

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](https://paypal.me/robbradshaw)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Baptist Quarterly* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bq_01.php

DAVID SYME RUSSELL: A LIFE OF SERVICE

Baptists do not go in for Archbishops nor for the concepts of ministry which go with an episcopal hierarchy. Nevertheless, in the Baptist Union of Great Britain they lay on their General Secretary a quite remarkable range of pastoral responsibility and oversight. In a real sense he must have 'the care of all the churches', and with the churches, their ministers. He is the one to whom the General Superintendents are responsible. He has a leading representative role. Moreover, he is the chief executive at the Union's headquarters. Clearly a ministry of these dimensions calls for exceptional capacity of mind and spirit. In the providence of God a person of this calibre brings much of his potential with him at birth. Yet however gifted in that sense, he must also be a person who has grown in stature through the quality of his Christian response to the claims and challenges which life has brought.

David Syme Russell was born in Dalmuir, Glasgow, on 21st November 1916, the second son of what came to be a family of three. Shortly afterwards the family moved to Cambuslang where his boyhood and youth were spent. His mother was the dominant personality in the home: practical and outgoing, she was liked and trusted, the sort of person to whom neighbours turned for help and counsel. An enormous sense of fun did not prevent her from being a firm disciplinarian with her children. His father, a joiner employed in Beardmore's Shipbuilding Yard in Clydebank, set himself high standards of excellence and believed that others should do the same. In his private morality and his social ethics he was a man of strict rectitude, 'a saint of the sterner mould'. Details of his childhood and early youth, are vividly described by David Russell himself in his autobiographical manuscript **Roots and Branches**. Of his home he says it was 'relaxed, hospitable and lovely to live in'. Of his father and mother: 'I am deeply grateful for the influence of those early days and not least for the example and prayers of godly parents who pointed their children beyond what they themselves could see or had experienced...' Within their home family devotions were held daily; God-fearing and devout, they had been brought up as Presbyterians but at Cambuslang joined the local Baptist Church, where David himself came to Christian commitment. Baptised at the age of thirteen he entered fully into the life of the church, joining organisations such as Christian Endeavour and the Scouts.

The early stages of his formal education were at Cambuslang Public School, West Coats Higher Grade and Rutherglen Academy which, in England at the time, would have meant that he began at the local elementary school and went on to a good grammar school education. He captained the school soccer team and was in trials for the national schoolboy team against England. In athletics he excelled at the high jump. Beyond school a host of other activities helped to shape a personality which responded to opportunities with energy and zest.

One of the most formative events in his early Christian development came in 1939 when he went to Amsterdam to the first World Conference of Christian Youth. One who was present recalls that 'in his kilt, he was conspicuous among the British party and even more so among the delegates from other countries, some of whom had never seen

a man in a kilt before'. For David Russell himself, however, the opportunity of conversation with young people of different nationalities and Christian traditions, the sharing in forms of worship quite new to him, and the discovery that in these other voices and expressions of faith he could recognise the same Gospel - all this was a watershed experience. 'I experienced there the kind of feeling Galileo must have had when he made the discovery that the earth wasn't after all the centre of the universe... I began to realise that my God - my Baptist God - my Scottish Baptist God - was too small and that Scotland itself, for all its worth, was not after all the centre of the earth.' By now he already knew that his calling was to the ministry. On his first application to the Baptist Theological College in Glasgow in 1934 he was deemed too young and sent away to attempt a Higher Certificate in Classical Greek. This he did in a year, only to find on re-applying that the College had already accepted as many as it could take for the current year. He then went to Glasgow University to do a general Arts course including English Literature, Political Economy, Moral Philosophy, Mathematics, Classical Greek, Modern History and Education. He went on to complete his M.A. in 1938 with Classical and New Testament Greek as his special subjects. This work provided a broad general education as a base for his vocational study. It also contributed to certain perceptions which became important to him, especially that life should be seen, experienced and enjoyed in wide variety and that the Christian Gospel should be understood and lived out within the wholeness of life.

Accepted by the Baptist College as a ministerial student during his first Arts year (1935-36) he did two theological vacation courses there. For the three year course leading to the B.D. he went to Trinity College, Glasgow, the only Baptist among a hundred Presbyterians. (Could this have been the origin of his special interest in Daniel?) Because of War he declined a Travelling Scholarship to Union Theological Seminary, New York, and applied for a chaplaincy in the Armed Forces but was deemed not to have had adequate pastoral experience. Whilst continuing his studies, he accepted an invitation to give weekend service to the Castlegate Baptist Church, Berwick-on-Tweed. For two strenuous years (1939-41) he travelled from Glasgow to Berwick by train every weekend and did his pastoral visitation and Sunday services before catching the 5.35 a.m. back to Glasgow on Monday morning. This was typical of what was to become his life-style; many friends and colleagues were to discover his deep discomfort with a diary that had any space to spare. In Glasgow, in 'spare' time he began Aramaic and Syriac studies with the University professor. In his B.D. (1941) he secured distinctions in both Old and New Testaments. Trinity awarded him prizes in Old and New Testaments, Systematic Theology and Church History and he won the University Gold Medal in Greek and Hebrew.

In spite of the experience gained at Berwick, the chaplaincy he sought did not materialize and his Old Testament professor urged him to contact Principal H. Wheeler Robinson, the Baptist Old Testament scholar. He admitted him to Regent's Park College, recently established in Oxford, and set him to read for honours in Orientals. A Baptist Union Scholarship brought financial help and admission to the distinguished list of previous holders. In college he took a prominent part in student life. In the churches in and around Oxford he proved himself a welcome preacher, especially at Woodstock where he

served for a year as student-pastor. For his Oriental Schools he had intended reading Hebrew, with Aramaic and Syriac as his subsidiaries. Unfortunately, no tutor was currently available for these subsidiaries and he had to take Arabic, a language entirely new to him. 'Senior Status' allowed him the mixed blessing of doing his degree in two years instead of the usual four: the hardest job, he confessed, he ever did. In the outcome his Hebrew was deemed first class, but his Arabic reduced his grade to a good second; by way of consolation Dr Robinson revealed that in years gone by the same thing had happened to him. Robinson encouraged him to proceed to a D.Phil. and after considerable discussion between them as to a subject he finally settled on 'The Psychology of the Apocalyptists, 200 B.C. - A.D. 100'. Although becoming increasingly frail, Wheeler Robinson acted as his supervisor and when in due course he saw the completed thesis, expressed his confidence that it would be approved. But in this assessment Homer had apparently nodded for the examiners awarded a B.Litt. instead of the doctorate. One of them, Dr H.H. Rowley, was glad to be one of the examiners for Glasgow University in 1967 when David Russell submitted his **Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic** and was awarded the D.Litt.

When he embarked on this research the study of apocalyptic was at a low ebb. The book, however, which first brought Russell's name to students was a small volume called **Between the Testaments** (1960), which was followed by **Two Refugees** (1962), a study of Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah. Next came the larger and more substantial, **The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic**, (1964). Dr Philip R. Davies, a leading authority in the field, has said in a private communication to the present writer that, together with H.H. Rowley's **The Relevance of Apocalyptic**, this book re-established the study of the apocalyptic in Britain and contributed to its revival also in Germany and, somewhat later, in the United States. 'Although Russell's book did not offer any new breakthrough in our ideas about apocalyptic, it was a much-needed comprehensive study of the subject and became an invaluable resource for scholar and student alike.' (Letter dated 26th May 1988)

The Jews from Alexander to Herod (1967) also became a widely read text-book on a period of Jewish history not very well known or understood. In 1978 he published **Apocalyptic Ancient and Modern** in which he explained to the general reader not only the background of apocalyptic writings but their theological relevance today, and three years later contributed a commentary on Daniel to the **Daily Study Bible** series. In retirement he has continued his writing: in 1986 he wrote **From Early Judaism to Early Church**, a supplement to his **Between the Testaments** and followed this in 1987 with **The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: patriarchs and prophets in early Judaism**. (Three of these titles have been translated into other languages, the commentary on Daniel into Japanese, **Between the Testaments** into Dutch, German, Spanish and Japanese, while **The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic** has been translated into Italian.) 'All of Russell's works' writes Dr Davies 'are characterised by clarity of presentation and style, by mastery of the scholarship and above all by relevance. While he would be the last to claim originality of scholarship, his concern to explain, to popularise (in the best sense) and above all to seek the theological relevance of apocalyptic has done a service to scholars and laymen alike. The quantity of his writings, in the midst of his other commitments, which would not disgrace many a full-time

scholar, is a tribute to his remarkable energy.' In a totally different genre, is the autobiographical manuscript **Roots and Branches** (1981) of which the second part was published by the Baptist Union in 1982 under the title **In Journeyings Often**.

When it became known that David Russell would be staying in Oxford for research, the Baptist Church at Woodstock Road invited him to become its minister for the duration of his studies. The church, not large in numbers but including a number of very promising young people, revelled in the ministry of a lively young pastor who was also a very competent preacher. In the two years of his ministry the church developed and grew. He made a point of calling in at Regent's Park College, keeping contact with the students, including any new arrivals. Sunday by Sunday there would generally be some Baptist undergraduates in the congregation at Woodstock Road and the Russell home was one of the places where they met. The Woodstock Road settlement provided the occasion and opportunity for his marriage in 1943. Marion Hamilton Campbell, one of the young people in the Cambuslang Church, was a woman of charm and grace, friendliness and humour, gentleness and patience. She brought to the partnership her own strong faith and, as time was to prove repeatedly, deep reserves of inward quiet and courage to meet the pressures and to make the sacrifices required. If a **Festschrift** is in some sense a bouquet, David Russell will want to share this one with his wife. The first of their two children, a son, was born shortly before they left Oxford and the second, a daughter, after the settlement in his next pastorate, at Acton, London.

Prior to the conclusion of his research David Russell had twice visited Church Road Baptist Church, Acton, and in March 1945 accepted its invitation to the pastorate. He was inducted in the September. He was succeeding another Scot, Taylor Bowie, who had also grown up in the Cambuslang Church. A member of the church, His Honour Judge Granville Slack, has drawn together a good deal of material concerning this pastorate, which lasted seven and a half years. It shows that the Acton people found in their minister one who was friend, brother, and father in God. Caring for them in their family life, he entered with delight into their joys: as one deacon put it, 'In our sorrows he carries our burdens with us. In our temptations he cares deeply that we should be the best God means us to be'. People thus pastored within their families tended to grow more deeply into the family life of the local church. They found that there was no part of its activity from which their minister stood back and the various sections discovered increasingly the meaning of being 'members one of another'. His church members found as his students did later, that if there was work to be done on the fabric he would be in the thick of it, whilst in social activities he could also play as hard as any. In every aspect of the church's life the picture is of a minister who kept alongside his people, old and young alike. The pulpit ministry was of similarly high quality. One shrewd judge, the Rev. A.A. Wilson, spoke of masterly exposition of Scripture and added: 'It is not cold exposition to which we listen for behind it is the passion of conviction and the fire of the born advocate'. People spoke of the freshness of his thinking and his ability to kindle their minds. No less than his preaching they valued his leadership of worship and his encouragement of their spiritual life, both personal and corporate.

In 1949-50 he was president of the Acton Council of Churches and

initiated a visitation of every house in the Borough. In the wider life of the denomination, he served as President of the Western Group of the London Baptist Association for two successive years from 1949. Elected to the Baptist Union Council in 1948 he was appointed to the Ministerial Recognition Committee and to the Young People's Committee of which he became chairman. Regent's Park College also elected him to its Council. Direct links with the Baptist Missionary Society began to be forged when in 1946 he was one of the leaders of the Summer School at Barton and in 1948 when he presided at the Bexhill School. He took part in pageants organized by the Rev. A.C. Davies for the Society at the Albert Hall and, in the same venue, for the Jubilee Congress of the Baptist World Alliance in 1955. An unexpected claim on his pastoral service came when he was asked to take the funeral of the eminent Labour Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, who in his early teens and twenties had been associated with a Baptist Church in Bristol. David Russell officiated at Golders Green Crematorium, delivering an address later published, at the request of William Deacon, General Secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union. Absent from the service through illness, the Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, wrote a gracious letter of appreciation from hospital.

During the first year of his pastorate David Russell spent a week in Germany as lecturer to the R.A.F. Moral Leadership course. In 1950 he took a party of thirty young people from England and Scotland on a tour of the Netherlands, followed in September by leading a team of thirty-five Baptist students from Cambridge and London universities in a mission at the Ashford Baptist Church, Kent. Two years later, in 1952, he went to the European Baptist Congress held in Copenhagen.

The people at Acton realised that their able and energetic minister would receive approaches from other quarters. In March 1953 came an invitation which he knew he must accept. It was from Yorkshire and it took him to the principalship of the Baptist theological college at Rawdon, near Leeds. Rawdon had behind it a considerable history in theological training and had had a specially significant role in the life and mission of Baptists in the north-east. It had come, however, to a period of uncertainty and insecurity. In 1953 E.C. Rust, a tutor of considerable ability, had gone to an appointment in the U.S.A. In the following year Principal L.H. Marshall died after only a brief tenure. Financially the college was struggling. It had ageing premises, whilst its location seven miles or so from Leeds and the University Department of Theology posed problems for students and staff alike. In a nutshell, the college needed a rescue operation. David Russell quickly rallied the committee and established his lines of communication with the Yorkshire constituency, hopeful of capturing for a new era the kind of backing that was going to be needed. He came as a Scot who had worked in the South to a people not quick to accept 'off-comed uns'; to a college with which he had no previous link, which had its roots in a Baptist Association of markedly independent character! It was a formidable scenario but his total commitment and warm-hearted approach quickly dispelled any doubts. The Ter-Jubilee of the College, just one year ahead, constituted a special opportunity and he bent all his energies to seize it. Founders' Day, May 1954, marked a new chapter in popular support and the Annual Meeting became thereafter a great event with huge crowds attending.

If the Association came to the college, the college itself went out into the Association. David Russell himself contributed at every level, in the local churches and in the Association work. He was made President in 1961. 'Rawdon lectures' given by himself and members of staff were organised in different parts of the county. Students were linked with churches in ways that became mutually beneficial. Like the lay-training this was not new in itself but it was developed in new ways. The College was offered as a Conference Centre and numerous groups, not least of young people, took advantage of this facility. Mrs Russell's share in this work, and in all the domestic needs of the college, was outstanding. Within the college the students became aware that they had not just a new principal but a new kind of principal. L.H. Marshall, the previous incumbent, was an Edwardian gentleman. David Russell was no less of a gentleman but with a different, younger style. He could be a firm disciplinarian but a lively sense of fun and enjoyment were never far below the surface. His lectures made the Old Testament come alive: One student recalls, 'I remember one day when he used his academic gown to good effect as he strutted and billed and cooed up and down the room illustrating the verse: "Israel flits about like a silly pigeon" (Hosea 7.11).' The same student, who did not take easily to academic life, says: 'He helped me to think and made me a questioning person.' The students also encountered the other side, the Scots puritan strand in his character, the serious attitude to work, the high ethical standards, and the sense of awe that came through in his college prayers. As a recognised lecturer of Leeds University, David Russell served on the board of the Faculty of Theology. He began writing again amidst many other commitments not only to the college and the Association, but also to the denomination. Rawdon itself made extraordinary calls on him: the shortage of staff meant that there were periods when the Principal with his wife was heavily involved in college domestic work. Colleagues believed that on top of all these demands, the strains of research and writing took toll of his health. Coincidence or not, the glaucoma which has been a thorn in the flesh ever since, started at this time.

For all the effort, imagination and sacrificial commitment which was put into it, and for all the growth in popular support, it steadily became clear that some of Rawdon's major problems could not be solved. Its position vis-a-vis the university was weakened by the closure of Headingley Methodist college. When the modest number of applicants was considered in relation to those of the Baptist college in Manchester, it became clear that only one Baptist college was needed in the north. David Russell took soundings and, in 1962, with K.C. Dykes, Principal of Manchester, became prime mover in a major development amongst Baptists. The proposal was that the two colleges should amalgamate on the Manchester site and make what would be a new beginning for each of them. There are few more tenacious of their loyalty than the alumni and supporters of a theological college. To suggest that their beloved alma mater has reached the end of its journey is the next thing to blasphemy. How then was it achieved successfully? Here one speaks only of the Rawdon and Yorkshire side of things. The Rev. George Hobbs, then Yorkshire Association Secretary, writes: 'There is no doubt in my mind that it was David's leadership, and the affection and respect which he had engendered in Yorkshire people which carried through the decision to unite with

Manchester'. He had won their trust and when the die was cast they observed with growing appreciation the statesman-like approach which he brought to the negotiations.

With K.C. Dykes, David Russell became Joint Principal and was recognised as Honorary Lecturer in the Department of Theology of Manchester University. He produced another book (**The Jews from Alexander to Herod**) and, as in Yorkshire so now in Lancashire and Cheshire he came to know and be known in the churches. The new college which he had helped to create and to house was successfully on its way. It brought new strength and freshness of approach to Baptist theological education in the north and it was so planned that further development would be possible in an ecumenical dimension. The progress of Northern College in its first quarter century is tribute to the foundations laid in 1964.

As Northern College got under way, Dr E.A. Payne's retirement from the General Secretaryship of the Baptist Union was impending and the question as to his successor had to be answered. It was the disclosure in the north of his wide range of gifts, together with his energy and the warmth of his personality, which identified David Russell as the person to succeed to the Secretaryship in 1967. He came to office at a time when new strategies in Christian outreach, in evangelism, in financial commitment, in the shape of the ministry, in mission and in relations with other Churches were all needed. In some matters he picked up work already in progress as in Church Relations where the valuable **Baptists and Unity** report (1967) had just been produced. He knew of the anxiety which existed in some quarters over ecumenical relationships and membership of the World Council of Churches, especially from some who stood under the 'Conservative Evangelical' banner. When the Baptist Revival Fellowship sent its leaders in more than one deputation to express their fears to the new General Secretary, it was very important to achieve real communication and his friendliness and warmth of personality helped in the honest exchange of views. The **Baptists and Unity** report went to the constituency and two years later the Advisory Committee for Church Relations, which had carefully monitored the responses of churches and Associations, presented its **Baptists and Unity Reviewed** (1969). That year's Assembly agreed that Baptists must continue as participants within the ecumenical framework but recognised that there were differences of conviction among them and affirmed that they had the right to engage in or refrain from participation; this made it the more important 'that they maintain, in their differences, a mutual trust and love that accords with the fellowship of Christ'. (**Baptist Union Annual Report for 1969**, p.12). The resolution was passed by 1125 to 356. Later that year the Secretary sent a pastoral letter to all ministers which evoked assent from ministers of very varying theological standpoint.

In common with others, Baptists in the sixties were giving increasing attention to the shape of the ministry. A Commission on the Ministry (established 1967) produced the report, **Ministry Tomorrow** (1969), which argued for a new structure of ministry partly on the ground of finance but also for the sake of the mission confronting the churches, and of 'job satisfaction' for ministers themselves. Some of the thinking in **Ministry Tomorrow** failed to convince the Council, notably its proposal that there should be a deliberate and significant reduction in the number of full-time ministers, whilst on a large

scale, the work of a new creature, the Supplementary Minister, should be developed. Nevertheless it was a strong and able report and stimulated the denomination into thinking with new seriousness about the ministry. The Supplementary Minister in due course came into being, first as an approved concept, then in the flesh. If recruitment was slow it was matched initially by the wary response of full-time ministers to the thought that partnership with a Supplementary might be worth considering.

'Strategy' was a word in much use during the first years of David Russell's regime; the Strategy Committee (probably not the first and certainly not the last) produced **Working Together** (1973), a report offering 'guidelines to Associations and churches in the missionary task facing them in Britain at this time'. It spoke not of abstract theory but of new work in progress and also of new ideas being tried out in old familiar settings. It took up the problem of churches without pastoral oversight and gave special consideration to better ways of caring for grouped churches. It looked at such matters as pioneer ministries and the special problems and opportunities relating to team ministry.

A resolution passed at the 1977 Assembly in Nottingham called for an investigation into 'the causes of numerical and spiritual decline' in the denomination. Predictably this required another working-group, and after eighteen months of thorough investigation, it reported back (1979). The picture was not uniform. In spite of the pessimism which the working-group had found both nationally and denominationally, finding some significant encouragements it had the courage to call its report, **Signs of Hope**. Believing that the best response to a document such as this was hard work, it proposed numerous tasks for Superintendents and Associations, ministers and fraternal, churches and colleges, Main committees and departments of the Union. Endorsing these recommendations, the Council instructed the General Secretary to examine and collate the responses that came from these various bodies. From this emerged a strategic pattern for action, a call to work out in practice 'what it means to be a Baptist Christian today', presented in 1980 as **A Call to Commitment**. Commitment was divided under six headings: (i) to worship and to pray, (ii) to evangelism, (iii) to learn, (iv) to care, (v) to serve, (vi) to release for leadership, lack of which was spelled out in detail and in practical ways. A lot of work was done in getting **A Call to Commitment** across to the denomination and none put more into it than the General Secretary himself. An initiative which was very personal to him was that associated with the phrase 'The Wholeness of the Gospel'. In 1974 he wrote two articles on the topic for the **Baptist Times** which aroused a good deal of interest. One of the useful fruits at the time was the preparation of a series of Mission Kits on the subject. Many were disappointed that the development of this theme was not further pursued for it challenged the one-sidedness and partiality of interpretation which so often distorts Christian witness and action. 'The Wholeness of the Gospel' reflected a compelling conviction in David Russell's obedience to the Gospel: to him commitments such as evangelism and social action which are so often separated or, even worse, treated as either/or, are on a true reading of the Gospel, indissolubly wedded.

Some reorganization was seen to be necessary. By decision of the Assembly (1969) it was agreed that the Assembly should relinquish its

power of nominating and electing fifty members of the Council by free vote of the churches and make good this decrease by increasing the number of Association representatives. A few months after his installation David Russell, with the General Purposes Committee launched a major review of the Union's committee and departmental structure. An important datum was the position of the General Secretary himself who also carried the role of Chief Executive at Baptist Church House. As well as seeking to ensure that the expertise of the Church House should be fully and effectively used, it was also desired that the General Secretary should gain sufficient freedom to function properly in this dual capacity 'and adequately focus in his own person the inter-relationship of the structures'. In response to the Structure Report (1969) the Council was to have three Main Committees [Administration, Ministry and Mission] with the work at Church House organised in three corresponding departments, bringing together previously independent committees and offices. After a shake-down period it proved, in the main, a successful reorganisation, though David Russell found it less so on the side of Administration than in Mission and Ministry.

He had been fortunate to take over from Dr Payne the services of the Rev. R.W. Thomson as assistant but in 1971 ill-health forced Mr Thomson's retirement after fourteen years of fine service. He was succeeded by the Rev. Edgar Brown but only for a brief period and only on a part-time basis. This left the General Secretary with too great a burden of administrative duties. The situation was made yet more difficult following the death in 1977 of the Head of Administration, the greatly esteemed J.B. Morris. The difficulty of replacing Mr Morris may be judged from the fact that when, after two years, his successor left for a new appointment, David Russell himself took responsibility for the Department. The ideals envisaged for him by the Structure Report were beginning to look threadbare.

In staffing, as elsewhere, finance (though not the whole problem) was a perpetual difficulty, often conditioning the arrangements which could be made. Severe health problems also disrupted the work at Church House. The Rev. Norman Jones was forced to resign after only three years as Head of the new Mission Department. David Russell himself underwent a number of surgical operations including one for glaucoma. Immediately following other surgery in 1977 he suffered a cardiac arrest. The financial problem so bedevilled plans and policies that at length it was decided to upgrade the work of Home Mission Fund promotion, which had hitherto been undertaken by one member of staff on a part-time basis. A Home Mission Secretary was appointed and this put promotion on a much more satisfactory footing. In time it became possible to make some improvements in value to the stipends paid to ministers of 'aided churches', with spin-off advantages to other ministers whose churches, though not aided, related their stipend to that of the figure operating in the Home Mission Scheme. There were improvements too in the Superannuation Scheme though not on the scale which became possible later through changed attitudes in the country generally and in related legislation.

David Russell had hoped to see through the re-housing of the Baptist Union: the premises at 4 Southampton Row were by now dated in style and increasingly inefficient. For once finance was not the major problem for there was little doubt that when the time came the site would attract favourable attention from property developers.

Major questions were whether to move from Southampton Row, and if so where; and, most importantly, would it be possible to achieve an agreement whereby the Union and the Baptist Missionary Society could be housed under one roof. However, the problems were stubborn, some relating to the Society's tenancy at Gloucester Place, some with their roots in distant history. The answer was not going to be found in David Russell's time and that was a disappointment which, like Dr Payne before him, he had to accept. As to the Church House premises he had to be content with improvements in the lay-out of offices, vestibule and canteen. With Council approval he launched in 1980 a Strategy Building scheme, designed to release finance for capital building operations needed by churches, to encourage strategic national planning in a way that would complement and supplement the existing Loan Fund, and to plan for growth by assisting specific projects deemed to be of special strategic importance. It was gratifying that, by one means and another, by the end of the following year the amount available had reached £75,000. Another very different sort of capital project belongs to the Russell era: the building of Newington Court, a hostel in North London, offering accommodation for business girls and students, the Diamond Jubilee project of the Baptist Women's League supplemented by a very large gift from Sir Herbert Janes. Housing for Retired Ministers became a major concern of the Honorary Solicitor, Mr Richard Fairbairn, and of David Russell. Whilst unable to emulate the Methodist scheme which they investigated and found to be on a much stronger basis, they saw the number of units more than quadrupled.

There were some negative tasks: one of the first was the winding up of the affairs of the Carey Kingsgate Press. The Haven which since 1945 had undertaken the care of unmarried mothers and their babies had to be closed in 1970, a result of changing social conditions. The premises at Yateley were sold and the proceeds assigned to the 'New Venture' Fund first used in the appointment in 1973 of the former Adoption Officer, Miss E. Bichard, to serve as Social Worker in the South West Durham Group of Baptist Churches. In 1975 the work of the Deaconess Order was brought to a conclusion: the call for their specialised services had declined as had the number of applicants. This did not mean the end of ministry for those still in active work and all who applied were transferred to the list of accredited ministers. The Baptist Women's League had served the women of the denomination with distinction for many years. However, an increasing number of women's groups in the churches did not see themselves as part of the B.W.L. and were reluctant to join it. After much heart-searching and many hours of consultation and committee work, the decision was made to disband the national organization of the B.W.L. and the new concept of Baptist Women's Work embracing every type of work undertaken by and for women was launched in 1979.

For the General Secretary there were many regular tasks. He was frequently preaching or speaking in churches, Associations, colleges and fraternals across the country. On the radio he did several Sunday services and a number of interviews on the 'Sunday' programme, as well as appearing on television. He particularly cherished his monthly letter to ministers which covered both news and a variety of information likely to be of interest and value to ministers. A personal, pastoral epistle in which he shared with his brother ministers some of his own hopes and fears, he felt that it

strengthened the bonds of understanding and never under-rated its importance. Committees and trustee meetings regularly required his presence. As General Secretary he became Joint Chairman of the United Navy, Army and Air Force Board which exists for the support of Free Church chaplains in the Armed Services. In a personal communication one of the most experienced among them has said: '...it soon became evident that his interest was very genuine and supportive. he wrote to us regularly...; he brought us more into denominational life and we were given, as a group, a higher profile at the Annual Assembly. The problem of offering Free Church chaplains reasonable career prospects was resolved during this period. David Russell, as Joint Chairman of the United Board, handled this and other delicate issues in a constructive and canny manner. All U.B. chaplains were to benefit from his leadership and skills and tact.' The chaplains greatly appreciated the care expressed in his several visits to British bases. They recall that though rated as a V.I.P. he had no interest whatsoever in pomp or ceremony. Perhaps this was just as well since, like a number of his students in earlier days, some young officers were convinced that they saw in him a likeness to Oliver Hardy, the larger partner of the famous duo. Somewhat surprisingly comes the comment: 'He was never at ease socializing. However, with bitter-lemon ever at hand he did his duty manfully...He was happiest when ferreting out the views of all ranks.'

The theological controversy connected with the Rev. Michael Taylor's address to the 1971 Assembly devoured attention for a year or more. Mr Taylor had put forward Christological views which came across to many as suspect. Predictably there soon developed what Morris West called '...an extremely difficult and potentially dangerous situation'. In the months that followed there was little in the way of successful dialogue. Those who ranged themselves behind Mr Taylor thought that the real issue was intellectual liberty; those who wanted his address censured thought that it was the nature of his Christology. Some who were deeply concerned about both could find no way through the impasse in their own minds. The General Secretary, concerned as much as any regarding intellectual liberty and theological truth, had also to be concerned with damage limitation. It was a year later that the Assembly in 1972 made decisions both positive and negative which closed the controversy down. Emphatically reaffirming its commitment to Christological orthodoxy, it insisted that the Declaration of Principle was the basic requirement for fellowship. It also made clear that it was not going to pursue judgmental or disciplinary action.

For most of the intervening year between those two Assemblies David Russell was at the centre of the storm. Part of the service he rendered was to feel and, in a sense, to absorb the indignation, righteous and sometimes less than righteous, which came from different quarters by phone, letter and personal confrontation. As well as integrity, he brought courtesy and almost unflinching patience to the innumerable discussions, formal and informal, and the eight hundred personal letters, many of them lengthy and intricate, which he had to write. It is perhaps fair to say that this controversy was a Catch 22 situation for the Secretary of the Union but those who were close enough to observe his handling of the situation, day in, day out, thought that he did it as well as anyone could have done. The year was a sterile experience for many and it certainly did nothing to

strengthen the denomination's cohesion. That it came through as well as it did owed not a little to its General Secretary.

Almost inevitably David Russell brought a change in style in the direction of affairs within Church House. This was partly the result of differences of personality as between him and the great man whom he succeeded. To many Dr Payne was a rather remote and awe-inspiring person. David Russell's personality was warm and buoyant; he could be approached in a more relaxed way. His humour often released tension. There were differences in their approach to management. Dr Payne found it helpful to consult fairly frequently with the Baptist Union Officers as a group. David Russell consulted the Officers, but more especially in their individual roles, whilst he also developed close consultation with his senior staff individually and as a group. He then gave them a good deal of freedom not only in the day to day management of their departments but in developing ideas and initiatives, knowing that these would be brought to him for counsel and consultation at an early stage. When he was clear that these were in line with overall strategy they had his warm encouragement to get the project (or whatever) moving. David Russell thus marked a transition stage towards the collegiate pattern which his successor has worked out. It was against this background quite considerable developments took place in Mission and Ministry.

Still within the British Baptist family it is right to note the way in which his relations with the Baptist Missionary Society deepened. As General Secretary he was welcomed to the General Committee and was consistently elected to the Society's General Purposes Committee. As early as July 1968, following the Baptist World Alliance meetings in Liberia, he made a visit to partner churches and missionaries in what was then Congo. On another occasion, returning from lecturing in Tokyo, he stopped off to visit missionaries in Calcutta, Bhubaneswar, the Kond Hills and Delhi. Yet again, he made an opportunity to visit the Society's work in Junk Bay, Hong Kong. The esteem in which the Society held him was indicated by an invitation to preach the Missionary Sermon in 1977. He was not able to accept the invitation but it was renewed in 1984 and he made a valuable contribution to the Assembly of that year. Though it did not prove possible during his Secretaryship to move under one roof with the B.M.S., that was not caused by any shortfall in his own relationship with the Society. The lines of communication, both ways, were in good serviceable working order.

David Russell as one of the Union representatives on various inter-church bodies, took an active share in their thinking and decision-making. Nearest at hand in London was the Free Church Federal Council. In his early years as Secretary one of the most important events among the Free Churches was the establishment of the United Reformed Church. In the wording of the Bill to go before Parliament there were several sensitive issues. David Russell was concerned to safeguard the integrity of the Baptist position whilst the uniting Congregationalists and Presbyterians were anxious that the Act should not distort the nature of the new Church. The Rev. Arthur Macarthur (former General Secretary of the U.R.C.) has said in a private letter: 'There were here enough issues for disagreement...That it all worked out amicably was tribute to David's willingness to see matters from our angle as well as his own. He did not allow us to blur the issues but equally he sought understanding

and agreement'. From the same source comes a comment which illuminates the stance which David Russell took up in both the Free Church Council and in the British Council of Churches. 'He quickly became involved in both and made certain that the Baptist voice was heard. While he welcomed the ecumenical agencies he remained and remains a Baptist. Thus in efforts in the late seventies to establish a Covenant between the Churches he always made it clear that Baptists would stand in a different position.'

The Free Church Council appointed him as Moderator for the year 1974 and he took as his theme: 'Interpreting the Good News Today'. Once again he took an opportunity to proclaim the wholeness of the Gospel. 'The Christian Gospel...has as its objective the salvation of the whole man in his total situation, and that means the salvation not only of his soul but also of the systems within which he works and the society within which he lives.' And again: 'Not just incarnation then, but atonement. Not just involvement with suffering humanity, but identification with our suffering Lord. Not just liberation for the masses, but forgiveness and cleansing through the blood of Christ. Not just social concern and Christian service, but personal commitment to Christ and loyalty to what we know of Him. That is the Good News which we have been given to interpret to this generation.'

Subsequent to the famous Nottingham Conference of 1964 there came a succession of hopes and projects. Whilst the Anglican/Methodist scheme proved abortive, the United Reformed Church was successfully brought into being. There were Talks about Talks; there was the Churches' Unity Commission, the Churches' Council for Covenanting, the Ten Propositions. In the consideration of these various initiatives David Russell worked with the Advisory Committee on Church Relations. There was much thinking, speaking, arguing, interpreting to be done within the Baptist family and in inter-church settings such as the British Council of Churches, of which he became a Vice-President in 1979. In the same year he was closely involved in the setting up of a B.C.C. Human Rights Forum, of which he was chairman until 1987. Beyond the B.C.C. Forum his advocacy of human rights, including religious liberty, involved him in much public speaking, in the preparation of papers, in conferences in the U.K. and overseas, in meetings with State officials in Eastern Europe and, in the U.K., with the Prime Minister and other members of the government, especially at the Home Office and the Foreign Office. At the invitation of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland he went with two others from the B.C.C. to visit Long Kesh Prison in Belfast and met a number of I.R.A. prisoners in their 'dirty cells'. For a number of years he took part in conversations between the B.C.C. and the Irish Council of Churches.

David Russell represented the Baptist Union on the World Council of Churches and from Uppsala to Vancouver 1968-83 was an active member of the Central Committee. When there was criticism of the W.C.C. (not only in the media but within the Churches also) regarding the Programme to Combat Racism, he pressed the Central Committee for clearer guidelines as to the use of the Fund, and more accountability, a by no means popular stance, interpreted by some Third World delegates as an unwillingness of Western Churches to trust them with the proper handling of funds. Another unpopular stance was the pressing of human rights issues in Eastern Europe when it was sometimes thought that the representatives of those countries opposed

too indiscriminately questions being asked within the forum of the W.C.C. At the Vancouver Assembly in 1983 he made a masterly and much appreciated speech in which he used the device of speaking of Albania (where there were no member churches) and other countries where similar abuses exist. His persistence won him many friends in Eastern Europe, not least amongst the Orthodox hierarchy in Romania who came to admire his tenacious consistency. He never lost an opportunity of defending the Baptist viewpoint when the representatives of State Churches were careless in their disregard of evangelical minorities. He opposed foot-loose sacramentalism, and rigorously defended responsible evangelism, distinguishing it from sectarian proselytism. Whilst in Argentina for W.C.C. meetings in 1985 he was part of a 'deputation' which called on Argentinian senators to discuss future relations with Britain in respect of the Falklands.

Another lively ecumenical interest was his membership of the Conference of European Churches (C.E.C.) which he represented on the Churches' Human Rights Programme for the implementation of the Helsinki Final Act of 1975, arguably one of the most important international agreements in modern times. It was divided into three sections described as 'baskets' and one of these placed great emphasis on human rights, embracing within that term political and religious freedom, the free passage of literature and people, and the free interchange of scholars. Thirty-five countries indicated their intention of adherence to the Act. Yet in spite of the impressive number of signatory nations, the Helsinki Final Act was not a binding treaty or 'convention'. That an agreement had been reached was one thing, but its implementation was another matter. It would be necessary to be vigilant and to maintain all possible pressure if the promise of the Act was to be fulfilled. In this situation the Churches Human Rights Programme was formed. It was not a W.C.C. Committee though it was the General Secretary of the W.C.C., Dr Philip Potter, who set up the machinery for it in 1979. It drew together the Canadian Council of Churches, the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., and the Conference of European Churches. The Committee concerned itself not only with individuals but with cultural and ethnic minority groups such as the Hungarians in Romania. When it seemed right so to do, it intervened with the appropriate State authorities on behalf of such communities. It also gave much thought to the theological and philosophical grounds of human rights.

David Russell took an early opportunity to pledge his commitment to the work of the European Baptist Federation and the Baptist World Alliance, on whose General Council he served throughout the whole of his secretaryship. He was made chairman of the Committee set up to revise the Constitution and in consultation with an Australian solicitor, Mr Fred Church, was largely responsible for drafting the new one. This assignment was a fairly typical experience. His mastery and precision in the use of language often got him involved in the framing of statements and resolutions. Likewise those for whom English was not first language found it easy to listen to him not only because what he had to say was worth listening to but because of his clear diction.

As with the B.W.A. so with the European Baptist Federation, he attended numerous committees and conferences, building contacts in almost every country of Europe, both East and West, which grew into strong friendships. His ability and his willingness to serve

inevitably meant that work would come his way. Appointed chairman of the Finances and Budget Committee in 1972, he was made Vice-President in 1977 and had much to do with the planning of the E.B.F. Congress in Brighton in 1979, serving as President from then until 1981. His devotion to the Gospel, warmth of personality and lively sense of humour helped to bridge language, cultural and political differences and also differences of theology. 'He was a colourful, devoted and very able leader for whom we thank God' says one of the E.B.F. leaders. He has become not only a brother beloved but something also of a father-figure among European Baptists.

His dedication to religious liberty found much work to be done, which he accomplished with skill, determination and discretion. He was much involved in the prolonged efforts to secure the release of Georgi Vins. He had interviews with Soviet officials in London and Moscow and wrote scores of letters. Three times he was visited at Baptist Church House by an Eastern European affairs emissary of President Carter. The fact that such work had to be done with discretion meant that some in the U.K. thought that little was being done and were prepared to engage in ill-merited criticism. Russian Baptists respected his integrity as he maintained his interest not only in the All Union churches but in unregistered ones also. In his efforts for religious liberty disappointment has not infrequently been the order of the day. In one of the Soviet satellite countries he and Dr Knud Wumpellmann of the E.B.F. had at length been granted an interview with a senior State official. They were seeking permission first, to import some Bible commentaries for the use of pastors, and, secondly for pastors to be allowed to participate in correspondence courses already being used by their Russian counterparts and periodically to visit Moscow to share in seminars. The official sat stony-faced throughout; from his assistant came an unwavering glare of deep hatred. The request was rejected. On the other hand, just now and then these encounters yielded an opportunity to speak straightforwardly of the Christian faith. Such chances were not allowed to slip.

One of David Russell's greatest interests was the work of relieving the famine of Christian literature in Eastern Europe. One experience moved him deeply: he had been taken to meet a peasant, the lay-pastor of a small group of Baptists who were under persistent harassment by the authorities. In the back room of the pastor's home they prayed together. Then the lay-pastor asked if he would like to see his library: he could hardly have been more interested! The pastor now brought him three books: a tattered Bible, a similarly well-worn concordance and a commentary - one volume of a small, very dated series. 'My library' said the pastor, his eyes shining. David Russell came back determined to find ways of translating his concern into action on a significant scale. He was not interested in illegal enterprises which, apart from any other consideration, could rebound on those at the receiving end. He talked to the Rev. Alec Gilmore, then General Secretary of the United Society for Christian Literature, who was also anxious to find ways of serving the churches in Eastern Europe, and with Dr Denton Lotz (at that time serving the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention), who had long shared the same concern. With Gilmore and the U.S.C.L. he launched 'Eurolit' and with Lotz he put across to the E.B.F. the idea of instituting a Books and Translations Committee, begun in 1980 with David Russell as

its chairman, in which position he remained until 1987. As to Eurolit most of the money raised in the first year came from Baptist sources but he and all concerned with the project were clear that it should not remain simply a Baptist enterprise. In Eastern Europe with two colleagues to find out how Christians saw their own literature needs, in country after country they visited the Baptist seminary and the Union headquarters. Subject to advice received they would then visit the appropriate State official. In due course David Russell came back with his 'shopping list' and Eurolit swung into action. Not only books but printing machines and tons of paper were despatched to Moscow, Budapest, Warsaw, Bucharest.

A translation of William Barclay's Daily Study Bible into Russian cost about half a million pounds and the help of the Baptist World Alliance was enlisted. Work began with the translation and printing of the New Testament section in sets of fifteen volumes. Five thousand sets were produced. At the time of writing, work is proceeding on the Old Testament section. There was a time when the ministers of one country could tell him: 'We have no books at all'. David Russell has helped to answer that cry not just with relief supplies but with the means to produce literature within some at any rate of the countries concerned. It has particularly pleased him that it has been possible to get this work moving on an ecumenical basis. Indicative of the way things are developing was the Translators' Workshop held in 1988 at Ruschlikon Baptist Seminary, Zurich, and attended by leaders from Eastern Europe. As well as the Baptists present there were representatives from the Orthodox, Methodist, Reformed and Lutheran Churches. These Christians from diverse traditions found no difficulty in agreeing on titles, in beginning to undertake their own translation work and to bring on writers of their own. Extremely important in its own right, this programme is thus proving to be a significant new bridge in Church relations in Eastern Europe. Of the enterprise as a whole David Russell says that nothing in his entire ministry has brought him greater satisfaction.

It comes as no surprise that the second part of David Russell's autobiographical manuscript was published under the title - **In Journeyings Often.** He was destined to become one of those Church leaders whom the late lamented Gordon Rupp likened to Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles. His Baptist and ecumenical commitments, in addition to preaching and lecturing tours, have taken him not only to almost every country in Eastern and Western Europe but to Africa (Sierra Leone, Liberia, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Kenya, Ethiopia, Zaire), to India, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Thailand, Hong Kong, China, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the U.S.A., Brazil, Argentina. In 1981 on the second of his two visits to China he was leading a small deputation in preparation for the forthcoming visit of a B.C.C. group led by the Archbishop of Canterbury. Since his retirement his travels have by no means ceased. In addition to continuing work on literature for Eastern Europe he went as representative of the Baptist World Alliance to the Extraordinary Synod of the Roman Catholic church held at the Vatican in 1986. Also for the B.W.A. he has attended the Central Committee of the W.C.C. in Geneva, Buenos Aires and Hanover, and the Lambeth Conference of the Anglican Communion.

At the time of writing yet another book from David Russell's pen awaits publication. It is to be about Daniel. It might be argued

that the sub-title, **An Active Volcano**, would be not inappropriate as a description of David Russell himself in retirement. But whilst volcanos are spasmodic in their eruptions he goes on producing steadily. Volcanos are destructive; his retirement like his previous ministry has gone on being creative. He has contributed two articles to the forthcoming Oxford Companion to the Bible. Bristol Baptist College has his help as a lecturer. He has served on the committee for the revision of the New English Bible. And, if the reader recalls that Amsterdam Conference of 1939, David Russell is one of twelve of the participants who are preparing a Symposium for publication to mark its fiftieth anniversary; his contribution is to be on the Baptist role in the ecumenical movement.

Several formal marks of recognition have come to him. In 1980, Glasgow University awarded him an Honorary Doctorate of Divinity. Her Majesty the Queen appointed him a Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 1982. The Baptist denomination has a few ways of thanking those who have served it well. Former General Secretaries tend to get 'hung' in the old library at Church House, in frames of course! The greatest honour is the presidency of the Baptist Union. To this David Russell was elected in 1982-83. But there are a few, a very few, who receive another compliment as well as the presidency and it comes in the form of a **Festschrift** presented by the Baptist Historical Society. The Society spends much of its time on yesterday's history but it likes to think that it can recognise contemporaries who are making Baptist history today and offer them its own kind of salute.

G.W. RUSLING