

Baptists in Scotland Before 1869

NINETEEN-SIXTY-NINE was a year of celebrations for Scottish Baptists. It was marked by the centenary of the Baptist Union of Scotland, by the 75th Anniversary of the foundation of the Baptist Theological College of Scotland, and by the 60th anniversary of the Women's Auxiliary. This seems a good time to gather together what is known of Baptists in this Presbyterian land before the founding of the Union. This article will be an excursion into a small but interesting segment of Scottish history,¹ and an attempt to piece together some of the tantalisingly brief glimpses that the sources afford us of a not unimportant corner of the Baptist world.

The Reformation in Scotland followed a course that was very different from that in England. When in 1560 the Protestant Confession of Faith was accepted by Parliament the Protestant religion was established in the name but without the authority of Queen Mary. In the two previous decades there had been a rapid turning from the corrupt old Church to the Calvinism of Knox and his followers, especially in the towns and by the landowners. Despite last minute attempts to reform, the old Church was doomed to a slow and relatively peaceful death—there were few martyrs at this period in Scotland. Protestantism of a Genevan sort became accepted as the religion of Scotsmen, and subsequent debates were between the royal desire for episcopacy, and the strong Presbyterian tenets of Andrew Melville and the other ministers. In 1690 after a century of unsettlement and the recent Killing Times, a relatively moderate Presbyterianism became the national faith once and for all. Few were not embraced by the Revolution Settlement. There were pockets of as yet unconverted Catholics in the Western Isles and in the hills of Glenlivet. There were Episcopalian incumbents and flocks who could not be removed, and there were the Society Men, the Cameronians, who would hold no truck with an uncovenanted government and Church. But the great majority of Scots were Presbyterian and looked back with gratitude to John Knox.

Knox has been unjustly called many things by modern Scots, and he has been blamed for anything visitors find uncongenial in Scottish life. He was a man of principle and strong personality, and it is probably unfortunate for Baptists that he, like his master Calvin, inveighed against the Anabaptists of his day. At the end of the 18th century clergymen writing in the *Statistical Account*

referred to Anabaptists in their parishes with a certain nervous distaste, even if they were constrained to admit that the Anabaptists are "peaceable and well-behaved."² The Scots Confession accepted in Parliament in 1560 states: "We confess and acknowledge that Baptisme apperteineth alsweil to the infantis of the faithfull, as to those that be of age and discretion. An so we dampne the error of the Anabaptistes who deny baptism to apperteine to children befor that thei have faith and understanding". Knox had earned for himself reputation as a confounder of the Anabaptists before his return to Scotland, and that was one of the reasons for his being offered the bishopric of Rochester in an area where there were refugee Anabaptists. In 1557 he wrote "To his brethren in Scotland" warning them of the dangerous and horrible heresies of the sect, as he had heard that their emissaries had penetrated the North. There seems to be in fact no record of Anabaptists in Scotland at this period, but they became a sort of bogey to Scots ecclesiastics.

Not only Anabaptism but any form of Independency was suspect in 16th century Scotland. In 1584 Robert Browne landed at Dundee from Holland, possibly expecting sympathy from fellow-opponents of episcopacy. Although he was kindly received at first by Melville, it was not long before he had to flee again, after he had addressed the Kirk-Session of Edinburgh on the over-severity of their discipline. Between 1588 and 1590 John Penry received shelter in Scotland, but there is no evidence that he gained any followers for the Independent way.

In 1624 there were Brownist sympathizers in Edinburgh, and in Aberdeen. John Mein of Edinburgh, a merchant, may be the first native Independent. Any tendency of Scottish divines to flirt with Independency was removed by the experience of their commissioners at the Westminster Assembly. The Civil Wars found Scotland resolutely united in defence of a Covenanted religion. It was with the coming of Cromwell's soldiery that Baptist preaching came to Scotland. From 1650—59 the country was under military occupation, and it was in garrison towns that we first hear of Baptist convictions. Under a Union with England the Kirk had perforce to give up its claim to uniformity and to allow the free preaching of the Word, however anarchic the result. It is from this period that Scottish Quakerism dates its continuous history. Though always a small body, the Society of Friends in Scotland took real native root, and in Barclay of Urie gave the movement one of its leading apologists. A fairly general toleration allowed the Baptists to debate their tenets, and to form churches in garrison towns such as Ayr, Leith, Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Cupar-Fife and Perth, and an occasional Baptist gained possession for a time of a parish, for example at East Kilbride in Lanarkshire.

According to Nicoll's diary for 1653: "This yeir Anabaptistes daylie increist in this natioun, quhair nevir name was of befor,

at leist durst not evow thaimselfis; bot now many made oppin profession thair of and avowit the same; sa that thryse in the oulk, viz on Monday, Weddinsday and Fryday thair were dippit sum at Bonnyngtone Mylne betwixt Leith and Edinburgh both men and woman of guid rank. Sum dayis thair would be sundried hundreth persones attending that action and fyftene persons baptized in one day by the Anabaptists."³

In Cupar some soldiers were baptized in the River Eden, and some local women followed their example. All seemed set fair for a Baptist dawn, but it was not to be. By 1657 the Kirk was regaining her strength. Those who in Cupar and elsewhere had been rebaptized were summoned before the whole might of the Presbyterian discipline, and the contumacious were excommunicated. Ministers in Aberdeen who hesitated to baptize infants were called to order. The Edinburgh and Leith congregations, which had issued a version of the 1644 Confession in 1653, became embroiled in anti-government plots and with an unworthy pastor. By 1658 Cromwell had been so alarmed by disloyal elements in his army that he forbade any Baptist to hold any office of trust, practise at law or keep a school. The Baptist cause in Scotland was still sufficiently strong in Scotland in 1659 for 200 signatures to be available for a petition for religious liberty, but when the army left, and the King returned bringing with him a modified episcopacy for Scotland, the Baptists disappeared for almost a century. Only the Quakers were able to continue through the dark years. Several acts were passed in different years imposing heavy fines on parents who did not have a child baptized within thirty days of birth. The Scots bent their energies to Covenanting and resisting episcopacy until 1690, when Presbyterianism triumphed.

When Baptists reappear in Scotland in the mid-eighteenth century they are a part of a native movement in Independency which, while it recognized itself as having much in common with the English Dissenters, nevertheless had a history and to some extent a theology of its own. The rise of the Scotch Baptists can only be understood against the background of Scottish religion at the time. It was not long after the settlement of 1690 before the rigours of covenanting began to lose their appeal in a land that was growing in economic strength, and coming into the common heritage of European culture. The "Moderate" movement amongst the clergy was characteristic of the eighteenth century. The minister strove to become a man of polite learning and good manners, acceptable to the best society of his day. No longer was his highest ambition to be a man of unction in public prayer. The seventeenth century was left behind with relief. Even John Knox became "that barbarian". Church discipline began to lose something of its rigour, and while the foundation of Calvinist theology was not attacked, sermons began to talk more of good

manners, and less of the decree of predestination. The Church and the State began to draw closer together, and in 1712 patronage was re-introduced. For long enough it worked fairly, but by the middle of the century the rights of congregations to choose, or at least to endorse, their pastors were too often trampled on and the local magnate's nominee was intruded into a protesting parish.

The complex history of Presbyterian schism puzzles non-Scots and leaves the natives a little confused. All that can be attempted here is an outline map of proceedings in the eighteenth century. There were those who refused to enter an uncovenanted church and continued the traditions of the times of persecution. They became known as the Reformed Presbyterian Church and were locally strong, especially in Galloway. But the majority remained at first in the national church, where there were many ministers who favoured the old ways and kept alive the traditions of severity and scriptural holiness often in difficult circumstances. The republication of an old Puritan work suspected of Antinomianism led to the Marrow controversy when a split between the "evangelical" ministers such as Boston of Ettrick and the scholastic Calvinists threatened at the General Assembly. The immediate quarrel died down, but in 1733 one Marrowman, Ebenezer Erskine of Stirling, was in trouble for disturbing the Church about the Patronage question and he and three brethren were removed from their charges. All efforts to heal the breach were unavailing, and the Erskines and their friends became the leaders of a new denomination, the Secession Church, still Presbyterian, now devoted to keeping alive the old ways, and becoming the focus of every discontented Christian who thought the world had taken over the national church. All the enthusiasm and the piety of which the lowland Scot was capable seemed to be gathered in the Secession congregations, which were voluntary, that is they supported themselves, and which soon manifested seeds of division amongst themselves, so that by the end of the century there were four secession churches. In 1751 a similar situation to that in 1733 arose, and Thomas Gillespie of Carnock was deposed from the ministry. In a few years he formed with two colleagues the Presbytery of Relief which afforded relief to parishioners oppressed by harsh Assembly decisions. This was the Secession in a milder form, and it is noteworthy that two of its first ministers were licensed by Classes of English Dissenters. The Relief was the first denomination in Scotland to adopt Open Communion, though not without a fight.⁴

All those splits occurred within the Presbyterian framework and while they contributed to the Baptist genesis at least the idea that the national church need not be one and indivisible, or even always right, they were in no way sympathetic to Independency. The first Scottish Independent was John Glas, and it is to this extraordinary man and the church he founded that we

must turn for the more immediate antecedents of our churches.

Glas was a Parish minister and the son of a Parish minister, nurtured in the best traditions of Presbyterianism. In 1719 he became minister of Tealing near Dundee, and gained fame as a preacher. In 1725 he formed a group of his parishioners into a praying society which held monthly celebrations of the Lord's Supper—a strange thing in a land where the Communion season was at most twice in the year. This fellowship group was in effect an *ecclesiola in ecclesia*, and was viewed with suspicion by outsiders. Added to this Glas began to express views on the spiritual nature of the Church of Christ that were not in accordance with the prevalent belief that the whole nation was holy. By 1730 John Glas was deposed from his ministry, and was being described as a "furious independent" by Robert Wodrow the historian. He went to Dundee and gathered his followers into the church there. Gradually his views developed until a highly idiosyncratic ecclesiastical situation developed. The Churches of the Glasites were to be found in a number of Scottish towns, and the whole movement gained greatly from the adherence of Robert Sandeman of Perth, whose name became attached to the movement outside Scotland. He had the pen of a ready writer, and his views were influential among a number of English Dissenters. Andrew Fuller was sufficiently alarmed by them to write his *Strictures on Sandemanianism*.⁵

Very briefly Glas and Sandeman held that faith was not a complex but a simple thing. One is saved by a bare belief that the facts concerning Jesus of Nazareth are true. This was an anti-emotional trait in Glasite theology. Otherwise their theology could be called Calvinist, or even hyper-calvinist. They were never a missionary Church.

The other distinguishing factor concerned Church life. The New Testament pattern was to be rediscovered and put into practice. From this search came many innovations in 18th century Scottish church life. Lay preachers were encouraged, and eventually the clerical caste disappeared. Only lay elders, and there must be more than one, gave spiritual guidance. The Lord's Supper began to be observed weekly. Infant Baptism was maintained, but carried out privately. Separation from all other Christians was strictly enjoined. A ceremony of foot-washing was introduced, and a love feast which was open only to members. Abstention from blood became a rule. All Church decisions had to be reached unanimously, and any dissenters were forced to leave.

The Glasites attracted to their meetings a number of men and women of strong spiritual character and it is to the ideas put into practice in these little churches that Scottish Baptists owe their origins and some of their customs. There were other dissenting movements in the mid-eighteenth century, notably the Old Scots Independents who arose in Glasgow and Fife in the 1760's

and had a great deal in common with the Glasites, and the Bereans who followed another deposed minister John Barclay, and retained a more Presbyterian form of government. Glas continued to exercise an influence far beyond his lifetime and the Haldanes were much influenced by some of his writings. It would be instructive to compare Glas with Darby but so far as I know while Glasites and Brethren may have the same sort of origins, there was no direct connection.

It is high time we came to Baptists again. Before we return to the Glasite line of descent, we must note that the oldest church dates from 1750. It is in Keiss in Caithness. Sir William Sinclair, the Laird, became a Baptist in circumstances which now elude us, and on returning to his estate preached to his tenants his new-found faith to such purpose that when he departed in debt to sort out his affairs in Edinburgh in 1757, the church continued and still does. Sir William found fellowship with the Glasites in Edinburgh, but never joined himself to them, and so far as I know his little church lacked the eccentricities of Glasite practice. He wrote for it a hymnal which is believed to be the first published in Scotland for congregational use.

Archibald McLean, who can claim to be the founder of Scottish Baptist life, was born in East Kilbride in 1733. He belonged to the Parish Church during his youth which was spent in Glasgow, and entered the printing business. As a young man he read Glas's *Testimony of the King of Martyrs*, and joined the Glasite church in Glasgow. All his life he was to show traces of this influence. But soon he left the body over a case of discipline, along with a former minister of the Seceders, Robert Carmichael, and in 1764 they began to debate the subject of Baptism. The result was that Carmichael went to London and was baptized by Dr. Gill, returned, and in 1765 baptized seven others. The first Baptist church in Edinburgh, now Bristo, was in existence with Carmichael as sole pastor. In 1768 McLean was chosen his colleague, and came to reside in Edinburgh.

The church grew slowly, and folk from other parts came to be baptized in it. Eventually they were set in order as churches, in Glasgow, Montrose, Paisley, Kirkcaldy, Largo and elsewhere. McLeanite churches even crossed the border to Beverley, Bridlington and London, and his ideas were taken up with enthusiasm in North Wales, where the name Scotch Baptists persists.

McLean was careful to deny the suggestion that he was a Sandemanian Baptist. The Glasites or Sandemanians had a not altogether undeserved reputation for exclusiveness and insistence on minutiae of religious behaviour, and a less deserved name for frivolity. Yet there was a good deal of Sandemanianism in Scotch Baptist life. A Church could only be set in order if there was a plurality of elders, who were laymen and who had parity in the Church. The Lord's Supper was observed weekly. The prayers

and exhortations of brethren were encouraged during worship, and the love feast and on certain occasions the kiss of charity were observed. Footwashing, if it really served as an act of charity, was encouraged. Abstinence from eating blood and things strangled was held to be binding. A strict attitude to the things of this world was inculcated and gaming, plays, routs and so forth were not allowed.⁶

The principle of unanimity in church decisions led to a number of schisms and excommunications which seriously weakened the connection, yet the churches showed a commendable desire for evangelism, and strongly supported the work of the B.M.S. The flavour of church life was distinctively anti-emotional, familial and biblicist, and when new forces began to be strong in Scottish Evangelicalism the Scotch Baptists lost some of their members, and a good deal of impetus.

The two other main streams of life came firstly from the Haldane movement through which lay-preachers were sent to the remotest areas of Scotland, and a strong Highland work built up. When in 1808 the Haldanes accepted believers' baptism, many of their converts followed them, and new Baptist Churches were set up, usually with a stated Pastor.⁷ The second new stream is associated with George Barclay of Irvine and Christopher Anderson of Charlotte Chapel, Edinburgh, whose ideas of church order showed the influence of English Baptist life. Their churches were called English churches as much to distinguish them from the McLeanite groups as to denote a foreign origin. There were then three main streams of Scottish Baptist life in the early 19th century which recognised each other but which were yet jealous of their traditions. This contributed to the difficulties of those who tried to bring Baptists together into more united action.

The composition of the earliest churches is difficult to ascertain owing to the lack of records. There is much evidence of theological liveliness, but any attempt to characterise the churches on a social basis, or to assess the relative strength in the various sections of the community is bound to be partial. On the assumption that much the same some of people became Baptists as became Glasites, however, certain conclusions can be drawn. The Glasite and the Baptist communities were almost exclusively to be found in the new industrial areas, where manufacturing towns were rapidly expanding and where population was being drawn in from the neighbouring parishes. Dundee, Arbroath, Montrose, Paisley, Dunfermline, Kirkcaldy, Newburgh on Tay, Galashiels and Perth all had early examples of both groups. Until the Haldane movement Baptists were confined to these towns. Nonconformity had some correlation with industrialisation and in particular with the weaving industry. Here there are parallels with England in the Commonwealth period and with the expansion of the Methodist churches. It was the same sort of people, loosed from the parish

structure, accustomed to argue and discuss, who became radical in politics, and nonconformist in religious practice. Such Church lists as we have show this to be true. In Paisley in 1798, the trustees of the Baptist Church consisted of four weavers, a hosier, a shoemaker, a thread maker, a cooper, a baker, a skinner, a merchant and a foreman.⁸ This seems to have been typical. A Glasite list of 1771 from Dundee, the main centre, contains 36 weavers out of 74 men. Most of the others were employed in ancillary trades, and the leadership was in the hands of their employers, merchants in the clothing industries.⁹

Among the leaders of the Scotch Baptist churches were men of education. There were a few clergymen like Carmichael from one or other branch of the Presbyterian Church. There was H. D. Inglis, an Edinburgh lawyer of good family, there was Dr. Charles Stuart, son of a Lord Provost of Edinburgh, and a former minister of the Parish of Cramond, there were a number of booksellers, and the founders of the Caledonian Insurance Company. Such men naturally came to be recognised as leaders, but not to the exclusion of the gifted working man.

In 1837 the results of a government enquiry into Church accommodation in Scotland were published in eight large volumes.¹⁰ Every congregation in the country was expected to give a great mass of detail concerning seating accommodation, services provided, means of finance and works of charity. From the reports some sort of picture of Baptist church life in the 1830's can be gleaned. The immediate reason for the enquiry was the apparent need for the provision of more churches in the new towns and the growing cities, and so practical recommendations affected in the main the National Church. Baptist and other nonconformists were at pains to show that they could serve far more of the community than they did at no extra cost to the nation.

We can glean from the report the statistics of the churches, the names of their pastors, something of their finance and a rough statement of their social composition. In Edinburgh there were six churches, and their answers were as follows.

1. The church at Niddry Street (the original Scotch Baptist Church, now Bristo) had an average attendance of 450 of whom 172 were communicants. Three-quarters of the congregation were poor and working class, and here there is a note of some definiteness. Few earned more than thirty shillings per week. None of the pastors were paid, and four mission stations were maintained.

2. The church at Argyle Square (a split from Niddry Street in 1834 over the question of elders presiding at Communion. This was the strict party). This body recorded an average attendance of 160 and a communicant membership of 109. There were nine journeymen tailors, a few domestic servants, and the rest of the membership was engaged in business. Possibly there was a social

element in the split, and theology was not all. It is noteworthy that the non-communicant attenders form a much smaller proportion here than elsewhere.

3. The church at Clyde Street (a split from Haldane's Tabernacle, carried on on Scotch Baptist lines. It eventually seems to have united with Niddry Street). The average attendance here was 120, and the communicants numbered 77, of whom two-thirds to three-quarters were poor and working class. It was noted that collections were taken only at communion services, which were confined to members.

4. The church at Leith Walk, Haldane's Tabernacle, now represented by the Duncan Street Church. Mr. Haldane gave his services free, and in fact owned the building. There were 750 attenders and only 280 communicants. This was still in fact a preaching centre. Almost all who attended were of the poor and working class.

5. The church at Rose Street (this church is now in a relatively new building (1912) on the same site, as Charlotte Chapel). Christopher Anderson, who owned the building, was reluctant to give financial details, but stated that no member was allowed to depend on public funds. This was common Baptist practice, and indeed something of a boast. About 500 attended, of whom 110 were members, and the pastor confined his pastoral activities to members. Much less than half were thought to be poor and working class.

6. The church at Elder Street (This was a parallel to the Haldane movement and was founded as an open communion church. Such it still is as the Dublin Street Church). Here the pastor, Dr. Innes, was paid a stipend of £200, there were 400 attenders and 150 communicants, less than half of whom were poor.¹¹

Not too many conclusions can be drawn from this. In many ways Edinburgh was not typical of Scotland, especially in the concentration of the professional classes in the city. But there were the different kinds of churches, to some extent catering for different strata of society. Some churches indicate that there were Sabbath Schools and missions. Haldane stated that he occasionally met with the children of members.

In Glasgow there were also six churches, mostly small. Apart from Hope Street, where James Patterson was paid £200 and there were 260 members, the churches were of the Scotch order, and indeed originated from each other by schisms. The end product of some reunions a few years later is the present John Street Church, and Hope Street migrated to the West End as Adelaide Place.

A different picture emerges from the Highland areas. Here ordinances were supplied by Home Missionaries paid from £43-£50 and often quite directly supported by city congregations. From

the Parish of Strath in Skye comes the report of a church with 20 communicants and 200 hearers. James McQueen, the missionary, was paid £42 with some travelling expenses and he itinerated throughout Skye and the adjoining mainland. There was no building at this date, and all who attended were of the poorer classes.

At Thurso was the headquarters of Edward Mackay, who had stations in many places in Caithness. One half of the 35 attenders were classed as poor and working class. At nearby Keiss was the old church of Sir William Sinclair. A Chapel to seat 80 had been built about 1795 of stone and turf at the cost of £5. The 20 communicants were ministered to by a farmer and only when Edward Mackay came five times a year was the Lord's Supper administered.¹²

At Grantown on Spey was a strong church which owed its origin to Haldane's followers. The chapel seated 250 and of the 350 people listed as habitual attenders, 120 were communicants. Several came from distances of up to 15 miles. The pastor, Peter Grant, one of the great stalwarts of Baptist work in Gaelic areas and the author of Gaelic hymns still used, was paid at this time £20 by the Baptist Home Missionary Society, and supported himself on the family farm. He gave three sermons and a lecture every Lord's Day and conducted a Sunday School. Once a week he itinerated in the district.¹³

For present purposes a few further notes must suffice. At Perth there was besides a strong evangelical congregation the only General Baptist Church in Scotland—probably Unitarian, which had only 11 communicants, all poor and working class. In Stirling there were two bodies, one on the English lines served by Malcolm McMillan, whose brother founded the publishing firm, and the other a Scotch Baptist group. In Cupar was a Free Communion Church of 120 members soon to become important. In some places Baptists worshipped at the Independent church, and other churches of which we know from other records seem to have been passed over by the Commissioners. Still we must be grateful to them for the picture they do give in these days before there was any united action or gathering of statistics.

The Scotch Baptists were obviously still strong, and there was little indication that within 50 years almost all the churches would have conformed to the English model of ecclesiastical government. The forces for disunity were strong at this date. There was remoteness, as the railway age had not yet come. There were personal rivalries and there was the jealous independence shown not least by the larger churches. There was also the Scots love for theological dialectic which was to cause the downfall of the earliest attempts at Union to which we now turn.

In a bundle of correspondence which related to the otherwise undistinguished Church at Clyde Street, Edinburgh, and which

has somehow been preserved, there is a tantalising glimpse of what must have been the first attempt at forming a Baptist Union.¹⁴

An anonymous circular was read at the monthly prayer meeting of the Church on 18th March, 1827. It was addressed to the Baptist Churches of Scotland and remarked on the sorrow that the writer felt at the disunity of the Church, and the consequent failure of witness. He stated that a number of individuals had resolved to meet in Edinburgh at half past seven every Wednesday evening to spend an hour in prayer about such matters. They were all connected with one of the congregations of Baptists in the city and they were anxious to correspond with other Baptists in Scotland to pray for unity amongst them.

He asserts that doctrinally they are united with regard to the essential doctrines of the word of God, and that they are all agreed on the independency of the local Church. The main differences amongst Scottish Baptists concern the number of pastors and the practice of exhortation. Could not all the Churches agree to work together for the conversion of Scotland and allow such differences to be a matter of forbearance. There is no indication who this writer is, or to which Church he belonged, but he and his friends evidently got to work.

On May 4th, 1827, another circular went out to the pastors of the Churches. It reported on a meeting held in Edinburgh on April 19th by several pastors and members of Baptist Churches to consider the propriety of forming a Union of the Baptist Churches in Scotland. Unanimous approval had been given to support such a scheme. The circular quotes from a letter received from one Church "If mutually to receive each other's members into occasional fellowship when away from home be all that is intended, we have for many years acted on this principle. The members of any Calvinistic Baptist Church, whether in England or in Scotland have been admitted by us." The letter then goes on to suggest that a meeting of representatives of churches "not of course as a court of review of appeal or control" but as a centre of Union would appear to be desirable.

The Meeting passed several resolutions, enlarging its committee, seeking to contact other churches, and stating that a Union amongst Churches holding evangelical doctrines requires no abandonment of principle. In this document some names appear. The Meeting was held in Mr. Innes' Chapel, that is in the Elder Street Church. Mr. Alex McLeod of Glasgow, a Scotch Baptist pastor, opened in prayer, and Mr. Jonathan Watson of Cupar, who was later to become Mr. Innes' colleague and successor, and the first president of the 1869 Union, was called on to preside. John Gilmore of Aberdeen closed the meeting in prayer. He was Pastor of an "English" Church.

A further meeting was duly held on Wednesday, 13th June,

1827, in Elder Street Chapel when delegates from 12 Churches were present. They came from: Irvine, Aberdeen, Lochgilphead, Berwick on Tweed, Glasgow, Cupar, Dunfermline, Eyemouth, Clyde Street, Edinburgh, Elder Street, Edinburgh, and Auchtermuchty. Twenty letters were then read from Churches, which with the exception of six, were favourable to the formation of a Union.

The twenty Churches, and there is no way of knowing which six of them demurred, were as follows: Dundee, Berwick, Glasgow (George's Place), Grantown, Kilmonivaig, Tullimet, Thurso, Bainsford, Falkirk, Auchtermuchty, Killin, etc., Greenock, Stirling, Hawick; Sanquhar, Airdrie, Edinburgh (Clyde Street), Perth, Anstruther, Kirkcaldy, Edinburgh, Pleasance (Bristo).

There are some omissions in this list which must have grieved the organisers but for a start it was a good collection. The Meeting resolved to form a union called "The Baptist Union of Scotland", to invite any evangelical Baptist Church to apply for membership, that there be two objects, first to promote the general edification and improvement of the Churches, and secondly to extend the Kingdom of the Son of God, that there would be annual meetings, that finance should be raised, that there should be an annual letter, and that the Union should not intermeddle in the affairs of Churches. An interim committee was set up, and all seemed set fair.

But here the records fail, and this Union proved abortive. From Archibald Smith's correspondence it is possible to glean a few details. It seems that the Church at Montrose, under the leadership of Jonathan Watson's brother, was suspected of Socinian leanings. The Clyde Street Church in ignorance received Mr. Watson to communion while he was visiting Edinburgh, a church in Glasgow—Portland Street—whose pastor David McLaren was father of Dr. Alexander McLaren, heartily disapproved of this action, and considered the whole Union to be tainted with Socinianism if one Church could be so careless, and refused to join. Clyde Street Church also withdrew from the proposed Union, and we hear no more about it. Theological prickliness had proved too strong for the desire to unite which seemed to have overcome ecclesiastical difficulties.

Theological troubles also beset the next and much more successful attempt to unite. The second Union, or the first if we accept the previous attempt as being so premature as to be abortive, is inextricably linked with the name of Francis Johnstone. His successor at Marshall Street Church, Edinburgh, speaks of him as a man with a message to his age, loyal to the truth as he understood it, with abundant vitality and intensity in him. He was born in Edinburgh in 1810, and his family was connected first with Rose Street and then with Haldane's Tabernacle.¹⁵ As there was no means of training for the Baptist ministry in Scotland, he went to Bradford College, and then to his first charge in the village of

Boroughbridge and Dishforth in Yorkshire, in 1835. In 1840 he went to Carlisle, and in 1842 returned to Scotland to the Church at Cupar in Fife, where previously Jonathan Watson had been pastor. He found in Scotland a small body known as the "Scottish Baptist Association" which had been formed significantly at Tullymet in Perthshire, one of the stations of the Home Mission then as now.¹⁶ Its first meeting was on 29th July, 1835, and it was addressed by James Haldane who pointed out that he did not believe in the scripturalness of joining together. Despite this frosty send-off a number of Churches particularly in the Highland region banded together into the Association and set themselves four objects: (a) to increase brotherly love and friendly intercourse amongst evangelical Baptist Churches; (b) to promote united exertion in the cause of Christ in general and Baptist sentiments in particular; (c) to obtain accurate statistical information; and (d) to address to the Churches an annual letter and progress report. Robert Thomson, pastor of the Perth Church was appointed secretary. Annual meetings of the Association were held and addressed by such well-known leaders as Patterson of Hope Street, Glasgow, and Dr. Innes from Edinburgh but the larger Churches showed little interest in joining the work of the Association, and by 1842 it was in danger of languishing. Then Johnstone came and threw all his energies into its work. The times were propitious. Once again ecclesiastical issues were very much alive in Scotland, for in 1843 the Free Church was formed, partly as a result of a strengthening of evangelical belief and work in the country. The shackles of scholastic Calvinism were being broken. James Morison, a minister of the Secession Church was expelled from his communion in 1842 for holding the three universals, that God loved all men, Christ died for all men and the Holy Spirit strove with all men. He and his followers formed the Evangelical Union which joined eventually the Congregationalists. Johnstone was profoundly moved by Morison's teaching, and found a new sense of urgency in the proclamation of the Gospel. The older Baptist leaders, and especially James Haldane remained unrepentant Calvinists, and seemed to have regarded Johnstone as a dangerous enthusiast, bringing discredit on the staid ways of Baptists and on their orthodoxy. He himself regarded himself as a conservative, recapturing the spirit of the revival of the Haldane's early days.

Almost immediately Johnstone became Secretary of the Association, and in 1843, at annual meetings at Cupar, it became the Baptist Union of Scotland. It had large aims. Johnstone was always interested in the education of young men for the ministry, and gathered them in his manse in Cupar and later in Edinburgh. Education became one of the aims of the Union. He was also a keen statistician, and he laid before the delegates a list of towns of sizeable population in which there was no Baptist Church. He urged that work should be done in the populous areas, and the

Union employed two full-time evangelists. He was also a believer in the power of print, and one of his periodicals, *The Evangelist* achieved a circulation of 3,000.

Unfortunately for the infant Union, or perhaps inevitably, print got it into trouble. A tract of English provenance *The origins, claims and antiquity of the Baptists* (London Baptist Tract Society) was circulated widely under the Union's auspices. In 1845 the Editor of the *Free Church Magazine*, a man of great influence amongst evangelicals, attacked it bitterly from a paedobaptist point of view. Strangely in the next issue there appeared a letter from the established Baptist leaders—Haldane, Watson, Innes, Anderson and others, disclaiming all responsibility not only for the tract but also for the sentiments. "The Union," they said, "was but a fragment claiming a lofty name." What sort of jealousy and theological suspicion was involved here can only be guessed at. Johnstone replied in a hard-hitting pamphlet and in the *Evangelist* complained that he had been dropped from the Committees of the Home Mission—the one place where there was united Baptist action. The Union went on with its good work for a few years, but the lack of support, especially financial from the stronger Churches eventually left it helpless, and by 1852 it had reverted to being an Association of individuals, and in 1856 it was dissolved.

In 1844 the first printed Annual Report¹⁷ contained statistics as far as could be gathered of the Churches. There were 91 Churches recorded, some very small indeed, and some apparently mission stations of the Union which did not scruple if need arose to found a Church where there was already an old and unwelcoming group of Baptists. In all these Churches there were about 5,500 members, of whom no less than 1,000 were Gaelic speaking. In some areas there had been notable additions during the year, especially in the Western Isles. There had been 45 baptisms on Mull, 39 on Tiree, and 29 on Skye. In Orkney there were 63 baptisms doubling the membership and in Shetland 32. City Churches on the whole report much more modest increases.

The sources for Scottish Baptist life before the foundation of the Union in 1869 remain tantalisingly scanty, but enough can be gathered to show that both in the old Scotch Baptist movement and in the later Haldaneite and English branches there was strong native life, owing more than is usually recorded to Baptists in the South, but nevertheless remaining a truly indigenous communion, with an influence in the land out of proportion to its numbers.

NOTES

¹ The best account of Scottish history of this time is T. C. Smout's *A History of the Scottish People*, Edinburgh, 1969. See also the *Pelican History of Scotland* by J. D. Mackie, 1964.

² The old *Statistical Account* in 22 volumes, published 1791—1798 is a mine of information about the country at the time and contains in its parish by parish survey a number of references to Baptists. The *New*

Statistical Account published around 1842 has also much information.

³ John Nicoll: *Public Transactions in Scotland 1650—67*, (published 1836).

⁴ For details see Burleigh *A Church History of Scotland*, Oxford University Press, 1960.

⁵ The best account of the Glasites is to be found in an unpublished Ph.D. Thesis in Edinburgh University by J. T. Hornsby "John Glas and his movement" 1936. See also H. Escott, *A History of Scottish Congregationalism*, Glasgow, 1958.

⁶ For a full account see A. McLean in Rippon's *Baptist Annual Register*, 1794—7, pp. 361—380.

⁷ See Alexander Haldane, *Memoirs of R. and J. Haldane*, London and Edinburgh, 1852.

⁸ Thomas Coats Memorial Church Jubilee Book, 1944, p. 32.

⁹ Lists in Glasite notebook preserved by the Glasite Church in Edinburgh.

¹⁰ *Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the opportunities of public religious worship, and means of religious instruction, and the pastoral superintendence afforded to the people of Scotland, 1837-8*, 6 vols.

¹¹ *Report*, 3.

¹² *Report*, 4.

¹³ *Report*, 5.

¹⁴ Correspondence relative to the Church at Clyde Street Hall, in possession of the Baptist Union of Scotland.

¹⁵ In Jubilee Handbook, Marshall Street Baptist Church, Edinburgh, 1896.

¹⁶ Ms Minute Book of the Association preserved in Baptist Church House, Glasgow.

¹⁷ Copy in Baptist Church House.

The standard work on the History of Baptists in Scotland is Yuille(ed). *History of Baptists in Scotland*, Glasgow, 1926, 2nd edition. To this might be added D. B. Murray's *First Hundred Years*. Glasgow 1969, which is mainly concerned with the life of the Union.

D. B. MURRAY

Joseph Butler, 1692—1752, author of "The Analogy of Religion".

Some features of his life and thought. Ian Ramsey. Friends of Dr. Williams's Library. London, 1969. 22 pp. 5 shillings.

As the title indicates, the twenty-third Friends of Dr. Williams's Library Lecture is concerned with "certain aspects" of Bishop Butler's life and thought. In it Dr. Ramsey makes interesting suggestions regarding the reason both for the philosopher's leaving Tewksbury Academy and for his entering Oriel College, Oxford. As typical of Butler's outlook and philosophical approach, his doctrine of probability is discussed and exemplified in relation to his view of conscience, moral decision, the future life, and the credibility of revelation in general and of miracles in particular.

Dr. Ramsey deserves our thanks for the skill and clarity with which he expounds the Bishop's thought, and for the glimpses he gives of Butler the man.

ERNEST F. CLIPSHAM.