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# John Love in London

## PART I: From Licensing in Scotland to Ordination in London<sup>1</sup>

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### Early Life

John Love was an eminent Church of Scotland minister in the days when Moderatism dominated the General Assembly of the Established Church. He had a decisive influence on some of the most conservative men in the Disruption Free Church, men like John Duncan, Archibald Cook and Gavin Parker. These men were shaped by Love's blend of Westminster Calvinism and experimental piety. He was born in Paisley in 1757 and died sixty-eight years later in 1825. His life can be divided into three broadly equal periods of just over twenty years. The first covers the period up to his licensing by the Presbytery of Paisley at the age of twenty-one.<sup>2</sup> John Love was a prodigy and, following a brilliant

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is the first of what is envisaged will be a three-part series on the ministry of John Love in London. It covers his licensing on 24th December 1778 by the Presbytery of Paisley, his years as a probationer in Scotland, and his ordination by the Scots Presbytery in London on 22nd August 1787. It is intended that the second part will deal with his troubled ministry at a small congregation at Crispin Street in Spitalfields, and the third part his massive contribution to the formation of the London Missionary Society, one of the largest missionary institutions of the nineteenth century. The writer gratefully acknowledges the help of Helen Weller, the Archivist at Westminster College, Cambridge, for access to the "London Scots Presbytery Minutes" and for reproducing a rare volume, and to the staff of the Dr. Williams Library in London for providing copies of a number of pamphlets.

<sup>2</sup> A detailed account by the present writer of this first period of John Love's life is contained in the biographical introduction to the Free Presbyterian reprint of the 1857 edition of the *Memorials of the Rev. John Love* (2 vols., Glasgow, 2015), Vol. 1, pp. ix-lxxiv (cited hereafter as *Memorials*).

university career, decided to study for the ministry. He was, however, a Moderate, and both he and his father, through the influence of John Warner, the Church of Scotland minister of Kilbarchan, near Paisley, lapsed into Socinianism.

During the summer break in the early years of his divinity course John Love was employed as a tutor to the children of the Dow family who lived near the town of Stevenston, a few miles from Ardrossan. Little is known of the Dows; they must, however, have been a family of reasonable means in order for them to have employed a resident tutor for their children. Love's tutorship with the Dows led to the day of his salvation. Mrs. Dow was "a truly pious lady"<sup>3</sup> and realised that their young tutor, though a divinity student, was unconverted. She gave him copies of Thomas Boston's *Human Nature in its Fourfold State* and William Guthrie's *The Christian's Great Interest*. Love was with the Dows in the summer of 1774 whilst he still held Socinian views and he was not pleased to have received the books. He was again tutoring with the Dows in the following summer of 1775 and in Mrs. Dow, though he did not appreciate it, he had the privilege of the society of a genuine Christian whose life was an exemplification of the power of godliness. Living in close quarters to such a lady must have had a beneficial influence upon him. Yet, the principal means of his conversion was the Word of God, applied by the Holy Spirit, and there appears to have been little or no human instrumentality.

The conversion of John Love is a notable instance of the sheer sovereignty of God in the salvation of a sinner. The nineteenth-century editor of John Love's *Memorials* reflects on the fact that it is the Lord's usual procedure in bringing sinners to Christ to cause them to see the magnitude of their sin, which then leads to a shorter or longer period of conviction of sin, before their minds are enlightened to the knowledge of Christ and they are enabled by grace to rest on the Saviour alone for salvation. However, in some the gospel is brought home with such assurance of Divine authority and with such demonstration of the Holy Spirit's power that the sinner sees the remedy before he sees his sin. This was the case with John Love.<sup>4</sup>

When the young student returned to the Glasgow Divinity Hall for the winter session in the autumn of 1775 he was under the tutorship of a

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<sup>3</sup> *Memorials*, Vol. 1, p. 45.

<sup>4</sup> See *Memorials*, Vol. 1, p. 40.

new divinity professor called James Baillie<sup>5</sup> who, unlike his previous professor, was not a hardened Moderate. Among the books he encouraged his students to read were John Owen on Justification, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, and Ebenezer Erskine on Assurance of Faith. Baillie, in his lectures, seems to have controverted the erroneous views held by many in the Moderate party who controlled the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland at the time of the Marrow Controversy. In the remaining three years of his theological course under Baillie, Love devoted himself to intensive theological study. The only exception to this unremitting study was the time he gave to personal devotion. The focus of



*James Baillie (1723-1778),  
Glasgow Divinity Professor during the second  
half of John Love's divinity course.*

his study was exegetical investigations into the precise meaning of Scripture. In addition to these exegetical studies John Love mapped out the whole field of systematic and practical theology. His reading on systematic theology was extensive; he studied carefully Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Francis Turretin's *Institutio Theologicae Elencticae* and Petrus van Mastricht's *Theoretica-Practica Theologia*. In addition he read selections of the writings from Herman Witsius and made a copious abstract of John Owen's *The Doctrine of Justification by Faith*. These studies were all undertaken whilst Love was still in his late teens. The fruit of these studies and of his prolonged periods of prayer are found in the two-volume, thousand pages of the *Memorials of John Love* that were all written prior to his licensing at the age of twenty-one in December 1778.

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<sup>5</sup> For biographical information on Baillie, see Hew Scott (ed.), *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae* (8 vols., 2nd edn., Edinburgh, 1915-50), Vol. 7, p. 401 (cited afterwards as Hew Scott, *Fasti*); James Coutts, *A History of the University of Glasgow* (Glasgow, 1909), p. 326.

Regrettably, very little has been written about the second period of his life of just over twenty years.<sup>6</sup> It is this period that I intend to deal with in this series of articles. The final period of his life, the one for which he is best known, was when he was the minister of the Chapel of Ease at Anderston in Glasgow from 1800 until his death twenty-five years later. The significance of his London ministry and his involvement with the London Missionary Society (LMS) is due to the fact that it had a formative influence on his later ministry at Anderston and his secretaryship of the Glasgow Missionary Society.

## 1. John Love's years as a probationer in Scotland

For the next eight years after his licensing by the Presbytery of Paisley, on 24th December 1778, John Love was a probationer in the Church of Scotland, firstly in the parish of Rutherglen and then in Greenock.

### (i) Rutherglen

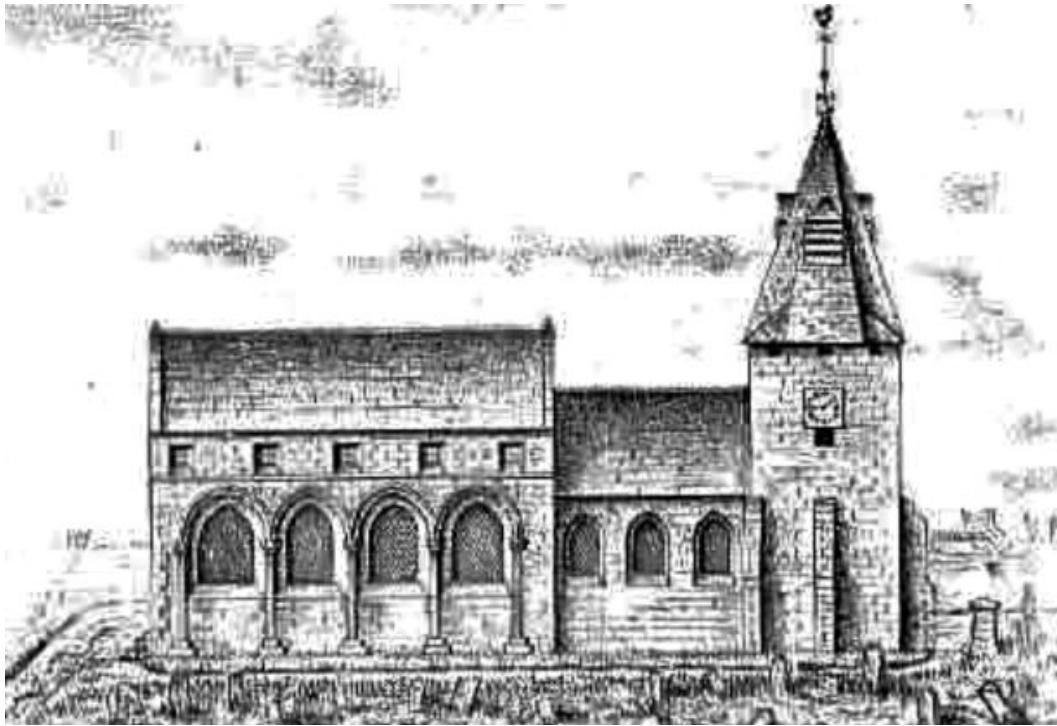
In the parish of Rutherglen, which is just over three miles south of central Glasgow, Love was an assistant to William Maxwell (1700-1780).<sup>7</sup> The parish of Rutherglen had been formed by the uniting of the parishes of Rutherglen and Polmadie prior to the Reformation, and was connected to Paisley Abbey, the church which Love attended when he was a boy. Maxwell was educated at Glasgow University and had been the minister of a Presbyterian congregation at Charleston in South Carolina. As the church there was unable to support him, he returned to Scotland and, following a short pastorate at Dunrossness in Shetland, he succeeded his brother, Alexander, as minister of Rutherglen in 1742. William Maxwell was an evangelical; he was one of the ministers that had assisted William McCulloch at the second great sacramental occasion at Cambuslang in August 1742 when George Whitefield was one of the preachers.<sup>8</sup> Maxwell was in his early eighties when the young

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<sup>6</sup> The most detailed sketch of Love's life is contained in John Morison, *Fathers and Founders of the London Missionary Society* (London, [1844]), pp. 254-267 (cited hereafter as *Fathers and Founders*). Apart from Love's contribution to the LMS, his London ministry is dealt with by Morison in less than forty lines.

<sup>7</sup> For biographical details of Maxwell, see Hew Scott, *Fasti*, Vol. 3, p. 488.

<sup>8</sup> See Arthur Fawcett, *The Cambuslang Revival* (Banner of Truth Trust, 1971), p. 120. Maxwell's preaching at Cambuslang was cited by a young woman in one of William McCulloch's examinations of those who professed conversion at the time of the revival. Part of her testimony was as follows: "Hearing another minister (William Maxwell) on these words We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block &c: While he often



*Rutherglen Parish Church in the time of William Maxwell.*

probationer became his assistant. Love's preaching at Rutherglen was said to be both attractive and useful and multitudes flocked to hear him preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ. He expatiated with all the delight and fervour of one who had but recently tasted that the Lord is gracious. The message proclaimed by him was blessed to the salvation of many souls, by which he learned practically that the new truths he had embraced were mighty through God to the pulling down of the strongholds of sin and Satan in the hearts of men and women.<sup>9</sup> He was now "not ashamed of the gospel of Christ" which had become "the power of God unto salvation". After just a few months as Maxwell's assistant, John Love reflected on his new responsibilities. In a letter to a correspondent he explains that he has been led to think more seriously than ever over three matters:

1. The vast difficulty of the work of the ministry. I know something of this now by experience. I feel how difficult and

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mentioned Christ's being the power of God & the wisdom of God to believers, I thought I could then say, that He was the power of God & Wisdom of God to me." Keith Edward Beebe (ed.), *The McCulloch Examinations of the Cambuslang Revival (1742)* (2 vols., Scottish History Society, 2011), Vol. 1, p. 118.

<sup>9</sup> Morison, *Fathers and Founders*, p. 258.

supernatural a thing it is to feel in my heart holy love to God and man. So prevailing as to keep self-seeking as to applause, &c., in its proper distance from such holy work.

2. How glorious a thing it is to be enabled to preach the gospel from such divine supernatural views of it, and from divine supernatural ends, that God may be glorified in the salvation of sinners! If it had not been a glorious thing, Christ would not have been engaged in it, nor would he have made such promises to those who attain to it!
3. How full and free are the treasures of grace in Christ.<sup>10</sup>

Nearing the end of his time at Rutherglen the young probationer seeks to assess what he, by God's grace, has been able to achieve. He writes:

So far as I can judge, it does not appear that the Lord is at present using me as an instrument of doing great execution as to the work of conviction and conversion. The principal effect of my present labours seems to be with regard to some of the people of God, in their instruction, direction, and consolation, particularly in perplexed and distressed cases. But I think, so far as I am an instrument at all regarded by the Lord, He is rather preparing and polishing me than using me.<sup>11</sup>

Maxwell died in 1780 and though Love had been his assistant, and was clearly popular with the people, he was not chosen as his successor; this was probably due to his youth as he was just twenty-two when the

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<sup>10</sup> *Letters of the late John Love* (Glasgow, 1838), p. 1, letter dated 1779. Whilst this volume of *Letters* is an invaluable source of contemporary information regarding the life and thought of John Love, its biographical usefulness has been reduced by the editorial work of the committee, led by Peter MacBride of Rothesay, which prepared the *Letters* for publication. MacBride writes in the Preface regarding the *Letters*: "They are all published from the author's own manuscripts – for he was in the habit of keeping, in shorthand, a copy of all or most of his letters. These have been carefully transcribed and arranged, omitting such parts as referred to private matters, and also for brevity's sake the usual formalities and compliments at the close of the letters as being of minor importance" (p. vii). These omissions, from a biographical point of view, are quite regrettable. Names have almost entirely been removed, along with, in most cases, the person to whom the letters were sent. In addition, the writer of this paper feels certain that on the basis of "private matters" a crucial set of letters are now lost covering the period between John Love's leaving Greenock and his ordination in London. There is a distinct gap in the series of *Letters* of just over one year.

<sup>11</sup> *Letters of John Love*, pp. 3-4. Letter undated.

senior minister died. Within little over seven months James Furlong,<sup>12</sup> who had been licensed just four years before Love, was inducted as the minister of Rutherglen. Though it was intended that Love would have continued as his assistant he left Rutherglen eighteen months after Furlong was inducted. The exact date when Love ceased to be an assistant in Rutherglen is not entirely clear. From the volume of his published letters Love gives his address as Greenock by April 1782.<sup>13</sup> In addition, the preface to a volume of sermons which he preached in Greenock, states that his assistantship in that town began in 1782.<sup>14</sup> From this it seems clear that his Rutherglen assistantship can only have lasted for little more than three years. In the three volumes of sermons and lectures,<sup>15</sup> published shortly after John Love's death in 1825, there are three sermons dated 1781 before his move to Greenock. They were preached in Campsie, Renfrew and significantly one in Greenock, where clearly the congregation must have been pleased with his ministry.



*Peter MacBride of Rothesay, the principal editor of John Love's Letters.*

<sup>12</sup> For biographical details of Furlong, see Hew Scott, *Fasti*, Vol. 3, p. 488. He had previously been the minister of North Albion Street Chapel, Glasgow, for five years.

<sup>13</sup> *Letters of John Love*, p. 7. Letter dated 20th April 1782.

<sup>14</sup> *Sermons preached by the late Rev. John Love in the West Church, Greenock, during the years 1784-1785* (Glasgow, 1853), p. iii (cited afterwards as *Greenock Sermons*).

<sup>15</sup> These are *Sermons Preached on Public Occasions* (Glasgow, 1826) and *Discourses on Select Passages of Scripture* (2 vols., Edinburgh, 1829). The 1781 sermons are all in *Discourses*, Vol. 2. The Campsie sermon, preached on 2nd September, is on pp. 414-428, the Renfrew sermon of 30th September is on pp. 295-310, and the Greenock sermon of 7th October is on pp. 385-392.

**(ii) Greenock**

In Greenock John Love was an assistant to David Turner<sup>16</sup> in what was once the old parish church. In 1741 a new parish, the East Church, was formed in Greenock by disjoining it from the old parish church. After this additional parish had been formed the old parish church was then called the West Parish in Greenock. In 1831, on the death of the incumbent, Robert Steele, this was the congregation that was offered by the patron to Thomas Chalmers. He declined it and recommended Patrick Macfarlan. When at the Disruption, in 1843, Macfarlan along with Chalmers became leaders in the Free Church, it was said that Macfarlan had for principle resigned the richest living in the Church of Scotland.<sup>17</sup>

David Turner (1695-1785) was the son of the previous minister, Andrew Turner. Both father and son appear to have been evangelicals. Andrew Turner, along with the patron Sir John Shaw and the people of Greenock, were actively engaged in suppressing the Jacobite uprising of 1715. It is recorded that “Mr. Turner had a commanding presence, and when he donned his regimentals ‘he looked every inch a soldier’.”<sup>18</sup> The son, David Turner, was the choice of the people more than the choice of the patron. The people of Greenock stated that they “had known him from his childhood, had so great affection for him and made so unanimous an application for having him called to be their minister, none making any objection except the Laird of Cartsburn”.<sup>19</sup> The patron, Sir John Shaw, who was not an evangelical, had put forward two other candidates after Andrew Turner’s death, both of whom withdrew. At this stage Shaw acquiesced in the choice of the Kirk Session and the people. Greenock was to be David Turner’s only charge; he was the minister of the parish for almost sixty-five years from 1721 to 1785.

The population of Greenock was growing, and the size of the congregation was increasing, and in consequence it was becoming a

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<sup>16</sup> For biographical details of Turner, see Hew Scott, *Fasti*, Vol. 3, p. 207, and George Williamson, *Old Greenock, embracing Sketches of its Ecclesiastical, Educational, and Literary History* (Paisley, 1888), pp. 93-98.

<sup>17</sup> James A. Wylie, *Disruption Worthies: A Memorial of 1843* (Edinburgh, 1881), p. 374.

<sup>18</sup> Williamson, *Old Greenock*, p. 91. Lady Greenock’s spirited address to the Greenock Company raised by her husband was seconded by Andrew Turner and the gentlemen present. She declared to them that “the Protestant Religion, their laws, and liberties, lives, and all that was dear to them as men and Christians, as well as His Majesty King George and the Protestant Succession, were all at hazard in this unnatural rebellion” (ibid.).

<sup>19</sup> Williamson, *Old Greenock*, p. 95.



demanding charge. It was during David Turner's pastorate and the increased demands on the minister that the charge was divided in 1741. It was also the demands of a large congregation and his increasing age that led Turner to seek the aid of an assistant. In 1774, when he was seventy-nine, a call was given to an evangelical, Colin Gillies, to be his assistant and successor. Gillies was the son of Dr. John Gillies<sup>20</sup> of the College Church in Glasgow and the friend and first biographer of George Whitefield. His mother was Elizabeth MacLaurin, the eldest daughter of John MacLaurin<sup>21</sup> of the Ramshorn Church in Glasgow. Colin Gillies, after seven years as Turner's assistant, was translated to the Laigh Church in Paisley in 1781; this was the church at which the eminent John Witherspoon<sup>22</sup> had been the minister from 1757-1769.

Turner was eighty-six and clearly needed another assistant and it was at this point that John Love was invited to fill the vacancy left by Gillies' departure. There was, however, a significant difference. When Gillies came to Greenock he received a presentation from the patron to the position of assistant and successor and received ordination when he arrived at Greenock. This was not the case with respect to John Love. There was no presentation from John Shaw; Love was asked merely by Turner to be his assistant and he did not receive ordination on his arrival

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<sup>20</sup> John Gillies (1712-1796) was a leading member of the "Popular" or evangelical party in the Church of Scotland and an important member of an international letter-writing network involving Jonathan Edwards, Philip Doddridge, and John Erskine. He also issued in 1754 a most valuable history of revivals, *Historical Collections Relating to Remarkable Periods of the Success of the Gospel*. An enlarged edition of this volume, with a preface and continuation to the 1840s, edited by Horatius Bonar, was reprinted by the Banner of Truth Trust in 1981.

<sup>21</sup> John MacLaurin (1693-1754) was one of the ablest preachers and theologians of the Church of Scotland in the eighteenth century. His outstanding sermon, "Glorying in the Cross of Christ" is widely regarded as the epitome of Scottish Evangelical preaching of that century. It was originally published in 1755 with a memoir by his son-in-law, John Gillies.

<sup>22</sup> John Witherspoon (1723-1794), after pastorates at Beith in Ayrshire and then in Paisley, emigrated to America to become the sixth President of Princeton College in New Jersey, in succession to men of the stature of Jonathan Edwards and Samuel Davies. Before leaving Scotland he was the leader of the evangelical party in the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. In his writings he attacked Moderatism. It has been said that it was Witherspoon who brought the philosophy of Scottish Common Sense Realism to Princeton. He sided with America in the War of Independence and was elected to the continental congress in Philadelphia. He was the only minister to sign the Declaration of Independence and served in the American Congress from 1776 to 1782. For biographical details of Witherspoon, see Ashbel Green's article on Witherspoon in William B. Sprague, *Annals of the American Pulpit* (9 vols., New York, 1857-69), Vol. 3, pp. 288-300; Hew Scott, *Fasti*, Vol. 3, pp. 174-176; and Ned C. Landsman in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* – online edition (cited afterwards as *ODNB*).

at Greenock. Within a week of Gillies being admitted to the Laigh Church in Paisley, John Love, in a letter to a correspondent dated 25th December 1781, writes: “As I supposed you would soon hear of my having communicated to Mr. Turner my acceptance of his offer, I have been less anxious at the delay of my writing you, occasioned by various circumstances.”<sup>23</sup> Love must surely have been conscious of the difference between the position Gillies held and the one he was being asked to fill. His being overlooked at Rutherglen and now an assistantship at Greenock without ordination was clearly a concern to him. Writing from Greenock in April 1782, after little more than a few months in his new position, he informs a correspondent: “My spirit hath been, particularly these two days, so depressed, as to oblige me to entertain thoughts of giving up all public work whatever; and if the hand of God were to continue lying upon me to the same degree, I believe I should have no reflection on myself for taking this step – which no doubt would be censured by many.”<sup>24</sup>

The West Parish in Greenock was a prominent congregation and by an assistantship there Love’s sphere of labour was greatly extended and a significant demand was made on the resources of his powerful intellect. There, as at Rutherglen, his labours were owned of the Lord. In one of the short memoirs of Love, his time in Greenock is described in these terms: “as at his former post, he found a people prepared of the Lord, who received him ‘in the name of a prophet’ and who shared with him ‘a prophet’s reward’.”<sup>25</sup>

As David Turner was then in his late eighties, the burden of the ministry at Greenock fell almost entirely on the shoulders of his young assistant. It is clear from Love’s letters that the older man had complete confidence in him and that he was fulfilling the role of acting minister of the West Parish of Greenock. Within a year of arriving at Greenock, when he was absent from the congregation on a Sabbath, he had the responsibility of arranging who would be preaching in his absence.<sup>26</sup> During his assistantship he was invited to assist at communions.<sup>27</sup> In

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<sup>23</sup> *Letters of John Love*, p. 5. Letter dated 25th December 1781.

<sup>24</sup> *Letters of John Love*, p. 9. Letter dated 20th April 1782.

<sup>25</sup> Morison, *Fathers and Founders*, p. 258.

<sup>26</sup> *Letters of John Love*, p. 17. Letter dated 1st November 1782.

<sup>27</sup> In the Church of Scotland in the late eighteenth century the ministers who assisted at communions did not usually preach the action sermon; this was normally the responsibility of the minister of the congregation.

June 1783 he assisted at the communion at Kilmarnock. This was most likely to have been at the High Kirk where John Russell<sup>28</sup> was the minister. As a student Love had accompanied his minister, John Morrison of the Laigh Kirk in Paisley, to communions where he had met Russell.<sup>29</sup> Writing about his labours at the Kilmarnock communion he observes: “whatever be the fruit of my coming here as to others, it has not been in vain as to myself. I have found a sufficiency of strength according to the work laid upon me. I have again seen the power and glory of God in the sanctuary.”<sup>30</sup>

John Love was held in sufficient esteem at Greenock for his advice to be sought by a person asking directions with respect to preparatory studies before applying to be accepted for the gospel ministry. When Love gave this advice he was himself just twenty-six years old. There were four points to his main advice; they were:

1. Labour after a solid assurance of your personal reconciliation with God.
2. Labour after such a course of living, both as to inward spiritual exercises and as to outward practice, as is every way pleasing to God, for this is one of the chief means of the genuine knowledge of Divine things.
3. Seek after clearness as to your being indeed called of God to aspire after this high office.
4. Make a business of daily reading the Holy Scriptures in secret with prayer and meditation, endeavouring, without slavish dependence on human exposition, to enter into and to digest what you read in the oracles of God.

Love then goes on to give him some guidance on how he might “be profitably employed for the first year of [his] course”. Again he has four points of advice.

1. Make yourself more thoroughly acquainted with the Greek and Roman classics, giving attention not merely to the words and letters, but to the style, composition, and sentiments.

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<sup>28</sup> For biographical information on John Russell (1740-1817), see Hew Scott, *Fasti*, Vol. 4, p. 326, and John Macleod, *Scottish Theology* (Edinburgh, 1943), pp. 211-212.

<sup>29</sup> *Memorials*, Vol. 1, pp. xlix-li.

<sup>30</sup> *Letters of John Love*, p. 36. Letter dated 16th June 1783. His published letters record other instances of his assisting at sacramental occasions; see *Letters of John Love*, p. 64. Letter dated 1785.

2. Exercise yourself in the study of Euclid's Elements and the conic sections, as a means of acquiring a habit of soundness and accuracy in reasoning.
3. As to books of divinity, let your chief reading be of practical writers, for a while at least. Of this sort I shall recommend to you Mr. Vincent's *Exposition of the Catechism*, and Mr. Flavel's *Works*.
4. Of books more doctrinal I shall name no others at this time but these two [Name deleted]: *Body of Divinity*,<sup>31</sup> and Dr. Bates' *Works*, particularly his discourses concerning the being of God and the immortality of the soul, and concerning the harmony of the Divine attributes in the work of redemption.<sup>32</sup>

It also seems clear that, during his time in Greenock, Love had a major responsibility for examining those who came to the Session seeking admission to the Lord's Table for the first time. Nearing the end of his assistantship, he writes to a minister, probably to David Turner:

It cannot be presumed that the only or most effectual mean of detecting the ignorant and presumptuous, or stirring up and helping forward those who have some knowledge and seriousness, is requiring a repetition of questions learned by rote from a book, which may be easily done by the most profane and ignorant person, if endowed with a good memory. Surely there may be much more close and satisfying dealing with the souls and consciences of those who offer themselves to this service; in order to form a profitable judgment as to their knowledge and seriousness, and whether it may not be expedient to keep back some for at least a time. Though I am very unfit for this work, yet

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<sup>31</sup> The author of the *Body of Divinity* that Love is recommending has been deleted by the editorial committee led by Peter MacBride, the principal editor of Love's *Letters*. The author was most probably Thomas Ridgley who, in a declining generation, was considered to be a bulwark of dissenting orthodoxy against the tendencies to Arian and Arminian laxity. However, as Alexander Gordon points out, Ridgley's scheme of the Trinity, denuded of the Generation of the Son and the Procession of the Spirit, was essentially Sabellian; and, in easing the difficulties of Calvinism, Ridgley follows the Socinians in limiting the penalties of Adam's sin to death and temporal discomfort. These were views that John Love would have regarded as serious errors. Ridgley's *Body of Divinity* was then, as now, the major work that expounded the Larger Catechism of the Westminster Divines. See the article on Ridgley by Gordon in *Dictionary of National Biography (DNB)*.

<sup>32</sup> *Letters of John Love*, pp. 36-38. Letter dated 4th October 1783.

I am willing to attempt it, if you are pleased to allow me to spend what time I can spare through the week, in conversation privately and publicly with these young people and to pay proper regard to the opinion which I may see reason to form of them in this way.<sup>33</sup>

Though only three of Love's sermons have survived from the period of his life when he was at Rutherglen, the position at Greenock was quite different. A volume of sermons was published in 1853<sup>34</sup> taken down in shorthand and carefully transcribed by John Caird, the grandfather of John and Edward Caird.<sup>35</sup> The volume contains thirty-four sermons that were preached in 1784-1785 when Love was twenty-eight. From the sermons in the volume it appears that it was his practice to preach seven or eight sermons in succession from the same text. The preface to the volume, published sixty-eight years after they were preached and over a quarter of a century after Love's death, speaks of them in these terms:

How deep does this wise master-builder dig the foundation, before he begins to raise the superstructure! Hence its solidity, grandeur and dignity! All who love to see the truth of God set forth in its beauty and just proportions, and resting on its only proper basis, – right views of the Divine character and government, – must hail with satisfaction the publication of these discourses, – even under the disadvantage of their not proceeding directly from the pen of the learned and godly author.

As these sermons – at the time of their being delivered in the West Kirk of Greenock – were signally owned of God, not only for the awakening of the secure, and the bringing of numbers to the

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<sup>33</sup> *Letters of John Love*, p. 58. Letter dated 19th February 1785.

<sup>34</sup> Love, *Greenock Sermons*.

<sup>35</sup> John Caird, the transcriber of the sermons, is described in the introduction to the sermons as “one, whose piety, intelligence, and high Christian attainments shone forth, during a long series of years, in the town and neighbourhood of Greenock, where, as in many places, his memory is still warmly cherished”. Love, *Greenock Sermons*, p. iii. John Caird (1802-1881), the grandson of the transcriber, became the Principal of Glasgow University in 1873; his brother Edward (1835-1908), after teaching in both Oxford and Glasgow, was appointed Master of Balliol College, Oxford, in 1893. George Williamson in his volume on *Old Greenock* provides the identity of the person who took down Love's Greenock sermons. He writes: “The notes were by Mr. John Caird . . . our informant being the Principal's venerable aunt, who was a personal friend and admirer of Mr. Love.” Williamson, *Old Greenock*, p. 97.



*The old West Church in Greenock.*

saving knowledge of the truth, but also for revival and elevation of His own people in the ways of vital godliness, – “when the times of refreshing” came “from the presence of the Lord;” – so they are now presented to the church in the humble hope and prayer, that, by the Divine blessing, the same precious effects may be experienced by many, in the reading of them; – and thus it may be felt, that the distinguished servant of God who was honoured to proclaim the precious truths contained in these discourses, “being dead, yet speaketh”.<sup>36</sup>

With the exception of a sermon preached on the fast day of the Greenock Communion on 18th August 1785, all the other sermons in the volume are short series of sermons from the same text. There are three series of seven sermons, one of eight, and another of four.<sup>37</sup> The

<sup>36</sup> Love, *Greenock Sermons*, pp. iii-iv.

<sup>37</sup> The texts for the three series of seven sermons are Luke 7:21, “And in the same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight”; 2 Samuel 22:5, “Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow”; and Song of Solomon 5:1, “Eat, O friends; drink, yea, abundantly, O beloved”. The series of eight sermons is on Joel 2:21, “Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice: for the Lord will do great things”.

sermons are carefully constructed with clear heads, and sub-divisions within the heads, and they conclude with several points of application. As the preface to the volume points out, they were, at the time of their delivery, blessed to the conversion of many and to the encouragement of the Lord's people. In addition to the distinct volume of Greenock sermons, there are a further six sermons preached at Greenock, prior to Love's going to London, in the second volume of his *Discourses on Select Passages of Scripture*, from the earlier part of his assistantship with Turner. The writer of a memoir of Love in the *Christian Instructor* describes his pulpit delivery and his general disposition: "His manner in the pulpit was slow, but solemn and impressive. As a friend and companion he was affectionate, instructive and cheerful, yet he never forgot his sacred character, and uniformly seemed to have a sense of the presence of his Divine Master, to whose service he was cheerfully and unweariedly devoted. No man perhaps of his time approached more nearly to the ancient Reformers in spirit, manners and character."<sup>38</sup>

Love continued to labour with David Turner, "as a son in the gospel", until death severed their union with the removal of the older man to his heavenly reward. When Turner died on 9th December 1785 at the age of ninety he was the "Father of the Church" – the oldest serving minister in the Church of Scotland. As at Rutherglen, John Love was again overlooked when it came to appointing a successor to Turner. Though he had been an assistant in the parish for almost four years, and his preaching had not only been appreciated by many hearers but honoured by the Head of the Church, another man was appointed rather than Love. When the Presbytery met on 25th January 1786, the death of the venerable pastor of the West Church was noted and within two months the Presbytery received a presentation by the patron, Sir John Shaw Stewart,<sup>39</sup> in favour of Allan M'Aulay (1750-

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The shorter series of four sermons is on Exodus 15:13, "Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people whom thou hast redeemed; thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation".

<sup>38</sup> Cited in Williamson, *Old Greenock*, p. 97.

<sup>39</sup> Sir John Shaw Stewart (c. 1740-1812) was the 4th Baronet of Greenock and Blackhall. The Stewart, later the Shaw Stewart Baronetcy, of Greenock and Blackhall in the County of Renfrew, is a title in the Baronetage of Nova Scotia. It was created on 27th March 1667 for Archibald Stewart. This family is descended in the direct male line from Sir John Stewart, illegitimate son of Robert III of Scotland, who granted him the estate of Ardgowan in Renfrewshire. Sir John added the surname Shaw when he succeeded to estates of his great uncle the last of the Shaw Baronetcy of Greenock. He sat as Member of Parliament for Renfrewshire from 1780 to 1783 and from 1786 to 1796.

1791)<sup>40</sup> who was just seven years older than Love and, like him, was a probationer. On 3rd May 1786 the Presbytery sustained the presentation and ordered the call to be moderated in just over a fortnight later on 19th May. There was, however, dissent in the congregation over M'Aulay's presentation. Shaw Stewart wrote to the Moderator of the Presbytery on 1st May 1786 from the family seat at Ardgowan House, near Inverkip:

Sir.

I think it my duty to inform you and the Reverend Presbytery of a most audacious attempt to prevent Mr. M'Aulay from preaching on Sunday the 18th last month. I make no apology for troubling you with this letter. Early on the morning of that day, some malicious persons cut away the bell rope, broke into the church, barricaded all the doors, and fastened the pulpit door with screw nails, the heads of which were cut off. Notwithstanding these precautions, their scheme was defeated, as everything was put to rights before the ordinary time of divine service. Mr. Campbell, my agent, is now taking a precognition in order to discover some of those concerned in this riot, but, hitherto nothing positive has come out, and I am afraid never will, because most of those who have been examined declared without hesitation that they approved of what had been done, and one in particular said that those who had shut up the kirk were all warranted to do so from the Word of God. I shall make no comments on this affair. . . . I only request that the Rev. Presbytery will be so good as to appoint one of their own number to preach, till a call is sustained, which I am informed is the usual practice. I have the honour to be. Etc.<sup>41</sup>

In addition to this disturbance, a local solicitor and parishioner, for himself and any who should adhere to him, appealed to the next Synod against M'Aulay's ordination and induction, though he subsequently fell from his appeal. Whilst it is not certain that the reason for the disturbance and the appeal was the overlooking of John Love, who was popular with the congregation, this seems to be the most probable explanation. On 31st May 1786, the Presbytery sustained the

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<sup>40</sup> For biographical details of M'Aulay, see Hew Scott, *Fasti*, Vol. 3, p. 207, and Williamson, *Old Greenock*, pp. 98-102.

<sup>41</sup> Williamson, *Old Greenock*, p. 99. It seems that Williamson had access to the documents of the Presbytery.



call to M'Aulay. It was signed by ninety of the heritors and three of the five elders and "a very considerable number of heads of families".<sup>42</sup> The Clerk was instructed to inform John Love, who had been supplying the pulpit, of the decision. M'Aulay was ordained and inducted to the West Church charge of Greenock on 27th July 1786. During the next few years little was heard of M'Aulay, except his representations to the Presbytery regarding the ruinous state of his manse. In November 1788 he married Margaret Hopkins in what was regarded as an irregular union<sup>43</sup> for which, along with other scandalous conduct, he was suspended from the office of the ministry.<sup>44</sup> M'Aulay was served with a libel and proof was being undertaken when his death, at the age of forty-one, brought the process to an end.

John Love was again by-passed at Greenock due to the patron, Sir John Shaw Stewart, favouring M'Aulay. As the writer of Love's entry in the *Biographical Dictionary of Eminent Scotsmen* notes:

It will thus be seen, that while Mr. Love had no church patron, or at least an efficient one, he had not that kind of popular talent which secures the greatest number of votes among town-councillors or seat holders. His, indeed, was that superior excellence which can only be appreciated by the judicious few, and after a considerable term of apprenticeship.<sup>45</sup>

It is not entirely clear when Love's assistantship at Greenock ended. He was still supplying Greenock at the end of May 1786 when the Presbytery sustained the call to M'Aulay; he had, however, left the congregation before M'Aulay's ordination on 27th July 1786.

In Love's *Letters* there are several passages where he reflects on his assistantship to David Turner. Writing in October 1782, a little over a year after arriving in Greenock, he observes:

As to the work of God in this place, I am still in the place of the breaking forth of children, and likely to continue so till the arm of the Lord is revealed, and his voice be uttered so as to shake the

<sup>42</sup> Williamson, *Old Greenock*, p. 99.

<sup>43</sup> Irregular marriages, which were strongly disapproved of by the Church, took one of three forms in the late eighteenth century. The three forms were firstly, by a declaration in front of witnesses; secondly, by a promise of marriage followed by a sexual relationship; and thirdly, by cohabitation and repute.

<sup>44</sup> Williamson was clearly aware of the nature of M'Aulay's scandalous conduct but comments, "over which we draw a veil". *Old Greenock*, p. 100.

<sup>45</sup> *A Biographical Dictionary of Eminent Scotsmen* (5 vols., Glasgow, 1853-57), Vol. 5, p. 385.

foundations of the security of this place. My opinion of those who pass for professors of religion here is daily becoming lower, their religious views and practice appear very mean, except a few who, being under sorrow, are despised by the rest for their brokenness of heart. If any remarkable work of grace shall be wrought here, it may have the inscription eminently upon it, “not for your sakes do I do this”. I think the chief design of my labour, since my coming here, has been to make such a discovery of the haughtiness and rottenness of the hearts of this people, as shall give occasion for a very great and remarkable mourning, when the Spirit is poured out upon us from on high. God hath come very near to this congregation and hath been despised, and turned back from doing them good. Woe unto them forever, if it shall stand so. In opposition to these discouragements, my faith and hope have been for some days past much invigorated; and I have been allowed to take hold of God in behalf of this poor people, as he who commandeth the light to shine out of darkness, and who quickeneth the dead, and calleth the things which be not as though they were. I earnestly beg your most importunate supplications to the Lord, for such a visitation of his awakening and converting power, as is necessary for the glory of his name here and to the ends of the earth.<sup>46</sup>

Nine months later he is still writing in a similar vein:

As to the work of God here, I am tried from day to day with clear and decisive symptoms of hardness of heart, presumption, rebellion, atheism, and delusion, as to the vital power of religion, and that in some of the highest professors; but I am strengthened from above to faith, patience, and earnestness in contending against those things, and in waiting for the time when the holy arm of the Lord shall be made bare.<sup>47</sup>

Despite this rather severe assessment of the West Church congregation, in his last published letter before he left Greenock he writes to a correspondent in these terms, “The signs of the work here are continuing”,<sup>48</sup> and several years later, writing from London, he was able to state:

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<sup>46</sup> *Letters of John Love*, pp. 38-39. Letter dated 17th October 1783.

<sup>47</sup> *Letters of John Love*, p. 54. Letter dated 3rd June 1784.

<sup>48</sup> *Letters of John Love*, p. 69. Letter dated 7th March 1786.

There is here, however, room for the greatest exercise of wisdom, zeal, faith patience and activity, in pursuing the designs of ministerial work. I now find the profit of that course of trial and education, through which it pleased God in his wisdom and love to conduct me, while I remained in Greenock. His work is perfect, being the result of eternal counsel, and being performed in the view of futurity, which is naked before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.<sup>49</sup>

He was also able to acknowledge when he had arrived in London that “it was part of the Divine counsel, respecting the course of things through which I have passed at Greenock, that thereby I should be prepared for the climate in which I now live”; and he goes on to speak of his “concern about my friends at Greenock”.<sup>50</sup> From this it appears that the original difficulties and his severe assessment of Greenock was significantly modified as a time of blessing followed. In addition, his experience there had taught him patience in the work of the ministry. Despite his own understandably cautious assessment of his labours in Greenock the opinion of others was rather different. John Morison’s description of his ministry there is as follows:

On retiring, however, from Greenock, he had the unspeakable satisfaction of knowing that he had many seals to his ministry, among a people to whose spiritual culture he had devoted some of the best years of his public life, and who continued ever after to cherish the kindest recollections of his faithful labours, both in the pulpit and in the private circle. With many who ranked as his spiritual children he has since met before the throne, where they gaze with mutual wonder and delight upon the glories of that Saviour, whose matchless love forms the bond both of earth and heaven.<sup>51</sup>

John Love was now almost thirty years of age; he had been a probationer for eight years, but was still not an ordained minister. As he looked to the future, the door to ordination and a charge in the Established Church of Scotland must have appeared to him as being firmly shut. It is not difficult to determine why this was so – the 1780s in

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<sup>49</sup> *Letters of John Love*, pp. 82-83. Letter dated 1788.

<sup>50</sup> *Letters of John Love*, pp. 78-79. Letter dated 1788.

<sup>51</sup> Morison, *Fathers and Founders*, pp. 258-259.

Scotland was still the “Age of the Moderates”. The Moderate party still had an iron grip on the General Assembly and the patrons, who had the right of nominating men for pastoral charges, were largely the landed gentry and were usually sympathetic to the ruling party in the Church. Though Love had once been a Moderate he was now an outspoken Evangelical. Though his preaching was appreciated by his hearers, in the 1780s it was not the people who determined who would be their pastor, but the patron. Faced with this difficulty, Love looked south to the small Scottish Presbyterian Church in England in order to obtain ordination. Whilst there is currently no full scale biography of John Love there are a number of brief biographical sketches. Several of these accounts describe Love as moving straight from his assistantship in Greenock to ordination in a Presbyterian Congregation in London.<sup>52</sup> This was not the case; he left Greenock in the spring of 1786 without any charge to go to in London and did not receive ordination in England until late August 1787.<sup>53</sup>

## 2. London and English Presbyterianism in the 1780s

In contrast to the prevailing Moderatism in Scotland, the London to which John Love came was in many ways a centre of evangelicalism. The effects of the evangelical revival were clearly in evidence. In 1787 both John and Charles Wesley and the Countess of Huntingdon were still alive and often in the capital.<sup>54</sup> George Whitefield had died just seventeen years earlier. John Newton was preaching at St. Mary, Woolnoth; William Romaine was at St. Dunstan’s, Fleet Street; and Rowland Hill was at Surrey Chapel; and the Clapham Sect were active

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<sup>52</sup> This is even the case in the article on John Love in the *DNB*. It is rather surprising that this has not been corrected in the more recent *ODNB*.

<sup>53</sup> *DNB*, *ODNB*, Hew Scott, *Fasti*, Vol. 3, p. 389; Nigel M. de S. Cameron, *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (hereafter *DSCHT*) (Edinburgh, 1993), p. 498; and G. C. Cameron, *The Scots Kirk in London* (Oxford, 1979), p. 47, all state that John Love’s ordination at the Church in Crispin Street, London, took place on 22nd August 1788. This is incorrect; his date of ordination in London was 22nd August 1787. See the manuscript, “Minutes of the Scots Presbytery in London” (hereafter “Scots Presbytery Minutes”), Vol. 1, p. 80, and the small volume containing the sermon and charge preached at his ordination, Thomas Rutledge, *A sermon preached on 22nd August 1787, at the ordination of the Rev. John Love, Minister of the Gospel at Crispin Street, Spital-fields to which is added a Charge by the Rev. William Smith* (London, 1787) (cited afterwards as *Ordination Sermon*).

<sup>54</sup> Both John Wesley and the Countess of Huntingdon died in 1791. Charles Wesley died in 1788. All three had residences in London. John and Charles were buried in London during John Love’s period in the capital.

in applying evangelicalism to the social issues of the nation. This was a group of Anglican social reformers based in Clapham who were very influential in the London to which Love came. They were a network of friends along with their families with William Wilberforce as their centre of gravity. What bound them together was their shared moral and spiritual values, their religious mission, and their social activism. Their members were chiefly wealthy evangelical Anglicans whose major political goals were the liberation of slaves, the abolition of the slave trade, and the reform of the penal system.

The group's name originates from the fact that many of them attended Holy Trinity Church on Clapham Common, an area south-west of London, then surrounded by fashionable villas. Henry Venn (1724-1797) had been a curate at Holy Trinity for five years before he became Vicar of Huddersfield in 1759 and his son John was the rector of the parish from 1792 until his death in 1813. Wilberforce and John Thornton, two of the group's most influential leaders, resided nearby, and many of the Clapham Sect's meetings were held in their houses. After many years of campaigning, both in British society and in Parliament, much of which must have been witnessed by Love, the group saw their efforts rewarded with the final passage of the Slave Trade Act in 1807 which banned the trade throughout the British Empire; and, after further years of campaigning, they saw the total emancipation of British slaves with the passing of the Slavery Abolition Act in 1833.<sup>55</sup>

### **(i) Eighteenth-Century English Presbyterianism**

English Presbyterianism was, however, in a less prosperous state.<sup>56</sup> The Presbyterians' central concern following the Great Ejection in 1662 had been to achieve some form of comprehension within the Established Church. This desire still lingered on after the Revolution in 1689 which led to their failing to organise themselves as Presbyteries and Synods and operating Presbyterian Church government merely at the congregational level. The problems that this would eventually bring were highlighted in the second decade of the eighteenth century when aspects

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<sup>55</sup> See Michael Hennell, *John Venn and the Clapham Sect* (London, 1958) and Stephen Tomkins, *The Clapham Sect: How Wilberforce's Circle Transformed Britain* (Lion, Oxford, 2010).

<sup>56</sup> For an overview, see Alan F. P. Sell, "Presbyterianism in Eighteenth Century England: The Doctrinal Dimension", *Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society*, Vol. 4, No. 6 (May 1990), pp. 352-386; and the present writer's article, "English Presbyterianism in Decline", *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 100 (July 1995), pp. 201-212.

of Trinitarian doctrine began to be questioned in Exeter by two Presbyterian ministers, Joseph Hallet II (1656-1722)<sup>57</sup> and James Peirce (1674-1726).<sup>58</sup> In 1713, Peirce accepted an invitation to become a minister in Exeter where there were five congregations managed by a committee of thirteen laymen, to which four ministers were appointed. The senior minister was Hallet, who, in addition to his pastorate, kept a Nonconformist Academy which in Alexander Gordon's words "became famous as a nursery for heresy".

In the early part of the century, the Trinitarian controversy had been renewed by men whose published works either leant in an Arian direction or insisted on the subordination of the Son to the Father. Leaders in this movement were William Whiston, Professor of mathematics at Cambridge (a Boyle lecturer and successor to Sir Isaac Newton as Lucasian Professor), and Samuel Clarke, Rector of St. James, Piccadilly, and the author of *The Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity* (London, 1712). Clarke concluded that though the Bible does reveal a God in Trinity, supreme worship and honour should be given only to the Father. Among the first Presbyterians to be influenced by the views of Whiston and Clarke was James Peirce. Before going to Exeter, Peirce had held a pastorate in Cambridge, where he became acquainted with Whiston. After reading Clarke's book he concluded that he must either "part with some beloved opinions, or else quit my notion of the authority of Holy Scriptures".<sup>59</sup> Initially, Peirce kept his doubts about the doctrine of the Trinity to himself. He first excited suspicion when he stopped the practice of singing the doxology after the Psalms had been sung in public worship. The doxology ascribed glory to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost as one God. He gave his reason for this omission: not his opposition to the Trinity, but that he objected to singing anything other than the inspired Psalms without human additions.

Towards the end of 1716 it became known in Exeter that "at the house of a layman who boarded some of Mr. Hallett's pupils, the

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<sup>57</sup> Joseph Hallett I (1629-1689) was an ejected minister; his son Joseph Hallett II (1656-1722) and grandson Joseph Hallett III (1691-1744) both held views on the Trinity that deviated from scriptural orthodoxy, with Hallett III holding the most erroneous views. See biographical accounts in *DNB* by Alexander Gordon and in *ODNB* on Halletts II and III by David L. Wykes.

<sup>58</sup> For a biographical account of Peirce, see the *DNB* article by Alexander Gordon and the *ODNB* article by David L. Wykes.

<sup>59</sup> Michael Watts, *The Dissenters* (Oxford, 1976), Vol. 1, p. 374.

divinity of Christ was being disputed”.<sup>60</sup> One of the students, Hubert Stogdon,<sup>61</sup> let it be known he had been converted to Clarke’s views. Speaking his mind at a student discussion he declared with a great deal of freedom, “I am an Arian, and glory in the name”.<sup>62</sup> As a result, Peirce himself came under suspicion and was asked to preach on the deity of Christ. In order to foil the orthodox in the congregation he delivered the crucial words of his sermon so fast they could not take down his words. However, when he and Hallett signed a certificate commending Stogdon for ordination, the fears of the orthodox appeared to have been confirmed.

In September 1718, the Devon and Cornwall Association of Ministers,<sup>63</sup> following a stormy debate, demanded that every member should declare his position on the Trinity, either in the words of the first article of the Church of England’s Thirty-Nine Articles, or in the words of the answers to the fifth and sixth questions of the Westminster Assembly’s Shorter Catechism<sup>64</sup> or, if they preferred, in words of their own. Hallett made his confession in words selected from Scripture; Peirce stated he believed “the Son and Holy Ghost to be divine persons, but subordinate to the Father”.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Watts, *Dissenters*, Vol. 1, p. 374.

<sup>61</sup> For biographical details of Hubert Stogdon (1692-1728) see the sermon preached at his death by Nicholas Billingsley, *A sermon occasioned by the death of the late Reverend Mr. Hubert Stogdon preached at Trowbridge in the County of Wiltshire on January 7th, 1727-8, with memoirs of his life and character* (London, 1728), and *ODNB*. He was the son of an ejected Presbyterian minister and held Presbyterian views on ecclesiology whilst he was at Exeter. He later became convinced of the propriety of baptism by immersion and was re-baptised in London. In 1724 he was called to a paedobaptist congregation in Trowbridge where he died at the age of thirty-six.

<sup>62</sup> Allan Brockett. *Nonconformity in Exeter* (Manchester, 1962), p. 82.

<sup>63</sup> This gathering of ministers was called the Exeter Assembly and was a mixed body of Presbyterians and Congregationalists.

<sup>64</sup> Article 1 of the Thirty-Nine Articles states: “There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts, or passions; of infinite power, wisdom and goodness, the Maker and Preserver of all things, visible and invisible. And in the unity of the Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power and eternity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.” The answers to the fifth and sixth questions of the Shorter Catechism are: “There is but one only, the living and true God” and “There are three persons in the Godhead; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory.”

<sup>65</sup> Watts, *Dissenters*, Vol. 1, p. 374; R. W. Dale, *History of English Congregationalism* (London, 1907), p. 533; Jerom Murch, *The History of the Presbyterian and General Baptist Churches in the West of England with memoirs of their pastors* (London, 1835), p. 395.



*Interior of the meeting house adjoining  
the Salters' Hall.*

The informal Exeter Assembly asked the advice of the London ministers meeting at Salters' Hall in February 1719.<sup>66</sup> This was a meeting of the general body of Protestant Dissenting Ministers and was comprised of Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Baptists, of which the Presbyterians were the largest body. It was called by the Committee of the Three Denominations in order to debate the "advices" that they should give to Exeter. The central debates at Salters' Hall were, however, not over the doctrine of the Trinity but over subscription to a creedal formula. As Geoffrey Nuttall has stated it, the controversy was "not over subscription to the *Trinity*, but over *subscription* to the Trinity".<sup>67</sup>

By a majority of four, the London ministers refused to recommend creedal subscription<sup>68</sup> to the Exeter ministers and from that date English Presbyterianism became known for its opposition to creeds. The famous dictum of William Chillingworth

<sup>66</sup> The literature on the Salters' Hall Controversy is extensive. See Watts, *Dissenters*, Vol. 1, pp. 371-382; C. G. Bolam, J. Goring, H. L. Short, R. Thomas, *English Presbyterians* (London, 1968), pp. 151-174; Roger Thomas, "The Non-Subscription Controversy among Dissenters in 1719: The Salters' Hall debate", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 4 (1953), pp. 162-186; three articles by F. J. Powicke in *Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society*, Vol. 7, "Arianism and the Exeter Assembly", No. 1 (1916), pp. 34-43; "The Salters' Hall Controversy", No. 2 (1916), pp. 110-124; "The Salters' Hall Assembly and the Advices for Peace", No. 4 (1917), pp. 213-223; Brockett, *Nonconformity in Exeter*, pp. 74-95, and pp. 235-237, where Brockett lists thirty-six pamphlets issued during the controversy; J. Hay Colligan, *Eighteenth Century Nonconformity* (London, 1915), pp. 23-33; J. Hay Colligan, *The Arian Movement in England* (Manchester, 1913), pp. 53-66; W. T. Whitley, "Salters' Hall and the Baptists", *Transactions of the Baptist Historical Society*, Vol. 5:3 (April 1917), pp. 172-189; Geoffrey F. Nuttall, "Why did the English Presbyterians become Unitarians?", in *Miscellanea Anglo-Belgica* (Leiden, 1987), pp. 7-17.

<sup>67</sup> Nuttall, "Why did the English Presbyterians become Unitarians", p. 10 (emphasis Nuttall's).

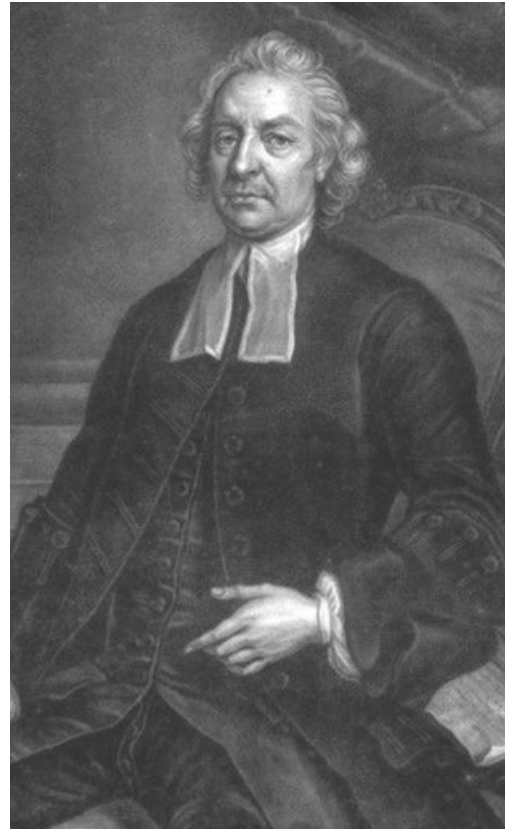
<sup>68</sup> Sir Joseph Jekyll (1663-1738), who was the Master of the Rolls, witnessed the scene and was the author of the often-quoted saying, "The Bible carried it by four".



(1602-1644) was quoted extensively during the Salters' Hall controversy, "The Bible, the Bible only is the religion of Protestants". It was used as the battle cry of the non-subscribers. Thomas Bradbury, a leader among the subscribers at Salters' Hall, commenting on this so-called Protestant principle, observes:

'Tis strange that none of the Protestants should ever understand their own principle till now. 'Tis well enough known how fast a desertion from the Church of Rome drew the nations into it; England, Scotland, France, Ireland, Poland, Holland, Denmark, Sweden and several more. These all agreed upon confessions of faith that were drawn up by the divines of those different countries. . . . And there was not one of 'em but what had the article of the Trinity, deliver'd in the words they thought the most convenient. So that 'tis very unaccountable, tho' they were all Protestants, none of 'em should understand their common principle.<sup>69</sup>

It was over the question of subscription to a creed that English Presbyterianism began to fragment. The Salters' Hall decision was a victory for laxity. Arianism soon got a foothold among the non-subscribers<sup>70</sup> and this led to the virtual extinction of English Presbyterianism. Robert Wodrow, the indefatigable Scottish letter-writer, in a letter to a correspondent in Ireland voiced the views of Scottish Calvinists:



*Thomas Bradbury (1677-1759), a leader among the subscribers at Salters' Hall.*

<sup>69</sup> Thomas Bradbury, *Answer to the reproaches cast on those Dissenting Ministers who subscribed their belief of the Eternal Trinity: in a Letter to John Barrington-Shute, Esq.* (London, 1719), p. 19.

<sup>70</sup> Philip Doddridge was a Congregationalist and a typical non-subscriber. He was invited to be a candidate for the ministry at Girdler's Hall in London, which was an important charge. He declined and wrote to Samuel Clark: "Considering the temper of the people,

I may be mistaken, but could never yet comprehend any plausible reason for non-subscribing, but some real dislike at the doctrine declared in the confession or articles to be subscribed; and in my poor opinion it would be much fairer and more manly to declare that than to quibble about subscribing under pretence of human phrases, imposition, and such threadbare pretexts that have been exposed a hundred times.<sup>71</sup>

The non-subscribers wanted complete freedom of religious inquiry and profession. By the end of the eighteenth century the term “Presbyterian” was equivalent, in England, to speculative liberty. Michael Watts has observed:

The Presbyterian minister, answerable neither to Bishop or ecclesiastical court on the one hand nor to inquisitorial church meeting on the other, was in a relatively privileged position, free as the younger Calamy said, “to pursue his commission to teach whatever Christ commanded”. True, orthodox trustees could, as at Exeter, close their meeting-house doors to heterodox ministers,<sup>72</sup> but for the most part the respectable merchants, manufacturers, and wholesale traders who acted as Presbyterian trustees were as much opposed to “enthusiasm” and were as sympathetic to a rational approach to religion as their ministers. Consequently

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I thought it very probable that I should be required to subscribe, which I was resolved never to do; for as I had been accustomed, under my dear tutor [John Jennings], to that latitude of expression which the scriptures indulge and recommend, I could not resolve upon tying myself up in trammels, and obliging myself to talk in the phrases of assembly’s catechism which . . . would have been necessary there”; Philip Doddridge, *Correspondence and Diary*, (ed.) J. D. Humphreys (5 vols., London, 1829-1831), Vol. 1, p. 355. When his Northampton congregation wished to expel one of its members accused of Arianism, Doddridge strongly protested. Men of this stamp were helpless in the face of heresy. See Roger Thomas, “Philip Doddridge and Liberalism in Religion”, in Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *Philip Doddridge (1702-51): his contribution to English Religion* (London, 1951), p. 149; Robert Strivens, *Philip Doddridge and the Shaping of Evangelical Dissent* (Ashgate, Farnham, 2015).

<sup>71</sup> Thomas M’Crie (ed.), *The Correspondence of the Rev. Robert Wodrow* (3 vols., Wodrow Society, Edinburgh, 1842-3), Vol. 3, p. 59.

<sup>72</sup> The Trustees of the Exeter Churches, before any advice was provided by the parties at Salters’ Hall, had closed their meeting houses to Peirce and Hallet and any that did not hold to Trinitarian doctrine. This led to Peirce producing a volume detailing his view of the controversy: James Peirce, *The Western Inquisition* (London, 1720). Peirce’s treatise was answered, from the orthodox side, by John Enty, *An Answer to Mr. Peirce’s Western Inquisition* (London, 1721). For the controversy at Exeter, see also Murch, *The History of the Presbyterian and General Baptist Churches in the West of England*, pp. 388-437. The author of the latter volume was a Unitarian.

when, in the second half of the eighteenth century, a Presbyterian minister interpreted his commission “to teach whatever Christ commanded” in the light of the theology of Arminius, Arius, or even Socinus rather than Athanasius or Calvin, he might suffer the departure of a large and orthodox section of his congregation, but he was likely to retain the confidence of the select group of laymen who held the deeds of the meeting-house and hence the key to his chief source of income.<sup>73</sup>

Entire ministerial freedom became a fundamental principle of English Presbyterianism. Liberty became progressively the badge of those Presbyterians who were moving firstly towards Arminianism and then to Arianism.<sup>74</sup> The Unitarian view of the importance of Salters’ Hall is given by their leading historian Alexander Gordon, who has written:

The rift at Salters’ Hall will be forever memorable; for then and there the future of the liberties of English Dissent was at high cost secured,<sup>75</sup> [and] The Salters’ Hall decision (in which the dispute as to subscription is a mere episode, however significant) is viewed by Unitarians as the charter of their liberties; and properly so, for while it permitted a Trinitarian congregation to get rid of an Arian minister, it allowed a Unitarian congregation to exercise a similar right.<sup>76</sup>

The drift to Arianism<sup>77</sup> was the consequence of refusing to subscribe to the Westminster Confession and putting liberty of conscience

<sup>73</sup> Watts, *Dissenters*, Vol. 1, pp. 379-380. For a summary of the later history, which makes rather depressing reading, see Alexander H. Drysdale, *History of the Presbyterians in England* (London, 1889), pp. 533-542; C. G. Bolam *et al.*, *English Presbyterians*, pp. 169-174.

<sup>74</sup> Philip Doddridge, who was an Independent opposed to subscription, ran an Academy himself; his lectures were transcribed and circulated among his students in shorthand in order to keep them from the eyes of orthodox ministers among whom they had an “evil reputation”. The result of Doddridge’s labours are plain from the following statistics: “of the fifty-nine former pupils of Doddridge known to be in the Dissenting ministry in 1772, no fewer than fifty-three are found among these liberal-minded men who in that year signed the petition for the relaxation of subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles; of the remaining six, four did not sign because they were Unitarians of the Priestleyan school who wanted a much more radical reform, while two remained to champion the cause of Calvinistic and Athanasian orthodoxy. Moreover twenty-nine of the fifty-three petitioners were serving congregations that were later to become Unitarian.” C. G. Bolam *et al.*, *English Presbyterians*, p. 195.

<sup>75</sup> Alexander Gordon, *Addresses Biographical and Historical* (London, 1922), p. 153. Gordon was a major contributor to the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

<sup>76</sup> Alexander Gordon, *Heads of English Unitarian History* (London, 1895), p. 34.

<sup>77</sup> Michael Watts observes with regard to Isaac Watts that he not only reached a Baxterian position in attempting to mitigate the rigours of Calvinism, but spent his last

in its place. Alexander Drysdale has described the characteristics of the two parties at Salters; Hall: “Those who took the non-subscribers’ side could boast of greater learning, social status and culture in their ranks; but the old fashioned party (the subscribers) as their opponents considered them, included the more saintly and devotional of the ministers and people.”<sup>78</sup>

The abandonment of Presbyterian Church government outside the local congregation, along with complete ministerial freedom, led to the wildest errors and the most unscriptural theories being taught from the pulpit, with the wider Church being powerless to stop the progress of error. Regarding this situation the younger Thomas M’Crie has observed:

There is reason to believe that, had any attempt of this kind been made, it would have been repudiated as downright persecution. Dr. Calamy, having come to Scotland in 1709, attended a meeting of the General Assembly during the trial of a minister for heresy. Being asked what he thought of the proceedings, he replied, “Well, now, in England we should think that this was the Inquisition revived”. . . . The subsequent history of Presbytery refutes this foolish idea of the discipline of Christ’s house, and reveals too well the sad consequences of departing from it. In Scotland, where the Confession has been sustained by the discipline, more or less faithfully administered, heresy has been silenced or suppressed. The English Church, in the absence of all Church discipline, has become a patent theatre for the exhibition of all sorts of doctrinal

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years worrying about the Trinity, praying almost despairingly, “Surely I ought to know the God whom I worship, whether he be one pure and simple being or whether thou art a threefold deity”. See *Dissenters*, Vol. 1, pp. 380-381; Isaac Watts, *Works*, (ed.) George Burder (6 vols., London, 1810), Vol. 4, p. 671; and, importantly, Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (3 vols., London, 1960), Vol. 2, pp. 423-428.

<sup>78</sup> Drysdale, *History of the Presbyterians in England*, p. 506. With regard to the division at Salters’ Hall, Geoffrey Nuttall has written: “More Independents were subscribers than non-subscribers . . . and more Presbyterians were non-subscribers than subscribers; but there was a fair representation of each denomination on both sides, with a number of leading Independents among those who refused to subscribe. The division, in fact, appears to have been largely one of age: those over 40 against those under 40, with those under 40 more impatient in their insistence on freedom from ties with ancient doctrine and more adventurous in their openness to the new century and its pressure for attention to the claims of reason in religion”; see “Why did the English Presbyterians become Unitarians?”, pp. 9-10.

varieties, and where subscription to the articles is a farce, at which all comers may play.<sup>79</sup>

By the time John Love reached London, very many Presbyterian Churches had moved from Calvinism to Arminianism, then from Arminianism to Arianism, and finally to fully-fledged Unitarianism. The younger M'Crie has further written: "the grand mistake to which we must trace the defection of so many of the English Presbyterians was their practical disuse and departure from the Presbyterial government."<sup>80</sup>

### **(ii) The Scots Churches' reaction to the decline in English Presbyterianism**

There had been Scots churches in London from shortly after the Great Ejection. Alexander Shields (1660-1700), who was born in Berwickshire and was an Edinburgh graduate, became the amanuensis to John Owen and was eventually licensed "by Scots Presbyterian Divines"<sup>81</sup> to minister to an English congregation meeting at Embroiderers' Hall in Cheapside; this was one of the London Company Halls which the Presbyterian sympathisers in the city trades made available to nonconformists. Who these Scots divines were that licensed Shields we do not know, but one of them may have been the minister of a Scottish congregation meeting at another of those Company Halls – Founders' Hall in Lothbury. Walter Wilson states that this congregation, which moved to London Wall in 1764, "is the oldest church belonging to that nation in London".<sup>82</sup> By the middle of the eighteenth century there were

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<sup>79</sup> Thomas M'Crie, Jr., *Annals of English Presbytery* (London, 1872), pp. 306-307. M'Crie's citation regarding Edmund Calamy is from Calamy's *Historical Account of My Own Life* (2 vols., London, 1829), Vol. 2, p. 155.

<sup>80</sup> M'Crie, *Annals of English Presbytery*, pp. 305-306.

<sup>81</sup> Cameron, *The Scots Kirk in London*, pp. 17-18. Alexander Shields was a covenanter and a close companion of James Renwick who, following the accession of William III, concluded that separation from the Church of Scotland could not be justified. He was the author of *A Hind let Loose*. For biographical details, see H. MacPherson, *A Cameronian Philosopher, Alexander Shields* (Edinburgh, 1932); the article on Shields by Sherman Isbell in *DSCHT*, pp. 772-773; and Matthew Vogan, "Alexander Shields, the Revolution Settlement, and the Unity of the Visible Church", Part I, *Scottish Reformation Society Historical Journal*, Vol. 2 (2012), pp. 109-146; Part II, *ibid.*, Vol. 3 (2013), pp. 109-157.

<sup>82</sup> Walter Wilson, *The History and Antiquities of the Dissenting Churches and Meeting Houses in London, Westminster, and Southwark; including the Lives of their Ministers from the Rise of Nonconformity to the present time* (4 vols., London, 1808-14), Vol. 2, p. 460 (cited afterwards as *Dissenting Churches* with volume and page number). This four-volume work by Wilson is

five congregations in London that regarded themselves as in connection with the Church of Scotland. These were the congregations at London Wall, Swallow Street, Crown Court, Peter Street, and Broad Street, Wapping.<sup>83</sup> Whilst they considered themselves as being in connection with the Church of Scotland, the reality was that, like the English Presbyterians, they existed in a kind of independency. They were Presbyterian merely at the congregational level. As John Black has observed, “The Established Church of Scotland . . . by its very constitution was precluded from exercising jurisdiction in England, and never attempted it”.<sup>84</sup>

Before the decision to oppose creed subscription at Salters’ Hall, relations between the Scots and the English Presbyterian were remarkably fraternal. They exchanged pulpits, delivered lectures, and were associated together in the Salters’ Hall Synod, 1719.<sup>85</sup> Ministers of the Scots Presbyterian Churches in the metropolis united with the English Dissenters in their witness regarding historic Protestantism. Thus Robert Fleming of Founders’ Hall headed the Protestant Dissenting Deputies when they presented an address of congratulation to Queen Anne in 1707 upon the occasion of the Union. Many of the churches that were later occupied by Scots Presbyterians were during one period in their history originally in the possession of English Presbyterians, Independents, General or Particular Baptists, or Calvinistic Methodists. Moreover, there are several examples

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an invaluable source for the history of the nonconformist churches in London. Kenneth Black has written concerning Wilson, that he “was born about 1781 and died in 1847; he lived, therefore, sufficiently near the times of which he wrote to be able to speak with authority. Bred to the law, he became a bookseller in partnership with Maxwell of Bell Yard, Temple Bar, and in 1806 took a book-shop at the Mewsgate, Charing Cross. After a time he conceived the project of compiling a history of the dissenting churches in and around London, and in 1808 issued the first two volumes, the third and fourth following in 1810 and 1814 respectively. At this period of his life he became possessed of a considerable income, and entered at the Inner Temple, but he does not seem to have practised.” Kenneth M. Black, *The Scots Churches in England* (Edinburgh, 1906), p. 5.

<sup>83</sup> The history of these congregations can be found in Black, *The Scots Churches in England*; Cameron, *The Scots Kirk in London*; and the volumes of Wilson’s *Dissenting Churches*.

<sup>84</sup> John Black, *Presbyterianism in England in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1887), p. 27.

<sup>85</sup> The three London Scots Presbyterian ministers at Salters’ Hall, when the issue of the advice to Exeter was debated in 1719, were all subscribers. They were James Anderson of Swallow Street, John Cumming of Founders’ Hall, and Patrick Russel of Crown Court, Covent Garden. See F. J. Powicke, “The Salters’ Hall Controversy”, p. 114.

of an English Presbyterian minister being the pastor of a Scots church,<sup>86</sup> while Scots pastors of English churches were numerous.<sup>87</sup>

A marked change in these fraternal relationships occurred when the English Presbyterians began drifting into heterodoxy. This drift forced the London Scots in 1772 into forming themselves into a Presbytery as a matter of self-defence in order both to uphold evangelical truth and maintain reasonable discipline. Alexander Drysdale details the reason for the formation of the Presbytery in these terms:

When the large and growing body of the non-subscribing Presbyterian ministers were insisting that freedom from all subscription to creeds was the ground of their nonconformity, and was the characteristic principle of their Presbyterian Protestantism, – the Scottish ministers, feeling repelled, like their English subscriptionist brethren, kept themselves more and more aloof from the heterodox party; and in self-defence created what came to be known as “the Scots Presbytery” in London.<sup>88</sup>

The moving spirit behind the formation of the Presbytery was Henry Hunter<sup>89</sup> who, on 11th August 1771, was inducted as the minister



*Henry Hunter, the first Clerk of the Scots Presbytery.*

<sup>86</sup> The second minister of Founders' Hall was Jeremiah Marsden (1626-1684), who was born in Coley, near Halifax. He was educated at Manchester Grammar School and ejected in 1662 from East Ardsley, near Wakefield. For biographical details see Samuel Palmer, *The Nonconformist's Memorial* (3 vols., London 1802-3), Vol. 3, pp. 421-423; Bryan Dale, *Yorkshire Puritanism and Early Nonconformity* (Bradford, 1909), pp. 100-104; A. G. Matthews, *Calamy Revised* (Oxford, 1934), pp. 339-340.

<sup>87</sup> William Smith, the minister of the Silver Street congregation, is an instance of a Scot being the pastor of an English Church.

<sup>88</sup> Drysdale, *History of the Presbyterians in England*, pp. 556-557.

<sup>89</sup> See the appendix to this article for a biographical account of Hunter, who played such a crucial role in preserving Presbyterian orthodoxy in the Scottish Churches in London.

at London Wall in succession to Robert Lawson who had died four months earlier. Within twelve months of Hunter's coming to London, a Presbytery was formed. Under his leadership, the Scots Presbytery became a rallying ground for those who were determined to maintain evangelical principles, wholesome discipline, opposition to Arianism, and commitment to the Westminster Standards.

On 5th August 1772 seven ministers assembled to form the Scots Presbytery at Hunter's London Wall Church. They were the ministers of the five churches that regarded themselves as being in connection with the Church of Scotland: John Patrick of the Peter Street congregation, who was chosen to be the Moderator; David Muir of Broad Street, Wapping; Dr. John Trotter of Swallow Street; Thomas Oswald of Crown Court; and Henry Hunter. The other two ministers at the meeting were George Turnbull of Hammersmith and William Smith of Silver Street. Little is known about the Hammersmith congregation or its minister. It does not appear to have been a congregation in connection with the Church of Scotland. Turnbull was Moderator of the Scots Presbytery in 1781. The Church at Silver Street, of which William Smith had been the minister from 1770, was a union in 1747 of two English Dissenting causes, a Presbyterian congregation founded by Lazarus Seaman and Thomas Jacomb who were succeeded by John Howe, and an Independent congregation founded by Philip Nye, of which Daniel Neal, the historian of the Puritans, eventually became the minister.<sup>90</sup> Smith was a Scot, educated at both Marischal College, Aberdeen, and Edinburgh University, who associated this old English congregation with the Scots Presbytery. The first action of the newly-formed Presbytery was to appoint Hunter as their Clerk.<sup>91</sup> The remainder of the first meeting was taken up with consideration of whether they would approve a

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<sup>90</sup> For a detailed history of these two congregations and their ministers, see Wilson, *Dissenting Churches*, Vol. 3, pp. 3-115; Cameron, *The Scots Kirk in London*, pp. 40-42.

<sup>91</sup> This was a position that Henry Hunter held until his death in 1802. His successor as Clerk could not find the Presbytery's Minute Book. It appears that in his last three years, when Hunter was in declining health, the book had been mislaid. Fortunately, his scroll minutes (the notes he took at the meetings) were discovered. On 4th January 1804 the new Clerk was instructed to purchase a minute book for engrossing the minutes of the Presbytery as far back as the committee could find the authentic documents. Hence, the entries in the first volume of the minutes of the Scots Presbytery, covering the period from 5th August 1772 to 14th August 1799 with occasional interruptions, are not the original minutes but a reconstruction based on Hunter's notes of the meetings. The three volumes of the Scots Presbytery Minutes have never been published and are kept at Westminster College, Cambridge, where the writer had access to them and was able to photograph the minutes relating to John Love's period in London.



divinity student, Charles Stewart, being taken on trials for licence. This historic first minute of the Scots Presbytery in London which reveals their care in dealing with men for licence reads as follows:

The Presbytery having unanimously elected the Rev. Mr. Henry Hunter to be their Clerk: There was produced to them a letter and recommendation in favour of Mr. Charles Stewart, student in divinity, in order to his being taken upon trials. Several other letters in support of this recommendation having been received from respectable ministers of the Gospel in Scotland by the Rev. Messrs Oswald and Hunter and by the Rev. Dr. Trotter were also produced and read. The whole being taken into consideration together with the personal application of Mr. Stewart himself it was unanimously agreed to take the said Mr. Stewart upon trials. The 51st Psalm was accordingly appointed to him as the subject of a lecture. Ephesians Chap 1st verse 7 as the subject of a homily – and for his exegesis *An bona opera necessaria sint ad salutem* – [Whether good works are necessary to salvation] with Acts 15 v 6 as the subject of an exercise and addition. The Presbytery having nominated next Tuesday, the 12 inst. when they should receive Mr. Stewart’s lecture and homily they concluded with prayer and adjourned to the 12th.<sup>92</sup>

In the preamble of the reconstituted minute book it is said, “The Scots’ Presbytery in London, since their first formation as an ecclesiastical body, have conformed strictly to the worship and government; inviolably maintained the faith and spirit; and legally exercised the powers, of the parent Church in the land where Providence hath cast their lot”.<sup>93</sup> The move to form a Presbytery committed to the Westminster Standards was opposed by the English Presbyterians with Arian sympathies who were against any form of creedal subscription. Meeting at the Dr. Williams Library towards the end of 1772 they disowned their Scotch brethren because they deemed them “not Dissenters upon principles of liberty”. As Drysdale observes: “and certainly they were not, if by ‘principles of liberty’ were meant that novel

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<sup>92</sup> MS. “Scots Presbytery Minutes”, Minute of 5th August 1772, pp. 7-8.

<sup>93</sup> MS. “Scots Presbytery Minutes”, pp. 3-4. Alexander Drysdale, in citing this preamble, dates it as part of the first minute of 5th August 1772. Drysdale, *History of the Presbyterians in England*, p. 557. This is incorrect; it is a preamble written over thirty years later when the first minute book was reconstructed after Henry Hunter’s death.

notion of a speculative freedom for ministers on matters of doctrinal opinion which was to put congregations entirely at the mercy of their preachers, and was opposed to all the meeting-house trusts, except perhaps a very few that may have been doctrinally open ones.”<sup>94</sup> Andrew Kippis, an English Presbyterian who had renounced the Calvinism in which he had been brought up and was now inclined to Socinianism,<sup>95</sup> has described quite plainly the state of the English Presbyterians the same year the Scots Presbytery was formed. He writes:

The Presbyterians in particular, with regard to their notions of ecclesiastical power and government, are a different set of men from the Presbyterians of the last century. The English Presbyterians of this age have discarded all ideas of parochial sessions, classes, provincial synods, and general assemblies. They disclaim all coercive jurisdictions in spiritual concerns; and believe that every distinct and separate congregation ought to be the sole director of its own religious affairs, and that no other society or body of men has a right to control it or call it to account. In short, except their denial of any scriptural distinction between the office of a Bishop and a Presbyter, and their uniting in the same mode of worship, they retain little of Presbyterianism, properly so called, but the name.<sup>96</sup>

Due to the loss of the original Minute Book a detailed account of how the Scots Presbytery was formed is now not possible. The Preamble to the reconstructed Minute Book states:

We regret exceedingly that the memorial of its first formation and the proceedings consequent thereupon, are not extant: and that many which have been preserved exist in an imperfect and mutilated state. We are, however, satisfied that the collection even in its present state will demonstrate our steadfast adherence to the constitution of the Church of Scotland and may serve as a guide to future proceedings.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Drysdale, *History of the Presbyterians in England*, p. 557.

<sup>95</sup> Andrew Kippis (1725-1795) held rather advanced views for many of the dissenters of his day; E. E. Cleal states “he was the first of the Dorking ministers to fall into the Arian errors”, *The Story of Congregationalism in Surrey* (London, 1908), p. 358. See also the article on Kippis in *ODNB*.

<sup>96</sup> Andrew Kippis, *A Vindication of the Protestant Dissenting Ministers* (2nd edn., London, 1773), pp. 43-44.

<sup>97</sup> MS. “Scots Presbytery Minutes”, pp. 4-5.

When Love became a member of the Presbytery fifteen years later there were around fifteen churches connected with the Presbytery. Denominational barriers were low and ministers who would not have been in the same Presbytery in Scotland were members together in the London Scots Presbytery. The ministerial members of the Presbytery came from three types of congregation: the majority were from congregations who regarded themselves as part of the Church of Scotland that was located in England; a second group, who were considered as visitors to the Presbytery but seem to have taken a full part in its proceedings, were the ministers of the two London congregations of Seceders, both Burger and Anti-Burgher; the third group was comprised of the ministers of English Congregations which had chosen to be associated with the Presbytery. The congregation from which John Love had received a call to be their minister was in this third category. Although fifteen congregations had a link to the Presbytery, in the 1790s the number of ministers that attended its meetings seldom exceeded six.

### 3. John Love's ordination

As noted earlier, it is not clear when exactly John Love left Greenock, or when he went to London, or what he was doing during this fourteen month period in which there is no record of his correspondence.<sup>98</sup> Whilst we know that his desire to obtain ordination was the major reason that took him to London, we do not know why he was drawn to the small congregation on Crispin Street, in the Spitalfields area of London, beyond that a vacancy had occurred in 1787 when the previous minister, Alexander Simpson, had accepted a call to a Dissenting congregation at Alnwick in Northumberland. The first reference of a call to Love appears in the Scots Presbytery Minutes of a meeting on 4th July 1787 held in the Crispin Street Church, when those in attendance were Charles Lorimer the Moderator; John Patrick the minister of Peter Street, Soho; Thomas Rutledge the minister of Broad Street, Wapping; and Henry Hunter, the

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<sup>98</sup> It is most pointedly with respect to this period of Love's career that one suspects Peter MacBride edited Love's *Letters*. Not only sections that referred to personal matters but even entire letters may have been omitted; at this point there is a gap of just over a year in the letters. In the printed volume of Love's *Letters*, which are spiritual and devotional in character, the first two hundred letters are in historical sequence dating from 1779, when he was twenty-two, to 1824, the year before he died. The last letter sent from Greenock is dated 7th March 1786; the next letter in the volume is from London and dated 25th April 1787.

minister of the London Wall Congregation and the Clerk of the Presbytery.<sup>99</sup> The minute begins:

At a Pro-re-nata meeting of the Scots Presbytery in order to moderate in a call from the Church in this place to the Rev. John Love to become their Pastor in the room of Dr. Simpson deceased.<sup>100</sup> After sermon by Dr. Hunter the call to Mr. Love was produced and read and the agreement of the congregation with only two dissenting voices. Mr. Love's letter of acceptance was also produced and read. Mr. Love then produced extracts of his licence and certificates in favour of his character and talents signed by many reputable ministers in Scotland which were unanimously approved of. Resolved: That the Scots Presbytery meet at Broad Street and that Mr. Love be desired to preach before them at that meeting, notice having previously been given from the pulpit of Crispin Street.<sup>101</sup>

The Presbytery met again six days later on 10th July 1787 at the Broad Street Church. The ministers present were the same as at the previous meeting, along with two elders. The relevant sections of the minute are as follows:

After prayer and a sermon by Mr. Love . . . an application from the Church in Crispin Street to carry their call to Mr. Love into effect as speedily as possible. Resolved: That Mr. Love be appointed to preach again before the Presbytery on Thursday the 19th at Crispin Street from 1 John 2:20 and previous notice thereof being given to all concerned.<sup>102</sup>

In accordance with the decision of the Presbytery, John Love preached before them on 19th July 1787. There were five ministers and two elders present at this sederunt of the Scots Presbytery; the ministers present were the same men who had been at the earlier meetings but now

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<sup>99</sup> For biographical sketches of these men, along with one of William Smith, see the appendix to this article.

<sup>100</sup> This is a rather curious reference to Alexander Simpson. He was alive in 1787 at the time of Love's call to Crispin Street; his death did not occur until 6th January 1793. (See Robert Small, *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church* (2 vols., Edinburgh, 1904), Vol. 2, p. 387.) He had died, however, by the time the minutes were reconstructed by a Presbytery Committee in 1804 and they appear to have noted the fact of his passing in the minute. See Cameron, *The Scots Kirk in London*, pp. 244-245.

<sup>101</sup> MS. "Scots Presbytery Minutes", Minute of 4th July 1787, pp. 75-76.

<sup>102</sup> MS. "Scots Presbytery Minutes", Minute of 10th July 1787, pp. 77-78.

with the addition of William Smith, the minister of a church on Silver Street. At this July meeting of the Scots Presbytery they resolved that the ordination of John Love to the Gospel ministry should take place on Wednesday 22nd August 1787 in the presence of the Crispin Street congregation.

When the Presbytery met on the 22nd August the same five ministers were again present; however, on this occasion there were no elders. Charles Lorimer was the Moderator of the Presbytery. The reconstructed minute is exceedingly brief. After constituting the Presbytery and detailing the members present the minute reads as follows:

They proceeded to the ordination of Mr. Love according to the order prescribed. Mr. Lorimer began the service and Mr. Smith gave the charge. Mr. Love being then solemnly ordained by prayer and the imposition of hands, the right hand of fellowship was then given him [unclear text] by the brethren. The sederunt was closed with prayer.<sup>103</sup>

Whilst the minute correctly details that William Smith gave the charge to both minister and congregation, it omits to record that Thomas Rutledge was the preacher at Love's ordination. Both the elders and the Crispin Street congregation were clearly very pleased that they had secured a minister<sup>104</sup> and were eager that both Rutledge's sermon and Smith's charge be printed as soon as possible. To this proposal the two ministers somewhat reluctantly acquiesced and a small volume was quickly published.<sup>105</sup> Rutledge preached from 2 Corinthians 4:5, "For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake". The printed sermon was Rutledge's first publication. He outlined the structure of his sermon in these terms:

<sup>103</sup> MS. "Scots Presbytery Minutes", Minute of 22nd August 1787, p. 80.

<sup>104</sup> Alexander Simpson, their previous minister, had left after just three years and prior to that there had been a twenty-year vacancy.

<sup>105</sup> Before William Smith's charge was a comment by him stating: "The author of the following Charge was obliged, at a very short notice, to take this part of the work upon him. For which reason he could by no means think of giving his consent to the publication of it, in the very imperfect form in which it was obliged to be given at that time. Being unable, however, to resist the pressing solicitations of the Managers appointed by the Society to publish the Sermon, he hath, with some additions, resigned to them also a copy of the Charge. And should it hereafter, by the blessing of Almighty God, in any measure prove useful to Ministers or People, the writer will not repent the giving up of his own opinion to that of his too partial Friends." (*Ordination Sermon*, printed before p. 33.)

In these words we have, FIRST, A duty recommended by the example of the Apostle viz. Preaching the Gospel – SECONDLY, What ought to be the subject matter of our preaching, namely, “not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord.” – And THIRDLY, we have the rank or station in which all ministers of the gospel are to reckon themselves, viz. that of “servants for Jesus sake.” – On each of these points we shall make a few plain and pertinent observations;- and then conclude with some APPLICATION, suitable to the occasion on which we are this day met together.<sup>106</sup>

In the light of how badly the Crispin Street congregation would very quickly begin to treat their new minister, the thrust of Rutledge’s application section of the sermon is rather poignant. Towards the conclusion of the sermon he said:

Having been for some time without a settled pastor, and unwilling to be longer deprived of the benefit of a stated ministry, you have used your laudable endeavours to have the want supplied. “For the work of the ministry, and for the edifying of this part of the body of Christ,” you have chosen the Reverend John Love, a person who has been regularly brought up to the sacred profession; one who having gone through his course of academical studies, and also the various parts of trial appointed by the rules and forms of that national church of which he was a member, and to the service of which he was educated, was approved of, was judged qualified for the holy ministry, and by that church licensed to preach the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ. Him you have called, by a great majority of the elders and members of the congregation, to be your teacher in the Lord. Your call has been accepted, sustained, and confirmed; and, by your desire, we are this day assembled in order to set him apart to this sacred office, and important charge. Receive him then as you ought; receive him in the Lord, not only as your minister and teacher, but also as your spiritual father and instructor, your friend and counsellor. Love him, cherish him, and “esteem him very highly for his works sake.” With readiness and cheerfulness act the part of spiritual children, hearkening to his instructions, giving heed to his counsels, and providing liberally for his temporal wants, according to your abilities, knowing it to be

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<sup>106</sup> *Ordination Sermon*, p. 2.

a divine injunction, that “they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel.” By making his external circumstances easy, he will be able to discharge his duty to you with more alacrity, and with greater usefulness; for surely no man, can set both heart and hand to a work by which he can barely live. Indigence is a mighty pressure upon genius; and I need hardly tell you what is known to all, that there are but very few of that class of men, who are here denominated dissenting ministers, who, after supplying their absolute necessities, have to boast of an overplus, arising from their professional income. – This I have only hinted at. Your piety and love for your Pastor will render more needless. But what must crown his joy, and prove a source of the most permanent felicity to yourselves, will be his beholding your holy life and godly conversation in the world, and your walking worthy of the Christian character.

Let me remind you, my brethren that the whole duty lies not upon your minister alone. You must not only encourage and strengthen him for the work, but you must also bear a part therein, lest his labours among you should prove fruitless and without effect. Nor can you more essentially help and assist him in the good work to which, under God, you have called him, than by remembering him daily in your prayers and intercessions at a throne of grace. Ministers have a service to perform for which the ablest and the best of them are but ill qualified; nay, utterly insufficient, without aid and support from on high. How needful, how becoming then to beseech God that he will enable them to execute so great and so important a trust with usefulness and fidelity. That you pray for your ministers we require, not only as a mark of your love and piety, but as a duty which Heaven hath commanded, and which the safety of your souls demands: for know assuredly, that the more you pray for your ministers, the more you will profit by them. When you are earnest and diligent in this duty, you edify yourselves; you help them to study, to pray, and to preach for your eternal advantage.

Let me also intreat you, my dear auditors, to take heed lest, by your negligence and inattention, you render abortive all the labours of your ministers for the salvation of your souls. Our sermons, poor as they are, cost us both labour and anxiety; do not

then use them as David did the water of Bethlehem, which his valiant men brought him at the hazard of their lives, that is, spill them on the ground, lest from thence, like the blood of Abel, they cry out against you. Whilst your ministers act according to their commission, and “declare unto you all the counsel of God,” you cannot despise their work without slighting your Saviour, and doing despite unto the Spirit of Grace. Shall they importune God for mercy to you, and will you refuse and reject it? Shall your souls be precious in their eyes, and they be vile in your own? Will you, by your iniquities, turn the prayers of your ministers into a curse, and their sermons into “the savour of death unto death?” Shall they open for you the door of life, and will you shut it against yourselves? Shall they in Christ’s stead beseech you to be reconciled to God, and will you not hearken unto their reasonable request? If you will not love your ministers, yet hate not yourselves; and when the herald of the gospel opens his lips, shut not your ears.<sup>107</sup>

William Smith had the task of giving a charge to both the minister and the congregation. In his charge to the Crispin Street congregation he made the following remarks which, like those made by Rutledge, once they were in print, must have been a stark reminder to them a few years later of the less than satisfactory way that they had treated Love so soon after his settlement among them.

My dear Friends, the person whom you have now had ordained among you, is the object of your voluntary election. You will then receive his ministrations with a prejudice of the right sort; you will ever be ready to put the best construction upon all his words and all his actions. So long as he continues to preach the pure gospel of the blessed God, strengthen his hands by every act of kindness, and follow him most affectionately and steadily, insofar as he is a follower of his Master Christ Jesus, who is the only perfect pattern of moral excellence.

Next to your minister’s comfortable subsistence, let me beseech you to watch over and defend his character and good name. Alas, Sirs! We are but men like yourselves; you cannot therefore, as long as we are here, expect to find us perfect, either in word or deed.

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<sup>107</sup> *Ordination Sermon*, pp. 26-30.



I trust, however, with respect to your minister, that as long as it shall please God to spare him among you, he will study, in life and conversation, to be a pattern to his flock. If, therefore, any disadvantageous reports should arise (for we live in an evil-judging and backbiting age), it is your duty to trace them to their source; and if ill founded, to repel, with becoming warmth, the injury which is done you, through the wounding and maiming of your Pastor's reputation. But if (which I hope shall never, or seldom, be the case) there should be anything blame-worthy in your minister's conduct, the scripture way, and the best and most Christian way, is, to go in the spirit of meekness and real love, and represent it to himself; and I will venture to add, so far from being ill received, every conscientious man will take it as an act of the sincerest friendship. Thus only, I am sure, can you preserve his usefulness, at the same time that you afford him an opportunity to reform.<sup>108</sup>

Being settled in a fixed charge had been John Love's desire since his licensing by his home Presbytery of the Church of Scotland almost nine years earlier. However, a pastorate in his native Scotland had not been possible due to his outspoken commitment to evangelical Calvinism. The day on which he was ordained as the minister of the Crispin Street congregation was a Wednesday; his preaching ministry among them began therefore on the following Sabbath – 26th August 1787. It was an old English congregation that had associated itself with the London Scots Presbytery, and, unknown to its new minister, a significant proportion of this small congregation were far from convinced with respect to Presbyterian polity. He would be their pastor for the next decade; these years would be the most difficult of Love's ministerial career, preaching to a congregation the majority of which did not seem to have appreciated his ministry. In the published volume of his letters, the earliest reference to the state of affairs in London is written four months after his settlement. Writing to his parents he reflects on his prayers to see his congregation built up:

The state of multitudes here is very deplorable, because they have broken loose from all regard to the means of salvation. It would be mercy with God to drive them to his ordinances, though it were

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<sup>108</sup> *Ordination Sermon*, pp. 45-46.

with raging pestilence. It is, however, part of my work to deal with God in prayer, that he may incline the hearts of perishing sinners to resort to the places where his saving power may meet with them; though the dead assemblies in Scotland are a proof of how little value a mere crowd of people (however regular) may be as to the great ends of divine ordinances.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> *Letters of John Love*, p. 76. Letter dated 18th December 1787.

**APPENDIX**  
**BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF THE MINISTERS IN THE**  
**SCOTS PRESBYTERY THAT ORDAINED JOHN LOVE**

**Charles Lorimer (1722-1806)<sup>110</sup>**

Charles Lorimer was the Moderator of the Scots Presbytery that ordained John Love. He may have been connected with a Lorimer family in Preston, Lancashire. The editor of *The Admission Register of the Manchester (Free Grammar) School* links him with a family who were grocers in Preston.<sup>111</sup> He attended Edinburgh University where a friend and fellow student was John Erskine, the future leader of the Evangelical party in the Church of Scotland.<sup>112</sup> Normally it took six years to complete divinity training at Edinburgh University which commenced after the student had finished his arts degree. Erskine, who had studied for only one academic year before obtaining a licence to preach in Church of Scotland pulpits, wrote to Lorimer on 29th March 1743, whilst he was still a student, explaining that under certain circumstances, “means may be used to get passed [*sic*] trials without spending six years at the divinity hall”.<sup>113</sup> Lorimer does not appear ever to have had a charge in Scotland.

The next reference with respect to Lorimer’s career is his settlement as the minister of the Presbyterian Church in Wiltown Bluff (properly Wilton), near Charleston, in South Carolina, at the latest by 1750 – the congregation was called the “Scots Church” or the “Scots meeting”. He was a member of a Presbytery meeting in Charleston in 1751.<sup>114</sup> The Carolinas were a favourite destination for expatriate

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<sup>110</sup> These dates have been deduced from the record of his death in *The Scots Magazine and Edinburgh Literary Miscellany*, Vol. 68 (1806), p. 808, which states his age at death on 3rd October 1806 to have been eighty-four.

<sup>111</sup> See Jeremiah Finch Smith, *The Admission Register of the Manchester School with some notices of the more distinguished scholars* (3 vols., Chetham Society, Manchester, 1866-74), Vol. 1, p. 78. Finch Smith links Charles Lorimer’s publication, *A Letter to the Corn Committee on the Importation of Rough Rice as a Supplement to Wheat Flour* (London, 1796), referred to in the *Biographical Dictionary of Living Authors* (London, 1816), p. 209, to a Lorimer family in Preston. As he provides no evidence for the linkage beyond the Lorimer surname, the identification cannot be regarded as certain. In addition the *Biographical Dictionary of Living Authors* incorrectly attributes Charles Lorimer’s booklet to a Rev. William Lorimer.

<sup>112</sup> See Jonathan Yeager, *Enlightened Evangelicalism: The Life and Thought of John Erskine* (Oxford, 2011), p. 38.

<sup>113</sup> Yeager, *Enlightened Evangelicalism*, p. 38.

<sup>114</sup> George Howe, *History of the Church in South Carolina* (2 vols., Columbia, 1870-83), Vol. 1, p. 271.

Scots.<sup>115</sup> The first Presbytery in the state, about which very little is known, appears to have been set up by Scots in the 1730s. Presbyterian congregations in the Carolinas that were without a pastor would frequently appeal to Scotland for a minister.<sup>116</sup> Some of the issues that troubled the settlers were often the ones troubling the home churches. The Charleston churches had to deal with the issue of some ministers being unwilling to subscribe unreservedly to the Westminster Standards. One minister was charged with saying that “Peirce of Exeter had as good right to hold his views of the Trinity as they had to hold the truth”.<sup>117</sup>

Lorimer was at first highly regarded in Wilton. George Howe, citing the journal of an expatriate Scot, Archibald Simpson, writes that in March 1754, “Mr. Lorimer gave in [to the Presbytery] a demission of his charge in Charles-town, which was sustained and the relation dissolved.” It appears that he had not retained the popularity which first attended him as pastor of this church. Then Simpson adds: “Mr. Lorimer about three years ago, was most cried up and esteemed, but is now not able to continue his ministry with any comfort and satisfaction.”<sup>118</sup> Lorimer then became the minister of the congregation at John’s Island near Charleston on 18th April 1755 following the death of Thomas Murray.<sup>119</sup> Simpson went to see Lorimer at John’s Island shortly after his induction; on his second visit he says that “he was kindly received by Mr. Lorimer and his newly married wife”. This is a reference to Jane Warrender, the daughter of Sir John Warrender and his wife Harriet Johnson whose father was Patrick Johnson, the Lord Provost of Edinburgh. Sir John’s father and Jane’s grandfather was Sir George Warrender, Baronet, the Lieutenant-Colonel of the Berwickshire Militia.<sup>120</sup> How Lorimer met Jane Warrender from a titled family, and how she came to America five years after Lorimer, is unclear.

As the minister of John’s Island, Lorimer was still a member of the Charleston Presbytery and took a full part in its activities. In April 1755

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<sup>115</sup> See Douglas F. Kelly and Caroline S. Kelly, *Carolina Scots* (Seventeen Thirty-Nine Publications, 1998).

<sup>116</sup> See Howe, *South Carolina*, p. 272. The Scottish Burgher Seceders formed a Presbytery of the Carolinas in 1802. See John M’Kerrow, *History of the Secession Church* (2nd enlarged edn., Glasgow, 1841), pp. 402-408.

<sup>117</sup> Howe, *South Carolina*, pp. 187-188, 190.

<sup>118</sup> Howe, *South Carolina*, p. 271.

<sup>119</sup> Howe, *South Carolina*, p. 279.

<sup>120</sup> William Courthope (ed.), *Debrett’s Baronetage of England* (7th edn., London, 1835), p. 159.

he preached at the ordination of Archibald Simpson and was a member of the Presbytery that ordained John Alison in May 1759.<sup>121</sup> Lorimer, along with another eleven Presbyterian ministers, in January 1760 presented “their humble address” to the Governor of the state following the militia’s safe return from their successful expedition against the Cherokee nation, giving themselves the designation: “We be his majesty’s loyal subjects, the Ministers of the Church in this province, having ordination from the established Church of Scotland.”<sup>122</sup> Sadly, as Howe points out, their hopes of peace with the Indians was a delusion. Shortly afterwards the Cherokees fell upon defenceless settlements, and men, women, and children were cruelly murdered.<sup>123</sup>

Lorimer, at the age of forty-two, embarked on a ship to return to England in July 1764.<sup>124</sup> We do not know why he left his charge; it may have been due to the obvious danger to which he and his wife were exposed from the Native Americans. His remaining career is also unclear. It seems that he was in the south of England and he may have been the minister of a small English Presbyterian congregation. Alternatively (and this seems to the present writer more probable), having married into a titled family he may after his return to England have lived in retirement in consequence of his wife’s wealth. This seems to be substantiated when both he and Mrs. Lorimer were separately subscribers to Thomas Rutledge’s volume of sermons.<sup>125</sup> The list of subscribers gives their address as Shooter’s Hill, Kent.<sup>126</sup> He appears in the late 1780s, when he was in his mid-sixties, as a member of the London Scots Presbytery in which he took a full part in its affairs. This is itself quite instructive as it indicates the Presbytery accepted its members upon their personal standing rather than on an ecclesiastical standing as ministers of a congregation.<sup>127</sup>

Lorimer, though well placed himself, was clearly a man with a social conscience, and at a time when England was at war with France

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<sup>121</sup> Howe, *South Carolina*, pp. 275, 277.

<sup>122</sup> Howe, *South Carolina*, pp. 305-306.

<sup>123</sup> Howe, *South Carolina*, p. 306.

<sup>124</sup> *South Carolina Gazette*, cited in Howe, *South Carolina*, p. 321.

<sup>125</sup> See the list of subscribers in Thomas Rutledge, *Practical Sermons on Select Passages of Scripture* (London, 1794), p. xxiv.

<sup>126</sup> Shooter’s Hill is now a district in South East London within the Royal Borough of Greenwich. It borders the London Borough of Bexley and lies north of Eltham and south of Woolwich.

<sup>127</sup> Black, *The Scots Churches in England*, p. 181.

and food prices had risen beyond the reach of the poor, he published in 1796 a booklet containing a letter he had written to the authorities with a scheme to alleviate the situation. The booklet was entitled *A Letter to the Corn Committee on the Importation of Rough Rice as a Supplement to Wheat Flour*; it was advertised in *The Times* on 29th March 1796. In a review of Lorimer's *Letter* the writer observes:

The endeavours of every individual to lessen the hardships of the poor during the existing dearness of corn, are entitled to the most candid attention; and such, we think, ought to be paid to the reasons given by Mr. Lorimer for advising an importation of rice in the bulk. It is, indeed, not a little singular, that the consumption of this excellent and highly nutritive grain is not at all times more general among the poor, but especially at this juncture. Our author strongly recommends the trial of rice and wheat flour mixed.<sup>128</sup>

A decade later Lorimer was living at Fountainbridge, near Edinburgh, where he died in 1806 at the age of eighty-four.<sup>129</sup>

### Henry Hunter (1741-1802)

Henry Hunter<sup>130</sup> was one of John Love's closest associates in London; he was born at Culross in Perthshire. His parents recognized that he was an intelligent child and, though they were relatively poor, he was sent, at the age of thirteen, to Edinburgh University. The resolution of his parents was strengthened, if not suggested, by his godly grandfather who took delight in conversing with him.<sup>131</sup> In 1758, at the age of seventeen, he

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<sup>128</sup> *The Critical Review or Annals of Literature; Extended and Improved, by a Society of Gentlemen*, Vol. 17 (1796), pp. 460-461.

<sup>129</sup> *The Scots Magazine and Edinburgh Literary Miscellany*, Vol. 68 (1806), p. 808. A copy of Lorimer's will is in the National Archives of Scotland – catalogue reference number: Prob 11/1541.

<sup>130</sup> There is more biographical information of Hunter than any of the other members of the Presbytery that ordained John Love. An extensive biographical account and a critical assessment of his writings prefaces the first volume of the two-volume set of sermons published after his death, Henry Hunter, *Sermons and Miscellaneous Pieces* (2 vols., London, 1804), Vol. 1, pp. i-lxxx (cited afterwards as *Biographical Account*). In addition, there are detailed accounts in Morison, *Fathers and Founders*, pp. 478-487, and Wilson, *Dissenting Churches*, Vol. 2, pp. 503-512, along with brief accounts in Hew Scott, *Fasti*, Vol. 1, p. 167, *DNB*, and *ODNB*.

<sup>131</sup> *Biographical Account*, p. iii. His biographer adds: "The impressions made by this good old man, were the impressions of piety and religion; and to the latest period of his subsequent life, Dr. Hunter never recalled his image to memory without paying the tribute of his warm affections, and not unfrequently of his tears."

became tutor to Claude Irvine Boswell, later Lord Balmuto, and then to the family of the Earl of Dundonald at Culross Abbey. He was licensed to preach in May 1764 by the Church of Scotland's Dunfermline Presbytery, having passed the several trials with great ability.

Previously to this, when he was nineteen, his mind had been agitated by the apprehensions of not proving worthy of the sacred character he was about to assume, and he considered finishing his theological studies and entering the army. The solicitations and encouragement of his friends, however, overcame his scruples, and persuaded him to adhere to his first resolution. As a young man his preaching was marked by an unusual degree of popularity. He possessed very considerable pulpit talents and it was not long before he had several offers of a settlement. The West Kirk at Edinburgh, and the Laigh Kirk, at Paisley, vacant by the death of Dr. Muir, were both offered to him; but he declined them in favour of the Kirk of South Leith, where he was ordained minister on 9th January 1766. The following May he married Margaret Charters, daughter of Thomas Charters, minister of Inverkeithing, to whom he had been attached for many years. Shortly after his settlement in Leith his grandfather died. Hunter was able to spend an evening with him and records the time in a letter:

A good part of the evening I spent with my grandfather, whose company I always delight in. He is within a day or two of his eighty-fifth year. What would I not give to be in his place to-night! And yet he seems afraid of death – is surrounded with much doubting and fearing. In what a condition am I then? Oh, how I blushed to observe the knees of his stockings worn out, and hear him talk of his own worthlessness, and complain of his deadness and stupidity! How my heart melted at the prayers he put up for me, and the earnestness of his looks, and the ardour with which he grasped my hand. How I was stung with conscious brutality, when I heard him express his fond hopes concerning me; and when I reflected on the disappointment they are likely to meet with if he lives much longer. And yet there are a good many particulars of his life which I think are resembled by several of mine. I fain would trace a likeness, and claim a nearer relation than that of blood.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> *Biographical Account*, pp. xii-xiii.

Around three years after his settlement at Leith, he went to London to see out of curiosity the city that was the metropolis of the British Empire. During his visit he was treated with a degree of attention and hospitality which he never forgot. Whilst in London, he preached regularly to the different Scots congregations; and shortly after his return to Leith, received an invitation to become pastor of that in Swallow Street, which he declined. A similar invitation, however, from the Scots church in London Wall, was made in the year 1771 which he accepted and on the 11th August of that year he entered upon his new charge and remained the minister for the rest of his life. It was about this time that he received from the University of Edinburgh the degree of Doctor in Divinity.

Once in London one of his first actions was to take a leading part in the formation of the London Scots Presbytery in order to distance the Scots Churches from the Arianism and lack of discipline that was so widespread in the English Presbyterian churches. He was the first Clerk of the Presbytery, a position he held until his death. John Morison observes:

Hunter's reception in the metropolis was more even than cordial. In a few months he became the most popular preacher in the city. He brought with him, too, a catholic spirit, which led him to seek intercourse with all the wise and good of every orthodox community. He exchanged pulpits with all the leading Dissenters of his day; preached public sermons on behalf of all popular charities; took part in the existing religious societies; and contributed his aid towards the formation of others not then in existence.<sup>133</sup>

One of Hunter's close friends, Dr. Collyer, records an illustration of Hunter's catholicity:

Upon the return of the Rev. Rowland Hill from Scotland, where some of the Established churches had been closed against him, in preaching a charity sermon at London Wall, that excellent and eccentric man said, in his peculiar manner – "I am once more in a Scots pulpit – thanks to my dear Dr. Hunter – I wish a gale would blow from the south for three months, to waft a like spirit of liberality into the north." Dr. Hunter preached unhesitatingly for

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<sup>133</sup> Morison, *Fathers and Founders*, p. 481.



all denominations and to every useful purpose, and for every exchange of fraternal service, his own pulpit was open.<sup>134</sup>

Hunter was both a prolific author and a translator of the works of others. As an author he wrote seven volumes of *Sacred Biography* – a series of discourses on the lives of the most eminent characters recorded in the Old and New Testaments. Along with James Fell, a Dissenting minister, he contributed to a volume entitled *Lectures on the Evidences of Christianity*, published in London in 1798. Two volumes of his sermons were published during his lifetime and a further two volumes of sermons and miscellaneous pieces were issued after his death. In addition, illustrating his scholarship, he translated a number of volumes both sacred and scientific.<sup>135</sup> His last production of this sort, in 1800, was of J. H. Castéra's *Life of Catherine II of Russia*.

For many years he had been a strenuous supporter of the Society for Propagating Christian knowledge in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland (SSPCK).<sup>136</sup> In August 1790 he was elected secretary to the Corresponding Board of the Society in London; he later wrote the history of the SSPCK.<sup>137</sup> Hunter officiated for some time as chaplain to the Scottish corporation and was also one of the “Fathers and Founders of the London Missionary Society” and chaired some of its early and most crucial meetings. All these institutions were greatly benefited by his zealous exertions on their behalf. Walter Wilson writes of him: “Enthusiastic as he was in everything which he undertook, he was doubly so in the support of establishments formed for the diffusion of knowledge, and the alleviation of misery and want.”<sup>138</sup>

<sup>134</sup> Morison, *Fathers and Founders*, p. 486.

<sup>135</sup> These included J. G. Lavater's *Essays on Physiognomy* in five volumes with over 800 engravings, issued between 1789 and 1798. Meanwhile Hunter had also translated Euler's *Letters to a German Princess on Different Subjects in Physics and Philosophy* in two volumes in 1795. This was a simple exposition of these topics, to which Hunter added notes and a glossary of foreign and scientific terms.

<sup>136</sup> A sermon on Matthew 18:10-14, that Hunter preached at Salters' Hall on 3rd April 1789 on behalf of the Corresponding Board in London of the SSPCK, was published at the request of the Society; see Henry Hunter, *Attention to Little Ones recommended in a Sermon preached at Salters' Hall* (London, 1789). At the back of the publication is a list of those who had contributed to the SSPCK. The list includes all the ministers present at John Love's ordination, along with Love himself, and many others such as William Wilberforce and the Duke of Argyle.

<sup>137</sup> Henry Hunter, *A Brief History of the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge in the Highlands and Islands and the Corresponding Board in London from the establishment of the Society in the year 1701 down to the present time* (London, 1795).

<sup>138</sup> Wilson, *Dissenting Churches*, Vol. 2, p. 507.

During these years of ecclesiastical, literary, and philanthropic activity, Hunter did not neglect his flock; indeed his eloquence always drew a large congregation. The Hunters' personal life was marked by tragedy. Their first-born died in infancy. In 1791 their eldest son, Samuel, who had been nine years with the East India Company, returned to England on leave; he was to travel back to India overland and Hunter accompanied him as far as Venice. Problems beset Samuel later in the journey and he died shortly afterwards. Three other children died in succession: Henry, a barrister, in 1797; Christine, in 1798; and Thomas, a merchant, in Jamaica in 1800. John Morison, in recording the close of his London ministry, writes:

His work on earth was now done, and the Master was even at the door. On the morning of Lord's day, June 20th, 1802, he was seized, while in the pulpit, with a sudden faintness, which compelled him to stop in the middle of his first prayer; a fortnight later he was similarly affected, to the great alarm and distress of his flock; and, on the 26th of September, he appeared for the last time in the pulpit at London Wall, on occasion of the dispensation of the Lord's Supper, but was unable to proceed in the solemn service. A settled cough and pain at the chest had now seized on him, and but slender hopes of recovery were entertained by his anxious friends.<sup>139</sup>

He gave up preaching in September and in early October went to Bath in hope of a cure; when this was not forthcoming he moved on to Bristol, where he died on 27th October 1802. He was buried in the nonconformist burial ground at Bunhill Fields, London, on 6th November; his grave marked by an inscribed pillar.<sup>140</sup> James Steven, a close friend of John Love, delivered an oration at the grave, and the following day William Nicol, the minister of the Swallow Street congregation, preached a funeral sermon to a crowded congregation at the London Wall Church. Walter Wilson gives this assessment of Hunter's abilities:

In professional talents, few men have ranked higher than Dr. Hunter, whether we consider him as a preacher, or as a writer.

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<sup>139</sup> Morison, *Fathers and Founders*, p. 483.

<sup>140</sup> Details of the long inscription are in *Biographical Account*, p. xl, and Morison, *Fathers and Founders*, p. 484.

He possessed a respectable share of learning, and his writings display much eloquence and imagination, as well as an extensive acquaintance with human nature. As a pulpit orator, his manner was solemn, unaffected, and impressive. His prayers were, in this respect, peculiarly striking; and his discourses interested, in no common degree, by exhibiting the most important and beautiful sentiments in polished language, aided by a fervent delivery. His superior natural powers had been richly cultivated by the study of the best writers in ancient and modern languages; and he retained to the last much of that popularity which attended his early labours. In the allotment of time he was exact, and punctual in the performance even of the smallest engagement.<sup>141</sup>

### **Thomas Rutledge (1746-1818)**

Thomas Rutledge was a Scot and became the minister of the “Scotch Church” at Broad Street, Wapping, in succession to David Muir in 1780 and also of a meeting at Shakespeare’s Walk, Shadwell. He remained the pastor in these congregations until his death thirty-eight years later. Rutledge was also a tutor at the Mansion House Academy for young gentlemen in Camberwell, run by William Smith, the minister at Silver Street. He was awarded a D.D. by Edinburgh University on 28th March 1799. He died on 26th November 1818 and was buried in the nonconformist burial ground at Bunhill Fields in London, having been one of the most prominent Scots ministers in London. A brief obituary speaks of him as “a man of exemplary piety and universally beloved”, whilst the entry in the Church of Scotland *Fasti* asserts that he was “in innocency of manners and simplicity of life rarely equalled”.<sup>142</sup> In addition to John Love’s ordination sermon, Thomas Rutledge published a volume of sermons in 1794 that was dedicated to the Duchess of Buccleuch. The volume was a subscribers’ edition, and the list of subscribers includes most of his fellow Presbyters: Henry Hunter and William Smith, who both subscribed for six copies, Charles Lorimer and his wife, David Tod, James Steven, and John Love.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Wilson, *Dissenting Churches*, Vol. 2, p. 510.

<sup>142</sup> Sylvanus Urban, *Gentlemen’s Magazine and Historical Chronicle*, July-December 1818 (London, 1818), p. 642; Hew Scott, *Fasti*, Vol. 7, p. 501.

<sup>143</sup> Rutledge, *Practical Sermons*. The list of subscribers occupies pp. xiii-xxxv.

### **William Smith (died c. 1829)**

William Smith was a Scot who had been educated at both Marischal College, Aberdeen and Edinburgh University. He was a licentiate of the Church of Scotland and became the pastor of a church which met in Silver Street, London in 1770.<sup>144</sup> The congregation in Silver Street had originally been Presbyterian, but due to decline in numbers it had merged with a larger Independent congregation in 1747 who took over their meeting house. Smith had also built a meeting house of his own in 1773-4 adjoining his dwelling at Mansion House Cottage at Camberwell. In addition, he was the head of a large and respectable boarding-school which he ran from his home. This was a handsome building, designed by the celebrated architect Inigo Jones and which was demolished to make way for the London, Brighton, and Chatham railway in the 1860s. David Bogue became Smith's assistant both in his academical and pastoral labours, and preached at Silver Street every Sabbath morning for three years from 1774, prior to his induction in an Independent church at Gosport in June 1777. In 1789 Smith resigned from Silver Street and removed to Camberwell where he preached in his meeting house, but at the same time he continued as a member of the Scots Presbytery. The Scots Presbytery met at his Camberwell meeting house on 1st June 1796.<sup>145</sup>

### **John Patrick (1706-1791)**

John Patrick was a native of Scotland, and received his education in the University of St. Andrews, where he graduated Master of Arts in 1724 and later received a Doctorate of Divinity. After preaching some years in his own country, he removed to London in 1740, in order to succeed James Anderson as pastor of the Presbyterian congregation in Lisle-street, Leicester Square. In 1755 his people built him a new meeting-house in Peter Street, Golden Square, Soho. This was Patrick's only charge; he served this congregation for more than fifty years. Patrick was chosen as the Moderator of the first meeting of the London Scots Presbytery in 1772. He died on the 30th July 1791, having nearly completed the 85th year of his age. Thomas Rutledge preached a funeral

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<sup>144</sup> Hew Scott, *Fasti*, Vol. 7, p. 494, gives the date, probably incorrectly, as 1772.

<sup>145</sup> For further biographical information, see Hew Scott, *Fasti*, Vol. 7, p. 494; Wilson, *Dissenting Churches*, Vol. 3, p. 114; Cameron, *The Scots Kirk in London*, p. 42; Black, *Scots Churches in England*, pp. 234-235.

sermon to the bereaved congregation. The sermon is printed in the published volume of Rutledge's sermons.<sup>146</sup> Walter Wilson writes regarding him:

Dr. Patrick moved for so long a period in one uniform sphere, his life furnished but few facts for the historian. He appeared with great respectability as a scholar, and a man of science; but it was in the character of a minister of Christ that he appeared to most advantage. Although of a mild and gentle temper, he was warm and zealous in his Master's cause. Having formed his opinions from a careful perusal of the scriptures, he maintained them with great steadfastness; yet was liberal towards those who differed from him, provided they acknowledged the great and leading truths of Christianity. Amongst these, he considered the Divinity, mediatorial offices, satisfaction, and intercession of Christ, as some of the most prominent. He was a great enemy to schisms and divisions in the church of Christ; nor did he approve of the conduct of people in breaking off from an established church in which they had been brought up, without the most cogent and satisfactory reasons. Being himself the member of an establishment, it is not surprising that he looked upon Dissenters with a jealous eye. In his ministerial duties he was punctual and diligent, neglecting no opportunity of usefulness. Such was the attachment he discovered to his work, that notwithstanding his memory had been failing, and his bodily strength declining for three years prior to his dissolution, he still continued to preach, at least once every Lord's-day, until within nine months of his death. During that period, his earthly tabernacle decayed apace, and gradually wasted away; but without any pain, sickness, or uneasy sensations: so that it may be truly said, "He went down to the grave, in a full old age, like as a shock of corn cometh in his season". For the tranquillity he enjoyed, he frequently expressed his gratitude to his heavenly Father, to whose disposal he entirely resigned himself, and waited with patience the hour of dissolution.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Rutledge, *Practical Sermons*, pp. 449-478. Towards the end of the sermon Rutledge provides biographical information regarding Patrick and gives details of his character, see pp. 469-476.

<sup>147</sup> Wilson, *Dissenting Churches*, Vol. 4, pp. 35-36.