in a sermon, "The Hidden Life", delivered in California in 1960.² During the Great War, Mr Cooke, Senior, was serving on the Western Front. In his absence, each Sunday evening, Mrs Cooke would take Leslie and his brother to visit her parents who lived in a cottage on the South Downs overlooking Patcham, three miles from Brighton. "There was a regular Sunday evening ritual", recalled Leslie.

After tea my grandfather would reach for his old violin, which he kept carefully wrapped in a green baize cloth. My two aunts ... would bring out two instruments that they played, which I think were called auto-harps ... And then began an hour or so of hymn-singing, always Sankey and Moody's hymns. The ritual was always brought to a close when my grandfather said, 'Now before you go home, we'll sing my favourite hymn'. We all knew what it was, we had sung it so often and brought these Sunday evenings singing hours to a close with it every Sunday:

Oh, Safe to the rock that is higher than I
My soul in its conflict and sorrows would fly;
So sinful, so weary, Thine, Thine, would I be

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1. Norman Goodall, "Leslie Edward Cooke - A Biographical Sketch" from *Bread and Laughter*, Geneva, 1968 p.17.
 2. L.E. Cooke, *Bread and Laughter*, WCC, Geneva, 1968 p.169.

Thou bless'd Rock of Ages, I'm hiding in Thee.
 The old violin was carefully wrapped in its baize cloth again and put away; and so were the auto-harps; and the farewells were said, and my mother with my brother clasping one hand, I clasping the other, would begin the three mile walk to our home.

Leslie then recalled the sights and sounds of the countryside as they walked in the lengthening shadows of evening and intermittently his mother would hum quietly to herself.

Hiding in Thee, hiding in Thee,
 Thou bless'd Rock of Ages, I'm hiding in Thee.

In these moments of memory, we can sense the deeply Christian environment of his boyhood; perhaps too an enhanced dependence on his mother with his father absent on active service. That there was a deep, perhaps unexpressed, concern for his absent father finds confirmation in a further fragment of memory described in his book *Above Every Name*.

The first time Leslie drove from Geneva to London, he tells us he chose a route which took him across the battlefields of Northern France.³ He followed the road from Cambrai to Arras, names burned into his memory in childhood.

From the time I was eight years old until I was eleven and a half, my father was away, a private soldier in the first World War. He was a driver on an ammunition waggon attached to a heavy artillery battery. I have vivid recollections of the experiences he told us, and can see now pictures of those shell-shattered towns he described... As I drove over that road, part of which is still made of granite setts, and other parts of granite setts which have been tarred over, what was a boyhood memory became an experience, not mine but his. The danger, the hardship, the rough life he had endured in a very real sense became mine. He became in his young manhood a living presence. I could see the heavy limbers being hauled over cobbles, hear the rattle of the wheels, and the clatter of the horses' hooves, see them straining sweating up the hills and all through the dangerous darkness.

His father returned from war service, and either commenced or resumed lay preaching in the village chapels of the South Downs. He was a coachman, and he would travel to his preaching appointments by pony and trap. Leslie began to accompany his father and to feel an urge to follow him in this work. He was encouraged to read the scripture lesson at the services, and later on to take a fuller part in the conduct of worship.

These experiences crystallised in a resolution to become a minister, and when

3. L.E. Cooke, *Above Every Name*, London, 1962 p.180.

Leslie was twelve he told his minister of the decision he had made. In one of his early volumes of sermons, *Faith Stakes a Claim*, there is a dedication to "Samuel Jones, Congregational Minister, born Mydrym, Carmarthenshire, 1879; died Preston Brook, Brighton 1934".⁴ In the preface Leslie explained this dedication:

...to a Congregational Minister to whom I owe more than to anyone else, other than my own parents, and my life's companion. He came from Carmarthen; he never ministered in large churches... He loved preaching and knew how to preach. He took me at my word when as a boy of twelve years of age I told him I wanted to be a minister, and he never left me until his death on Christmas Eve 1934. I have often wished that he could have lived that I might have had opportunity to acknowledge an indebtedness I could never hope to have repaid...

Leslie was educated in Brighton, at primary school and subsequently at the Varndean Secondary School. There he proved himself sportsman as well as scholar. He is recalled as goalkeeper in the school's first eleven. He is also credited with a century in a cricket match between the boys and the masters. In 1927 he entered the Lancashire Independent College and Manchester University to train for the Congregational Ministry. The college was then under the principalship of A.J. Grieve while in the University from 1930 C.H. Dodd was Rylands Professor of Biblical Criticism. Leslie was an outstanding student: he graduated in both Arts and Divinity and again showed himself to be a sportsman, playing football for both College and University. He also became involved in pastoral work at the Congregational Mission in Hulme, an inner city area, and preached regularly at some of the smaller local churches. He formed a more extended association with Long Lane Church, Cheadle, a village church in a developing neighbourhood.

Leslie used to spend part of his summer vacations as excursion leader at the Christian Endeavour Holiday Home in Penmaenmawr of the North Wales coast. There he was invited to lead services at one of the local churches. It was on one of these occasions that he came to the notice of T.R. Jones, then Church Secretary at Gatley Congregational Church. Thus a link was formed with that church, and it continued through the remainder of his student days.

From 1925 to 1929 the Gatley Church had been without a pastor, but in the latter year it invited Gordon Robinson to become pastor.⁵ He accepted. His pastorate was a time of great activity for the church, not least in its impact on the rapidly growing neighbourhood; but it proved to be a short one. Gordon

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4. L.E. Cooke, *Faith Stakes a Claim*, London, 1949 p.10. For Samuel Jones, minister at Preston Park 1914-34, see *Congregational Year Book* 1936 p.655.
 5. W. Gordon Robinson, minister at Gatley 1929-32, and Union Street Oldham 1933-43; Tutor Lancashire College 1929-33; Principal Lancashire College 1943-58 and Northern Congregational College 1958-68; Chairman, Congregational Union of England and Wales 1955-56.

Robinson, having refused several invitations to move, accepted a call to the Union Street Church, Oldham, in November 1932.

In these circumstances, an immediate approach was made to Leslie Cooke, and he accepted an invitation to serve as student-pastor for the first three months of 1933. At the end of the three months, the church unanimously invited him to fill the vacant pastorate. Leslie accepted and was ordained and inducted on the 10th July, 1933.

Gatley Congregational Church dated from 1777, when a congregation of weavers, small farmers and farm labourers, formed themselves into a gathered church. A building was erected in 1779, and a small village chapel it remained, with a chequered history, until well into the present century. By then improved transport facilities with its much larger neighbours, Manchester and Stockport, opened up the district as a residential suburb. This happened markedly in the years following the First World War and presented the church with the challenge of widely expanding horizons; but inspiration, organising skills and leadership were required for the church to make an adequate response to the challenge. These had been provided by Gordon Robinson during his short ministry. Leslie Cooke took over the task and provided in full measure the qualities needed to carry it forward.

II

He was ordained and inducted to the pastorate at Gatley in a service presided over by Gordon Robinson. Leslie's impact on the church was immediate. In particular, the quality of his preaching and the warmth of his nature drew large congregations. It soon became clear that these congregations could not be adequately accommodated in the existing building. Could it be extended? This proved impossible. A new church on a different site seemed to be the only adequate solution. By April 1934 a suitable site had been obtained - in a quiet residential road less than five minutes from the centre of the village, an ideal situation. Although the immediate need was for a new church building, there was ample room for halls and ancillary accommodation to be added later.⁶ Building contracts for the new church were placed in May 1936, and it was completed in August 1937, providing seating for a congregation of 300.

Meanwhile, on 4 July 1936, an important event had taken place: Leslie Cooke married a young woman, Gladys Burrows, who was already closely associated with the life of the church. She was to survive him by twenty years.

Leslie Cooke's achievements came in very measurable terms. From 1920 to 1939, with the emphasis more particularly on the 'thirties, church membership grew from 26 to 160, with corresponding increases in adherents, Sunday School

6. The outbreak of war delayed further development, and it was 1964 before the project was completed. Meanwhile the old church and hall gave yeoman service.

scholars and teachers. Towards the end of this period, George Lee, a senior Deacon wrote:

...Mr Cooke, however, was never anxious to achieve spectacular results which could merely be counted or tabulated. These were not wanting, but the main object of his ministry was to quicken and deepen the spiritual life of his people, to enter into their joys and sorrows, and to minister to their deepest needs. Perhaps the most significant note of his preaching, and that which made the most lasting impression, was the force of that personal and individual appeal which he never failed to make to the conscience and experience of his hearers...⁷

There were, then, signs of growth: in numbers; in spiritual depth and understanding; in financial strength; and in accommodation. But other matters needed attention. As noted in the bicentennial history of the church in Gatley, "from very early years the form of church government had been unsettled. Sometimes it had been carried on by a Committee, sometimes by a Diaconate, sometimes by a combination of both, and the results were not always happy or satisfactory..."⁸ Leslie Cooke took a lead in this matter and, working with a small committee, produced a draft constitution which was adopted by the Church Meeting on 10 March 1936. This constitution, with some amendment, still governs the internal administration of the church's affairs.

Nor were concerns outside the local church overlooked. Not far from Gatley, Manchester was developing a satellite town in Wythenshawe to rehouse people from run-down areas. In the Benchill neighbourhood of this newly developed area, the Lancashire Congregational Union and the Manchester Congregational Board were co-operating to establish a new church, and were seeking local assistance. Leslie Cooke responded by undertaking temporary supervision of this cause, and four members of the Church were appointed to its Management Committee.

There are few now remaining in Gatley who were there during Leslie Cooke's ministry. For those who do recall that exciting time there are many lively recollections of his open-hearted friendliness and his close involvement, not only in every aspect of the church's corporate life, but also in the significant events of his people's personal lives. He took part with competence (albeit punctuated by not infrequent prompting) in the productions of a thriving dramatic society - he would not sacrifice pastoral time for rehearsal time. He would willingly sing baritone solo parts in Musical Services and social evenings alike. He would go walking with groups of his own people. He played football and cricket in local teams. There seemed no limit to his versatility. He had an inherent charm of manner - brought into play once when a young man whom he

7. W.H. Shercliff, *Gatley United Reformed Church 1777-1977* Cambridge, 1976, p.46.

8. *Ibid.*, p.45.

was helping at a difficult time by employing him to clean his car, damaged a neighbour's garden wall. Naturally, Leslie went to apologise and offer amends. He returned relieved of all liability to pay for repairs and with a handsome contribution to the Church Building Fund.

Serious purposes were served by these very human and social contacts. Equally, Leslie could show a proper firmness in following out what seemed to him to be the right course. Not least was this seen in the pulpit, and in the care he gave to his study and his sermon preparation. When the Sunday School preparation class more than once tentatively suggested that their understanding of his preaching would be improved if he were to preach in simpler terms, and at less length, Leslie "would have none of it". He had a message to proclaim and he must be faithful to that message. They must strive to understand at that level: and the church was enriched in its experience by that preaching.

Perhaps there was one lesson Leslie took to heart at Gatley. In his early days he would follow closely his prepared text. One or two of his senior deacons hinted to him that his preaching would gain greater impact by his speaking more directly to the congregation. For some time thereafter he would go to the old church, usually alone, but sometimes accompanied by one of the deacons, to rehearse his sermons to an empty church with little reference to his script. It was thus that once the church caretaker found him in full flight. This was a lesson which he learned well.⁹

Reference has already been made to George Lee, a former master at Manchester Grammar School. His nephew, Leslie Atkins, was minister of St. James's Congregational Church, Newcastle-on-Tyne.¹⁰ He was asked to preach at the Anniversary Services in Gatley; but doubt was expressed whether a straightforward exchange of pulpits, allowing Leslie Cooke to preach at St. James's, would be acceptable. He was, after all, young, not long out of college, and in his first pastorate, virtually unknown. George Lee had no hesitation in reassuring his nephew. Leslie preached at St. James's and there he came to the notice of Sir Angus Watson, then a prominent layman in the Congregational Union.¹¹ At Watson's suggestion, Leslie was invited to preach at an Autumnal Assembly of the Union. Thereafter, he was invited to preach in some of the largest Congregational Churches, including the City Temple and Richmond Hill, Bournemouth.

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9. For these paragraphs of recollections, I have drawn on the verbal and written testimonies of friends in Gatley and elsewhere who belonged to the church during Leslie Cooke's ministry there.
 10. C. Leslie Atkins, minister at Rothwell 1915-20, Clarendon Park Leicester 1920-5, Great Yarmouth 1925-9, St. James's Newcastle Upon Tyne 1929-34, Purley 1934-44, Moderator North East Province 1944-6, Victoria Avenue Harrogate 1946-53, Bognor Regis 1954-7.
 11. Sir James Angus Watson (1874-1961), business man and philanthropist; associated in business with the first Lord Leverhulme; founded Angus Watson and Co. Ltd., fish canners; active Congregationalist and Chairman of the Union 1935-36; generously supported many religious, social and educational causes.

After several approaches from other churches, and five years in Gatley, Leslie accepted a call to the influential Warwick Road Church in Coventry, and commenced his ministry there in June 1938. As Gatley's history puts it: "the church leaders were very reluctant to lose him since he had made such a deep impression on the church especially by his fine gifts as a preacher and his capacity for hard work".¹² On his part, Leslie never lost his close interest in Gatley. He often came to preach, and was not infrequently seen seated in the deacon's pew at the back of the church, just a member of the congregation.

III

Warwick Road was a large church. It was older than Gatley; indeed it had hoped at one time to call Philip Doddridge to its pulpit. It had the advantage of being centrally placed, and was as influential in the affairs of the city as it was among the Congregational Churches in the area.

In the 1920s and 1930s Coventry went through a rapid expansion as a centre of the automobile, aircraft and electrical engineering industries, then entering a prosperity enhanced by the rearmament programme to meet the threat from Nazi Germany. Consequently, population grew between 1921 and 1937 by some 60 per cent - drawn by the availability of employment and the comparatively high wages.

It is not surprising, therefore, that at a time of decline in the strength and influence of churches, the Warwick Road membership increased from 464 in 1916 to 528 in 1927 and to 650 in November 1934.

The church, then, presented a challenge to a young man who had just closed his first, comparatively short pastorate. Furthermore, he was succeeding, in Maurice Watts, a minister who, in the full maturity of his considerable powers, had been pastor for fourteen years, and was already a figure of national standing in the denomination.¹³

In the early months of his new ministry, Leslie put into effect proposals for closer co-operation between the Congregational Churches in Coventry, with quarterly meetings of ministers and deacons. Then, early in 1939, links were established with the Cathedral. These bore fruit in the idea of a Chapel of Unity, finally embodied in the new Cathedral, built after the end of the war. This close co-operation also conceived a scheme for a Christian Service Centre, which also was ultimately based on the new Cathedral. Leslie was always keenly ecumenical in outlook.

In those early months, too, badly needed renovation of the buildings

12. Shercliff, *op. cit.* p.50.

13. S. Maurice Watts, minister at Bromley, Kent (assistant) 1916-18, Whitefields Central Mission London 1918-24, Warwick Road Coventry 1924-37, Elgin Place and Centenary Memorial Glasgow 1937-42, Mill Hill London 1942-61, Chairman of the Union 1948-49.

demanded a high priority, but such plans had to be suspended with the declaration of war. Effort instead had to be diverted to the organising of air raid precautions and to dealing with the public authorities anxious to make use of the halls.

Early in 1940, Leslie went through a period of ill-health; but when he had made a good recovery, he sought the advice of his deacons as to whether he should undertake some specific war service. Their advice, amply justified by subsequent events, was that his services were best utilised as a pastor. Nonetheless, he did at a later stage take up duties with the Royal Observer Corps, but these did not conflict with his pastoral work.

During the summer of 1940 air attacks on Coventry intensified and the heavy raids of October and November 1940 and April 1941 inflicted massive destruction on the city. Leslie Cooke was greatly affected by the experience and shared it with his people.

Indeed, the Cookes had to evacuate their home because of an unexploded land mine. Writing of this incident, Leslie, referring to Hans Lilje's description of his arrest and imprisonment, and how, when the prison door closed behind him, a deep sense of peace descended on him, went on:

I believe that my wife and I had just one glimpse of this once, when, after a night of bombing, we had to leave our home because of delayed-action bombs that were around. In the cold, grey light in the morning we packed a few books, some clothes, and some food and left the home we had built and paid for with our savings, and in which there was so much that was precious and dear, and left it thinking that perhaps we would never see it again. As it happened, we were able to return, but we didn't know then. As we made our way over the hill in the cold, grey light of the morning, we were silent. And then I said to my wife, 'If anybody had said that I could leave my home with a sense of emancipation and freedom and detachment like this, I would never have believed them'. She said, 'Strangely enough, I was just thinking the same thing'.¹⁴

Leslie's comment on this was: "whatever happens, it happens to the furtherance of the gospel. This is the faith that gives you courage to meet the dark hour".

As a result of the enemy action, the Congregational Churches at Well Street and West Orchard were demolished. Warwick Road took the initiative in establishing united services for the three churches in the Warwick Road premises which had largely escaped intact, mainly through the bravery and resourcefulness of the church officers. United services continued until the end of the war, under more formalised arrangements. There was also further growth in ecumenical relations, marked by a personal accord between Leslie Cooke and Richard Howard, the Cathedral Provost.

14. L.E. Cooke, *Chautauqua Sermons*, New York, 1957 Sermon 3, p.5.

Meanwhile, Leslie Cooke had further enhanced his powers and his reputation as a preacher of national stature. He was regularly broadcasting, and in the early summer of 1944 he went on the first of many preaching and lecture tours to the United States. While he was there, he represented the British Free Churches at an early meeting of an embryo organisation which later developed into the World Council of Churches.

Mission formed a vital part of Leslie Cooke's ministry and, even in the war years, members of Warwick Road with his encouragement had gone to serve in Africa, India, and China. Home mission was of no less concern, and he became closely involved in the oversight of smaller Congregational churches in isolated situations - at Potter's Green, Brownhill Green, and Keresley. Some able young student-ministers were deployed in these situations, notably Alex Holmes and Henry Rust.¹⁵ The latter, from California, characterised two important strands in Leslie's conception of what a church should be about - establishing and maintaining links with churches in countries overseas; and the vital importance of home mission in the overall mission of the church.

Leslie Cooke's gifts were recognised and confirmed by his call in 1948 to succeed Sidney Berry¹⁶ as General Secretary of the Congregational Union. The history of Warwick Road thus sums up Leslie's ministry: "...Through war and adversity the Congregation and Pastor had undergone a remarkable experience and achieved a vision, that of a wider Christian community, interdenominational and international in nature, where it had not existed before".¹⁷

Sydney Berry had been General Secretary of the Union for twenty-five years. Leslie Cooke had held only two pastorates and was just forty years old. Nevertheless he was generally regarded as the obvious choice, and as Norman Goodall subsequently wrote: "He assumed the position and the responsibilities of leadership which it entailed as to the manner born".¹⁸

IV

Even before his appointment Leslie Cooke had been involved in the Union's Committee work. Dorothy Biggs, then an Assistant Secretary for Youth Work, has related how, not long before Leslie's appointment, she had to take a

15. Alex Holmes subsequently was minister at Cavendish Chapel, Manchester, where he developed a healing ministry. Afterwards he moved to Canada. Henry Rust returned to the U.S.A.

16. Sydney M. Berry (1881-1961) was ordained in 1906 and ministered at Chorlton-cum-Hardy, Manchester 1909-12, Carrs Lane, Birmingham 1912-23. He was Secretary of the Union 1923-48 and became Minister-secretary, International Congregational Council from 1949. He was Moderator of the Free Church Federal Council 1934-37 and Chairman of the Congregational Union 1947.

17. D. Rimmer, *Pulpit and Pew: A History of Warwick Road Church 1891-1991* Coventry, 1991 p.41.

18. L.E. Cooke, *Bread and Laughter*, Geneva, 1968 p.18.

resolution to the General Purposes Committee proposing a representative group of young people who would formulate a policy to encourage young people, particularly those returning from the forces, to join youth clubs, to learn to run the clubs themselves, and to use this to draw them back into the life of the church. In Committee the response was mixed until Leslie gave it his enthusiastic support. He had already been working on those lines in Coventry. He immediately offered a redundant church at Withybrook, outside Coventry. He also offered to secure bunk beds, mattresses and blankets to provide a centre where young people could meet at little expense. In the event, Leslie and Gladys Cooke also assisted with the provisioning.¹⁹ Thus, Leslie's interest and decisiveness helped to bring into being the first Central Youth Council, formed as an outcome of the Conference in the first year of Leslie's General Secretaryship.

Another task which Leslie Cooke took with him to his new office, at least until 1949, was the Co-Editorship of the *Congregational Quarterly*, which he shared with his close friend Leslie Tizard of Carrs Lane, Birmingham.²⁰ He also maintained a link with the life of the local church by serving, through his time as General Secretary, as honorary pastor to the small Congregational church at Iver in Buckinghamshire, where the Cookes had their home.

At the time of Cooke's appointment the question of union with the Presbyterians had again become a live issue. The report of a Joint Committee formed in 1945 was published in 1947. Its proposals anticipated the basis on which union was to be accomplished in 1972. But neither church seemed ready for a decisive step. There were marked differences of opinion in the Council of the Congregational Union which was unable to give guidance to the 1948 Assembly as to how it should proceed. Finally, both denominations remitted the scheme to the local churches, but in neither case was sufficient support forthcoming. The scheme was shelved. One significant factor was the complexity of the legal implications of any formal union. It was a baptism of fire for the newly-appointed General Secretary.

There had, however, been a breaking-down of the separatism of Congregational churches in preceding years. The Reconstruction Fund of 1941-45 and the setting-up of the Home Churches Fund in 1948 had helped in giving a sense of common purpose to the local churches.

So one of the firm objectives which Cooke had in view was to bring the churches of the Congregational Union into a more cohesive structure without impairing the spiritual authority and integrity of the local church. There was a concern at a serious loss of church members. In 1949 it was noted that the churches had lost some 100,000 members in the previous twenty-five years. Accordingly at the 1950 Assembly, Cooke called the churches to a Forward Movement to rebuild their life, to face the task of evangelism, and to provide the

19. I am indebted to Miss Biggs for written notes of her own recollections.

20. Leslie J. Tizard, minister at Albion Southampton 1929-35; Lion Walk Colchester 1935-41; Carrs Lane Birmingham 1941-57; Editor, *Congregational Quarterly* 1946-8; Chairman C.U.E.W. 1952-3.

financial resources to carry forward a policy of expansion and development. This was widely supported and put into operation. But by 1953 the Union was in financial crisis, and it was necessary to retrench on spending and curtail some planning. The original proposals had been over-ambitious. This was a keen disappointment for Cooke.

Nevertheless, things did not stand still. Both the Presbyterian and the Congregational Assemblies in 1949 had approved the setting up of a Joint Advisory Council to consider common policy and action - on church and community; in women's work; in church extension; and on publications. Local co-operation in youth work was also encouraged. It was further proposed to consider the question of mutual eligibility of ministers, and to examine the possibility of dovetailing ministerial training. In 1952 the two Life and Work Departments initiated a joint study of the use of force in society. There were clearly many areas in which practical co-operation was possible. In May 1951 this continuing relationship received a degree of formalisation in a Joint Session of both Assemblies for worship and communion at which was read an agreed declaration of a new covenant relationship.²¹

Cooke's years as Union General Secretary were also marked by close involvement in the work of the World Council. In 1948 he led the Congregational delegation to the inaugural Assembly of the World Council at Amsterdam, and also to the second Assembly at Evanston in 1954. He was appointed to the Central and Executive Committees and was later appointed as Chairman of the important Committee on Structure and Functions, which shaped the organisation of the Council's work. With his appointment in 1955 as Associate General Secretary and Director of the Division of Inter-Church Aid, Refugees and World Service, Cooke's term of service with the Union was brought to an end.

Of Leslie Cooke's service to British Congregationalism in his years as Union General Secretary, John Huxtable, in a tribute, had this to say: "He did not hold office long enough to see the fruits of his labours; but it is virtually certain that future historians of Congregationalism will record that much of what has happened within it in recent years had its origin in the vision and statesmanship he brought to this office. Certainly he rejoiced most generously when his successors reaped the harvest he had sown".²²

21. The summary of events given in the preceding four paragraphs is based on research, for a different purpose, derived from contemporary sources including: *British Weekly*, *Congregational Monthly*, *Congregational Quarterly*, *Year Books*, *Presbyterian Messenger*, *Outlook*, Reports to and of Church Assemblies.

22. L.E. Cooke, *Bread and Laughter*, Geneva, 1968 p.280.

V

The World Council of Churches came into being through the coalescence of the Faith and Order Movement and the Life and Work Movement, each with their origins in the early years of the present century. The final step was taken by both movements in the years immediately before the outbreak of war in 1939. An inaugural assembly of the World Council, planned to take place in 1941, had inevitably to be postponed. But a provisional Committee had been set up in 1938 to take such preparatory action as seemed to be possible in the circumstances. One issue arose which demanded immediate action: that was the refugee problem. An Ecumenical Refugee Commission was set up in Geneva. It quickly became involved in the work of rescuing and housing Jews from southern France. It also started a chaplaincy service for prisoners of war, and it took steps to give aid to churches in many parts of Europe. So, almost imperceptibly, a Department of Inter-Church Aid and Service to refugees had come into being as part of the programme of the emerging World Council of Churches.

The primary purpose of the Department was to provide a channel by which the collective resources of the member churches might be applied to the urgent needs of individual churches. But the calls for assistance were not all of this nature. It came to be recognised that the churches acting together had a role in meeting other forms of human suffering. Nor was the direction of aid always church-related or even Christian related. The emphasis shifted from meeting the more immediate needs of a crisis, to a more planned and methodical provision of specific technical skills, and so on to schemes of more general development, all requiring careful determination of priorities. It was at a time of rapid growth in this division of the Council that Leslie Cooke was called to its direction.

It has already been noticed that Leslie Cooke had been drawn into the work of the main governing committees of the World Council by his appointment to the Central Committee and to the Executive Committee and, after 1954, to the Chairmanship of the Committee on Structure and Functions. To that extent, he was familiar with much of the organisation and activities of the Council. It seemed, therefore, a logical step to move to a permanent appointment.

Kenrick Baker,²³ an American Congregationalist, and at that time a recent student at the Graduate School of Ecumenical Studies at Bossey, was assisting the General Secretary, Dr. Visser 't Hooft, in preparing for the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches at Evanston, Illinois, arranged for the summer of 1954. Part of his duties consisted in preparing the minutes of the Central and Executive Committee meetings. Leslie Cooke was already a member of both these Committees. Baker has written:

...I recall with clarity the leading rôle he played. I think of the

23. I am grateful to the Revd. Kenrick Baker for a memorandum on his personal recollections of Leslie Cooke.

leadership he gave for the setting up of the new structures of the Council, which were to go into effect after the Evanston Assembly, and even more the way in which he led the worship services at many of these meetings. They always helped us who on the staff were very much preoccupied with administrative detail, to remember what was the real purpose of the Council and of the Ecumenical Movement as a whole.

Baker has also described how staff members used to withdraw when the Committees went into closed session. At a meeting early in 1954, Leslie Cooke joined them at the coffee table:

He confessed that he had been obliged to leave, too, as the committee was discussing a staff appointment for him... An invitation would be hard to refuse as he was deeply committed to the ecumenical cause, but he had some misgivings too. He said that at the age of 46 to leave England and transfer to Geneva meant putting in question his conviction that he was first of all called to be a preacher. He hoped that if he did accept, it might still be possible one day for him to return and resume his ministry as a pastor and preacher.

Nevertheless, he brought administrative skills to the complicated work of his division. Moreover, he added unique skills of advocacy (just because he was at heart a preacher of the gospel?). To both skills he brought a tireless energy.

Mme. Baehr,²⁴ Leslie's personal assistant throughout his service with the World Council, has described how, soon after he had become Head of the Division, a severe earthquake occurred at Skopje in Yugo-Slavia, destroying several villages. Leslie spent the day on the telephone and by evening had sufficient funds pledged to rebuild an entire village:

...and so it went on over the years. Neither before him, nor since, has the World Council had such a fund raiser. He travelled the world, preaching and speaking, always with the same enthusiasm and imagination, always giving help where help was needed.

There was also a strategy behind this energy. There is ample evidence that he devoted hard and constructive thought to the problems which in his view the Division would have to contend with. Some of his thinking over a wide field is seen in the keynote address to a World Consultation on Inter-Church Aid at Swanwick in 1966, not long before his final illness.²⁵ Kenrick Baker has referred to its "insight and prophetic vision". Its main points are outlined as follows:

24. I am indebted to Mme. Gwendolin Baehr, now retired in Geneva, for both a long letter containing her recollections, and a copy of *Bread and Laughter*.

25. L.E. Cooke, *Bread and Laughter*. Geneva, 1968 p.23ff.

- (i) The refugee problem would continue, but its causes would change; instead of displacements resulting from the Second World War, fresh international strife, internal upheavals, and economic circumstances would be contributory factors.
- (ii) Large scale movements would increasingly demand state or community intervention and action.
- (iii) Many cases handled by the Council may best be processed by delegating the work to the indigenous churches.
- (iv) Conflict of interest may well arise between the aid agencies and governments over the direction of resources.
- (v) There may be some continuing resentment on the part of recipients of aid, at a perceived evangelistic implication in the giving of aid.
- (vi) Fundamentally, there must be more determined effort put into the task of securing economic and social justice in "aided" countries.

These points indicate (and more so in the expanded form of the original address) the penetration and scope of his thinking in the complex field with which he was engaged.

At the close of his Swanwick address, Leslie turned to a subject which, as he expressed it, was very much on his mind at that time - the Biblical and theological understanding of that task. He refers to the word "sign" as an important concept in the New Testament presentation of the Gospel. Signs were used by the Old Testament prophets, and were used by Jesus as a means of pointing to "a reality beyond itself and which help to bring that reality into the experience of men by the creation of faith or belief". C.H. Dodd described them as "effectual" or "efficacious" signs. Leslie's final paragraph is worth quoting:

I believe this throws light on our common task and offers a most searching judgment on what we are seeking to do. Our projects, our programmes have a manifest meaning and effect in so far as they may heal the sick, feed the hungry, care for the poor. They may even have a manifest meaning in that we are trying to follow the example of our Lord. If this is all, then our motivation and our behaviour is too superficial. Unless we conceive and carry out what we do as SEMEIA - signs which point to Jesus as the image of God, as the bringer of the new order, as manifesting the DOXA, the glory, the selfgiving of God - can we be said to have begun really to understand the Gospel?

So it was all preaching, proclaiming the Gospel, if not all the time in words, then at least in effectual signs.

Linking up with these thoughts, there was an earlier reference to the element of evangelism in the giving of aid. Lesslie Newbigin, who, after the merger of the

International Missionary Council with the World Council, was Director of World Mission and Evangelism from 1962 to 1965, has said that there was the possibility of tension between his Division and Leslie Cooke's Division.²⁶ The latter was a burgeoning department with ample resources. The former was small by comparison and attracted some disfavour among the younger churches, who looked upon it as a survival from colonial days:

It was a very great help to me that Leslie always retained his belief in the enduring importance of world mission. He knew that it was the work of missions which had, under God, brought forth the fine leaders in the churches of the Third World with whom he was dealing. My task would have been much harder if he had not had this deep understanding of the missionary dimension of the Church's life.

Quite independently, Kenrick Baker has said: "...We often got involved in questions of political and social commitments. Leslie was often the one to call us back to remind us of our Evangelical calling".

Above all, in the busy life in which the direction of his own Division and all his other World Council commitments ceaselessly involved him, Leslie always remained essentially the Christian minister and pastor. Bishop Newbigin has recently commented:

My other main recollection of [Leslie Cooke] was his pastoral care for the people working in the WCC headquarters. In a large organisation of this kind, where everyone is under pressure to achieve, it is easy for the personal strains and stresses of individual members from the General Secretary to the office workers and cleaners to be overlooked. Leslie Cooke was a true pastor and sensitive to needs which most of us had not noticed. I was often grateful for and humbled by his gift in that matter.

Here are two examples:

...He gave me invaluable counsel and orientation... Again Leslie was invaluable as he helped me to understand the nature of the task and pointed out the booby-traps that awaited the inexperienced. What proficiency I had was in large part due to Leslie's guidance and counsel.

Leslie fostered a sense of collegiality among the members of his staff. The weekly staff meetings brought us together to think

26. Bishop J.E. Lesslie Newbigin, Church of Scotland Minister 1936-74; Bishop Church of South India 1947-74; General Secretary International Missionary Council 1959-61; Director of World Mission and Evangelism World Council of Churches 1962-65; Selly Oak Colleges 1974-79; Moderator General Assembly United Reformed Church 1978-79; Minister, Winson Green United Reformed Church, Birmingham 1979-88.

through with him the responses that were needed to meet the requirements of churches around the world. We all felt ourselves as part of a single team, each sharing his responsibility with his colleagues. And Leslie was not only our director but also our guide and pastor. In our meetings and our retreats he often led the worship and continued his vocation as a preacher.

In the tradition of his Master, Leslie had time to give to the children. One of his former colleagues has described how his ten-year old son took him to see his newly installed electric train set. Leslie became so engrossed in operating the switches and speeding up the locomotive that they had great difficulty in tearing him away for a meal. To the children of another colleague Leslie and Gladys were known familiarly as “Uncle Boss” and “Auntie Cookie”. The Cookes had no children of their own.

Norman Goodall was also a colleague of Leslie Cooke at WCC headquarters. In a biographical sketch published at the time of Leslie’s death, he wrote: “It was out of the heart of a caring minister that there pulsed the energy of the powerful administrator”.²⁷

In the course of a preaching and lecture tour in Canada in October 1966 he was overtaken by an illness which proved to be fatal. He died in New York on 22 February 1967, and was buried at Stamford, Connecticut, and a memorial service was held at the Riverside Church in New York City. In a tribute in *Congregational Monthly*, John Huxtable used words which, some years earlier, had been used of Archbishop William Temple: “God must be very sure of his victory, if he calls such a soldier home so soon”.

VI

Leslie Cooke believed that he had responded to a call to be a preacher of the gospel. In the last twenty years or so of his life, however, he had been called first by the Congregational Union Assembly and then by the Assembly of the World Council of Churches to perform tasks not primarily involved in preaching the word to a local congregation. Nevertheless, the story of his life shows that his deeds spoke as loud as his words, since he continued to preach at every opportunity. But it is as a preacher of the Word he would wish to be remembered. So what of his preaching of the Word, its manner, its ideas, beliefs, and commitments, and its major themes?

Leslie was, in his sermon preparation, industrious, careful and assiduous. He himself said: “Although it is fourteen years since I was called away from the ministry in the pastorate... I have continued in sermon preparation and have

27. L.E. Cooke, *Bread and Laughter*, Geneva, 1968 p.19.

taken every possible opportunity of preaching in the course of many journeys across the world".²⁸ Huxtable has further said:

Without doubt, Leslie Cooke was a conscious artist. He stirred up the gift that was in him so that he might be a workman that needed not to be ashamed; and those who knew him best could testify how diligent he was at his books even when in later years his programme of work might have been used as an excuse for abandoning studious habits. His last sermon to the Congregational Assembly was abundant evidence that unobtrusive but abundant book-work and skilful craftsmanship underlay the passionate eloquence in which the message was proclaimed.²⁹

In the pulpit he was a commanding presence. He had a fine voice, melodious and well modulated. He gave an impression of high seriousness, and he was always able to strike a note of urgency in his voice. Franklin Clark Fry, then Chairman of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, described his preaching in the following terms:

Although twenty years had elapsed since his parish ministry days, he remained the epitome of a preacher until the end of his life. Others of us with administrative duties become bleached out, but not he. The mighty ideas of the Scriptures determined his modes of thought. The rhythm of his words reflected, his tongue was steeped in their imagery. The joy of a known Lord shone from his handsome open face. It suffused the whole man... God had called Leslie Cooke and he never ceased to hear that call ringing in his ears. The only news that he knew that was worth telling was the good news of Jesus Christ...³⁰

Because he was supremely a preacher, Leslie Cooke was an evangelical. In a paper on "The Biblical Revolution" in the collection of his sermons and addressed in *Bread and Laughter*, he explains that he was brought up in a fundamentalist home. His parents' views, however, broadened with the years. His own views broadened: "...under the cultured and gracious influence of my minister..." But it was at theological college that he really faced up to the challenge of the critical approach to the Bible. It became part of his intellectual equipment as a minister, and he came to find it a positive force in his ministry. For this reason, he eschewed dogmatism of any kind, and in that sense was in the tradition of Congregationalism stretching back to Isaac Watts and Philip Doddridge. In one of his Chautauqua Sermons of 1957,³¹ he described how he was present in 1952 at the Faith and Order Conference at Lund in Sweden. He

28. L.E. Cooke, *Above Every Name*, 1962 p.7.

29. L.E. Cooke, *Bread and Laughter*, Geneva, 1968 p.279.

30. *Ibid.*, p.15.

31. L.E. Cooke, *Chautauqua Sermons*, New York, 1957 Sermon 4, p.1ff.

recalled being member of a group discussing ways of worship and particularly the liturgy of the Eucharist. The Chairman asked each member of the group in turn to speak about the particular experience and understanding of their own Church. When it was Leslie Cooke's turn, Leslie said that all that his colleagues found in the Eucharist, he found in the communion of the Lord's Supper. He continued: "And I find it not in the actions of the priest, but in the praise and the hymns, for we sing our creeds. And I quoted some of the great hymns that are sung around the communion table". The same thought occurs in his book *Above Every Name*.³²

...The noblest hymns of the church are its theology. If we were to ask what more than anything else has preserved the faith and kept the Church true to it, the answer would not be the classic statements of the faith, not the work of scholars, important as they are, but the Church's hymns. There is a real sense in which it is true to say that a theology which does not issue in praise and adoration, which cannot be sung, is a bad theology. No statement of the Christian gospel is adequate which does not make a man want to praise and glorify God.

It is clear that Leslie Cooke had a high view of the purpose of the Church. He quoted in a chapter on the Church in one of his early books words of Bernard Lord Manning which noted three things about the Church: (1) It is a society different from all others because it is made by what God did 1900 years ago, not by what men do now. (2) Its members belong to it, not because they are better than other men, but because God has called and they have heard. (3) It is one Church.³³ Perhaps Leslie would have put those three points even more positively: God has called men to Himself. Some have responded in penitence, humility and loyalty. The Church, though superficially divided, is one Church. His strongly ecumenical stance is reflected in his own words:

...There is one body because there is only one Christ. That body is the Church, wherever it is found and by whatever name. That fellowship is authoritative, catholic, unified, in the only true meaning of those terms. If our membership of the Church visible is not an expression of membership in that true fellowship in Christ, then we are none of His. If it is, then we are not divided from those that are His, whatever their name, or the form of the worship and witness by which their life in Christ is nourished and their loyalty to him declared.³⁴

He is not, however, unaware of the weaknesses that the churches can show. "I was", he says, "a pastor long enough to be made all too familiar with the trivial

32. L.E. Cooke, *Above Every Name*, 1962 p.88.

33. L.E. Cooke, *The Token of Our Inheritance*, London, 1943 p.80.

34. *Ibid.*, p.86.

reasons which men and women give for cutting themselves off from the means of grace".³⁵ He quotes C.S. Lewis's mordant description in the *Screwtape Letters* of the meaner aspects of congregational life. He fully endorses Bonhoeffer's distinction between "cheap grace" and "costly grace".³⁶ But ultimately the Church remains the one body of Christ. We may leave the last word to words with which Leslie closed an address given at Kidderminster, where Richard Baxter once ministered.

...‘Only a life of underlying love among Christians will extend the work’. Until we take this step we are in disobedience.

If one came in - is this what he would find? Is there some way in which we can become this kind of Church? Baxter said it beautifully: ‘Thy presence makes a crowd a Church. Thy converse make a closet, or solitary wood, or field, to be kin to the angelic choir’.

‘Thy presence makes a crowd a Church’. That and nothing else. Without Him, however efficient, wealthy and strong we may be, we cumber the earth. With Him, though we may not number many noble, nor wise, nor mighty, we are His people, His body, a colony of heaven, a people for His own possession - a royal priesthood through whom His name shall be honoured and His kingdom established.³⁷

There is no doubt that the Person of Jesus Christ was central to the faith of Leslie Cooke. In one of the earliest of his books, *The Token of our Inheritance*, he relates this to the historical question and declares his conviction that the rooting of the Christian Gospel in history is of supreme importance. However important the things that have been claimed for Jesus and believed about him, more important still are what he claimed for and believed about himself. He quotes C.J. Cadoux, who wrote: "...the endeavour to obtain a complete and systematic view of the real content of Jesus' own teaching in distinction, as far as possible, from the interpretation put upon it by the first followers, remains a vital prerequisite for the true understanding of the whole Christian movement".³⁸ Leslie himself continues:

There is no room for dogmatism here. The Spirit bloweth where it listeth; but there is room for personal testimony and this is mine - that my own experience came that way; that from the darkness of doubt and complete misgiving in which none of the great assertions of the Christian faith went unchallenged, this was 'the light which I thought I saw, and going up thither, keeping it in my eye, I found

35. L.E. Cooke, *Above Every Name*, 1962 p.32f.

36. *Op. cit.* p.113ff.

37. L.E. Cooke, *Bread and Laughter*, Geneva, 1968 p.154.

38. L.E. Cooke, *The Token of Our Inheritance*, 1943 p.40f.

that it led to a wicket-gate and at last to the foot of a Cross'. For me it was the person of Jesus and the message of Jesus which challenged to the decision, to dare to believe that God is what Jesus said He is, and that the meaning of life is what he declared it to be.³⁹

It is at once fascinating and revealing that Leslie, more particularly in his early writings (e.g. *Faith Stakes a Claim*) commonly uses the epithet "The Master" in referring to Jesus. It was used frequently in his early days in the ministry. It is the title used so often by the early disciples: Rabbi, or Teacher. It seems to embody the feelings of friendship and loyalty they bore towards him, who so clearly commanded their respect, their reverence and their single-minded obedience. It crystallises the close relationship the Christian should have with Jesus, without leaning either towards a closed dogmatism on the one hand, or excessive familiarity on the other.

In a sermon, written presumably in his World Council days, Leslie concluded thus:

Firstly and lastly, everthing rests upon this simple decision: to cast in one's lot with him, to dare to believe that he was right about God, life and men, and though the heavens fall to be standing with him, living for him and dying with him. It is then we discover that the promises are true and know that the life which was in him is being manifested in us. We are not saved from perplexity, but we are saved from despair.

When I was young, I had a lot to say about the Gospel and the Faith and Christian Doctrine and the Church. As I grow older I find I have only one thing to say, one name to speak, and one only to whom I can point. It is He, Jesus of Nazareth.⁴⁰

This memoir could end there, but it seems appropriate to add two footnotes. The words just quoted allow for the existence of perplexity as an accompaniment to Christian Faith. Leslie never lacked the courage to face up to the difficulties of our struggles with perplexities and our encounters with paradox. We need only note the titles he gave to some of the sermons which he published in *Faith Stakes a Claim*: "Faith's Lingerin' Doubt"; "Learnin' God's 'Yes' through God's 'No'"; "The Disappointin' Christ". The first sermon I heard from Leslie Cooke, some fifty years ago, was on the "Divine Assailant".

The second point to be noticed is that from this quotation we can draw out once more the full effect of Leslie's vision of the work performed by him and his colleagues at the World Council as constituting a sign of the presence of the Kingdom active in the world – the Kingdom that has its centre, now and always, in Jesus of Nazareth. In the light of such understanding, we may say that the life of this preacher-administrator – premature as its swift ending might seem – was richly and remarkably fulfilled.

JOHN E MORRIS

39. *Ibid.*

40. L.E. Cooke, *Bread and Laughter*, 1968 p.168.

REVIEW ARTICLE

Calendar of the Correspondence of Richard Baxter, Ed. N.H. Keeble and Geoffrey F. Nuttall, Volume I 1638-60. pp.433; Volume II 1660-1696. pp.387 Oxford: Clarendon Press 1991.

The greatest of all English Puritans in the seventeenth century has not lacked for biographers. It is perhaps not generally realised how few of them (two of the exceptions being the editors of the volume under review) have drawn upon Richard Baxter's voluminous correspondence. This is a pity, because as we shall see there are many treacheries in the printed Baxter text. But future biographers will have little excuse in the future for neglecting this source, now that we have Dr. Keeble's and Dr. Nuttall's handsomely produced calendar of the entire Baxter correspondence.

This achievement cannot be overpraised. In his introduction Dr. Keeble modestly underplays the difficulties in getting this intractable-seeming material under control, although anyone who has attempted hitherto to grapple with the archive will be under no illusions about the magnitude of the task. Not only are all the letters presented in chronological form, and the persons referred to in the text clearly identified, but the editors made the bold - and justified - decision to incorporate the numerous (and often revealing) dedicatory epistles that Baxter provided to other writers' works, as well as to his own. Careful examination of the two volumes threw up few errors, although "Laudersdale" (i, p. 386 note 6) should read "Lauderdale", and note 3 (i, p. 391) should refer the reader to Letter 607, not 667, whilst the index reference to John Lambert should be to Letter 574 not 573. On the other hand the editors have been able to correct a number of mistakes in other studies, among them the present reviewer's *Richard Baxter and the Millennium* (London, 1979), the most chastening of which was his attribution of *Union Pursued* (1691) correctly to John Humfrey (Chapter iv, footnote 122) but later incorrectly to Thomas Comber (Chapter iv, footnotes 127 and 129).

Why does it matter to seventeenth-century studies that we now have such a full and accurate record of Baxter's letters made accessible to a wider public? Baxter is opaque: do not be misled by the seeming candour of the printed word. The general reader is most likely to encounter Baxter first in the *Everyman* edition of his autobiography. But these memoirs were composed over a long period after the Restoration: hindsight wisdom distorts his account, for instance, of the origins of the Civil War. Worse still, the *Everyman* edition of 1931 is itself an abridgement by J.M. Lloyd Thomas of Matthew Sylvester's posthumous edition of 1696 (the famous *Reliquiae Baxterianae*). When *Everyman* produced a new edition in 1974, Dr. Keeble wrote a new Introduction, but the text remained Lloyd Thomas's. One more Everest therefore remains for Baxter scholars to climb: a new Baxter autobiography with an abridgement which takes into account the findings of modern research. If that ever happens, we will indeed be fortunate if it matches the consummate scholarship of this calendared correspondence.

Among its many virtues, the calendar is generous in its summary of the contents of the letters themselves. This might give the illusion of completeness: a claim, incidentally, expressly repudiated (i, p.xl) by Dr. Keeble in his Introduction. For the remainder of the review I shall direct the reader to areas where I believe there are omissions, or where I would put a different emphasis. No scholar would have identical reactions to the material, and ultimately the reader must return to the original to make his or her individual judgment. What follows is a sketch of some areas of possible disagreement.

First, the editors identify the contributions which Baxter made to Thomas Edwards's notorious anti-libertarian diatribe, *Gangraena*, in 1646 (Letters 6 and 7, i, pp. 41-2). They could, however, have highlighted their importance by reference to his part-disowning of them in 1682 (*The True History of Councils Enlarged and Defended*, p. 190). Baxter's letter to John Durie of 20 November 1652 (Letter 104, i, p. 89) is important because it ties up Durie's ecumenical schemes with Baxter's own Ministerial Association plans, and sees the way forward to their common end as the summoning of a consultative Assembly (with Constantine the model): none of this evident in the summary provided. Martin Johnson argued the Catholic case with Baxter on 8 December 1653 (Letter 153, i, pp. 120-1). Baxter had argued that the Catholic claims to an apostolic succession were subverted by the pontificate of Pope Joan. The editors refer to Baxter's *The Safe Religion* 1657) (*Ibid.*, i, p. 121 footnote 153) for his reassertion of the authenticity of a Pope Joan. But in 1690 Baxter expressly refused to peddle that fable, even though it seemed to do the Protestant cause good (Dr. Williams's Library, *Baxter Treatises*, vii, fol. 45). Henry Newcome's letter to Baxter (430, i, pp. 291-2) of 25 February 1658 concerning usury is summarised too tersely: the concerns it voices are crucial to the discussion of Baxter's position on these matters in the works of Weber and Tawney. The editors rightly draw attention to Baxter's problems with Philip Nye, the leading Independent minister (i, p. 299). To describe their relations as "uniformly unfortunate" may be overplaying it: in the last year of his life he could project a "National Church" which would appeal to "Intelligent Independency" (Dr. Williams's Library, *Baxter Treatises*, vi, fol. 302), and include Nye among his "intelligent Independents".

The editors include in their summary of Baxter's letter to John Howe of 3 April 1658 (443, i, p. 300) his remarkable tribute to Oliver Cromwell as "a man of a Catholike Spirit, desirous of the unity and Peace of all the servants of Christ". Their footnote reference (no. 4) is to his "more developed, and critical, portrait of Cromwell" in his later *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, "which does not acknowledge this 'catholike' spirit". This comment is misleading. It makes it seem as if an aesthetic judgment is being offered: Baxter is able to give later a more nuanced portrait of the Protector. This is to ignore the political context in which these different judgments are offered: after the Restoration Baxter had to work his passage to eliminate the (well grounded) assumption that he had become too close to the Protectorate (father and son). Here the correspondence is a valuable corrective to the retrospective memoir, and its force is blunted by the explanation which the editors offer.

Although the editors give lengthy summaries of the exchange between Baxter and the Baptist Thomas Lambe in 1658 (Letters 495 and 503, i, p. 344-5 and 348-350) they miss its central drama: Lambe assumes that if he gives up separatism he therefore gives up the poor; Baxter tells him the contrary. The editors summarise a twenty-two-and-a-half-page letter from Baxter to Joseph Cooper in 1670 (Letter 814, ii, pp. 97-8) in six lines, which inevitably cannot do justice to its importance as a statement of his revulsion from populism at that date, but also misses out Baxter at his most venial: with another "grave divine", stuffing himself in the bottom of the pew to conceal his enjoyment at a crowd-pleasing preacher. The editors double the ration of summary to another Baxter letter three years later, to Edmund Hough in 1673 (Letter 906, ii, p. 146), but it is doubtful whether even twelve lines are sufficient to prepare the reader for the content of what emerges as the fullest analysis he was ever to give of the origins of the Civil War (apart from his embarrassingly candid *Holy Commonwealth* of 1659). Apart again, that is, from his letter in 1679 to his old schoolfriend, Richard Allestree (Letter 1039, ii, p. 211) which is similarly not highlighted strongly enough for that fact. In the same year the lapse of the Licensing Act gave Baxter the opportunity to publish *The Nonconformists Plea for Peace*. The editors summarise from his dedicatory epistle (Letter 1028, ii, pp. 205-6) to that work his grievances against those who called him schismatic, without acknowledging how at that time the work lent itself to just such an interpretation in a way that most others of his writings - earlier and later - did not.

These are points on which editors and the present reviewer diverge. But, it must be emphasised, these points could themselves only be made because of the generosity of the summaries which the editors provide, which paradoxically make their occasional parsimony stand out. Their achievement is, on the other hand, immense. In Christopher Hill's marvellous *The World Turned Upside Down* 1972, p. 283) Baxter embodies the enemy: "The rich will rule in the world", sighed the well-to-do Richard Baxter philosophically; 'and few rich men will be saints'. Now, armed with Keeble/Nuttall, the reader can return to the source, and will find that it comes from a Baxter letter to John Eliot in 1663 (Letter 714, ii, p. 41). The reader will then see that the "well-to-do" is irrelevant, the philosophical sigh invented, and that a cautionary brake on the zeal of a fellow ecumenist is a long way from a blank cheque for capitalism. Some sort of rough justice is then done to the man who would end his days writing a social tract as angry and compassionate as *The Poor Husbandman's Advocate*.

Other readers will pluck out other plums. These superb volumes are as important to seventeenth-century historical studies as Latham's *Pepys*: I know of no higher praise to offer.

WILLIAM LAMONT

SHORTER REVIEWS

From Reformation to Toleration. By Leonard Bayes. Pp.206. Produced for the author by Lakeside Publishing (36 Dogfield St., Cathays, Cardiff, CF2 4QZ). 1990. £4.95 plus p. and p. 70p.

This short paperback follows the course of the Reformation in England from its beginnings in the fifteenth century to the Toleration Act of 1689. The author, who has specialised in history, has spent a lifetime in teaching and education while also playing a full part in Baptist and ecumenical work and witness.

The problem one faces in writing this kind of book is judging what to leave out. The author has packed factual information into his pages possibly at the expense of interpretation. How hard it is to prune and simplify! For example, instead of providing detailed information about William Brewster and his friends in Lincolnshire, would it not have been better to elaborate on the venture of the Pilgrim Fathers, not forgetting to point out that strangers as well as pilgrims were in the party? The best pages are those with pen sketches of characters, such as Charles I and Cromwell; but surely the author should have at least mentioned *Paradise Lost* in an otherwise excellent account of Milton's contribution? He provides a brief but useful section on dissenting worship but ought to have given more space to the growth of congregational polity. There are some useful appendices but little in the way of footnotes and the select bibliography is limited to nineteen authors. However, in a day when books are frighteningly expensive, Mr. Bayes has given us value for money.

JOHN H. TAYLOR

Rhetoric and Reality: Theological Reflections upon Congregationalism and its Heirs. By Alan P.F. Sell. Pp.29. The Congregational Memorial Hall Trust, Caroon House, 14 Farringdon St., London, EC4A 4DX. £2 plus postage.

Rhetoric and Reality was the 1991 Congregational Lecture given at Dr Williams's Library, which now also houses the Memorial Hall Library. It is a consideration of how change has affected the key tenets of Congregationalism. The method is to set three slogans before us in turn:

We believe that the Church comprises gathered believers;
we believe in the priesthood of all believers;
we believe in freedom.

Then questions are put: "How much of this is mere rhetoric? Do the slogans describe the reality of church life? Have they any significance in the changed circumstances I have sketched?"

His answers reach the not surprising conclusion that there has been a decline of conviction. It has been severe at home, but abroad, in Australia and America, it has been even worse. Professor Sell perceives that today we are afraid of being gathered out of the world, afraid of being called narrow-minded; individualism has overwhelmed corporate religion. "Deprived of the ecclesial experience the

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newly converted are cheated; and it is not surprising if religion comes to be understood as helping oneself, and if, in consumer societies, the churches come to be regarded as competing enterprises whose goods may be selectively bought or passed by".

Most attention is given to the Church Meeting, which he believes, alongside Sunday worship, to be the focus of the life and work of the priesthood of all believers. Here we have a sorry tale, with theocracy debased to mere democracy.

The functions of the Church Meeting as set out in *The Manual* of the United Reformed Church are quoted in full with acclaim, yet it has to be admitted that there is a lack of enthusiasm in the United Reformed Church for the Church Meeting and the ideals in *The Manual* are disregarded. Members of the Congregational Federation at the lecture were disappointed that their polity and practice were overlooked. My disappointment is that Professor Sell could not find a little time to refer to the House Church Movement and to what degree it fulfils the ideals in some places. Alan Sell's plea is for the revitalisation of the Church Meeting "as a check upon individual consumerism".

His discussion of freedom is brief and marred in two respects. It is a pity that so much of it is given over to explaining what freedom does not mean, i.e. that churches can do as they like and members believe what they like. Good points, but not an argument for the need of freedom. Secondly, he ignores freedom in worship and prayer, a freedom cherished today as in the past by many. The questions that need asking here relate to the liturgical movement, such as the use of service books and lectionaries, written versus extempore prayer. One wonders what Professor Sell makes of the liberation of ministerial dress.

In *A Question of Conscience* Charles Davis is struck that "the forces of change do not originate within the social structure of the Church. They come from outside..." What he means is that he finds God challenging the Church from outside. There is a good deal wrong with the heirs of Congregationalism. I wish that the lecturer had spent more time considering the impact of the world on the churches, listening for the voice of God in it, and looking forward.

JOHN H. TAYLOR

John Huxtable (1912-1990). Readers of the *Journal* should be aware of two appreciations of John Huxtable as College Principal and as Ecumenist by Ronald Bocking and Arthur Macarthur respectively which have appeared in *Reformed Quarterly*, Vol 3, Nos. 1 and 2 (May and August 1992). Copies may be obtained from 86 Tavistock Place, WC1H 9RT. The annual subscription to *Reformed Quarterly* is £5.