

THE SCOTCH BAPTIST TRADITION IN GREAT BRITAIN

This statistically insignificant phase in Baptist life merits an occasional paragraph in denominational histories,¹ and a rather small section in Goadby's *Byepaths of Baptist History*.² By no means confined to the Northern Kingdom, its surviving churches are in North Wales and Lancashire. The Scotch Baptist movement originated in Edinburgh in 1765, in the tiny church formed by Robert Carmichael, where he was joined by his colleague from Glasgow days, Archibald McLean, in 1767. McLean became the chief pastor, writer and mentor of the movement, which may, with some accuracy, be called McLeanite, as Professor Witton Davies does in his account.³ But they acquired another name, which they usually, in their early days, indignantly repudiated, Sandemanian Baptists. This inquiry, therefore, begins with an explanation of this title, and then proceeds to describe McLean's thought and work, and the spread of his teaching in the United Kingdom. It looks at the redoubtable William Jones of London, takes a glance at James Everson of Beverley, and concludes with a retrospect of the last hundred years, in the form of a series of glimpses of a passing way of life and worship.

JOHN GLAS AND HIS CHURCH

John Glas and his son-in-law, Robert Sandeman, were responsible for a tiny revolution in eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century theology and church life in Britain and for a ripple in New England that worried Isaac Backus.⁴ Far more were influenced by their teaching than were ever gathered in the now almost extinct chapels called by their name, whose ethos John Betjeman so neatly caught in his poem, 'The Sandemanian Meeting House in Highbury Quadrant':

Steam or electric, little they care,
Yellow brick terrace or terra cotta hall,
Whitewood sweetshop or silent square,
That the Lord of the Scriptures is Lord of all.
Away from the barks and the shouts and the greetings,
Psalm singing over and love lunch done,
Listening to the Bible in their room for meetings,
Old Sandemanians sit hidden from the sun.⁵

Barony Street Meeting House, Edinburgh, is not so different, a 'faded Victorian postcard' of a place.⁶

Andrew Fuller, friend and correspondent of McLean, thought it worthwhile to controvert Sandemanian theology in his *Strictures on Sandemanianism* (1810), whilst confessing in the introduction, 'The principles taught by Messrs Glas and Sandeman, about half a century ago, did certainly give a new turn and character to almost everything pertaining to the religion of Christ... there are many things in the system which are worthy of serious attention... if Mr Sandeman and his followers had only taught that faith has revealed truth for its object, or that which is true antecedently to being believed, that the finished work of Christ, exclusive of every act, exercise or thought of the human mind, is that for the sake of which a sinner is justified before God... they would have deserved well of the Church of Christ.'⁷ Then he devoted twelve letters to detailed and exhaustive criticism of this system which led its adherents to keep aloof from all other Christians. He includes McLean firmly

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within the Sandemanian family.

There is a direct connection. Robert Carmichael, an Anti-Burgher Secession minister of Coupar Angus, read Sandeman's letters on Hervey's *Theron and Aspasio*, and was captivated by the argument. He corresponded with Glas, moved to Glasgow, was excommunicated from his church, and with McLean, a self-taught printer, joined the Glasgow Glasite church in 1762, but after less than two years left over a case of discipline. The influence, however, continued, and McLean, who came to deplore the worldliness into which Glasite anti-Pharisaism seemed to degenerate, still honoured their teaching and scripture interpretation.

Glas was parish minister of Tealing, near Dundee, deposed in 1730 for contumacy in maintaining independent views of church and state. He and his followers formed churches, first in Dundee and Arbroath, and then in Edinburgh, Perth, Glasgow, Paisley, Kirkcaldy, Aberdeen, Montrose, Galashiels, London, Nottingham, Trowbridge, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Wooler, Whitehaven and other places. In almost all of these locations Scotch Baptist churches arose. Glas, and the more aggressive Sandeman, also influenced the Old Scots Independents from 1768 onwards, and some of the followers of Benjamin Ingham, who still meet at Winewall and Wheatley near Burnley, where Scotch Baptists also emerged in the 1830s.⁸

Besides holding a strong Calvinist theology and an intellectualist view of faith as bare belief, the Glasite churches sought a restored primitive Christianity, like their later descendants the Campbellites,⁹ and like the Plymouth Brethren,¹⁰ and present-day Restoration churches.¹¹ The Glasite pattern is based on a particular interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles. Congregations appointed elders, gifted but not necessarily trained, and deacons. The Lord's Supper was observed by believers only, every Sunday afternoon. Abstinence from blood and things strangled was insisted upon. Primitive customs, such as the kiss of charity, or salutation, the love feast, footwashing on appropriate occasion, avoidance of drawing lots (except in sacred matters) were perpetuated. In addition, much scripture reading in worship, psalm singing, the use of hymns at the love feast (Glas published the first hymnbook in Scotland in 1749)¹² and particular postures for prayer (with hands upraised) were adopted. Congregational independence from the civil magistrate was a central doctrine. Churches were closely linked by visits and letters, and even the transfer of elders, for there could be no Lord's Supper without a Presbytery. Total ecclesiastical isolation developed, but social diversions were not forbidden, which gave rise to McLean's allegation of worldliness.

That most of these were the beliefs and customs of strict Scotch Baptists in the 1850s is evident from this letter to the *Christian Advocate and Scotch Baptist Repository* in October 1850:¹³ 'Sir, will you allow me to enquire through the medium of the *Christian Advocate* if there are any persons resident in or about London, who believe the following doctrines and practices to be taught in the New Testament and are desirous of uniting in church fellowship with such who so believe:

1. Particular Redemption.
2. The communication of the knowledge of saving truth by the Word of God accompanied by the power of the Holy Ghost.
3. Immersion in water on a profession of belief in the truth.
4. Weekly communion in the Lord's Supper.
5. The kiss of charity.
6. The exhortation and prayers of all the brethren in the assemblies of the church.
7. The constant reading of considerable portions of Scriptures in the church.
8. A plurality of elders.

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9. Presidency confined on all occasions to elders.
10. Attention to the Lord's Supper only under the presidency of an elder.
11. Feasts of Charity.
12. Church communion confined to those who are heartily of one mind on all the doctrines and practices of the New Testament.

Only 3 and 10 are not strict Glasite principles, for Glasites are paedobaptists and require more than one elder for the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Certain practices are omitted, possibly by accident, for McLean and his fellow elders strongly contended for abstinence from blood and things strangled, and at this period the Glasites were sadly divided over the same issue.¹⁴

Scotch Baptists, then, were deeply indebted to Glas and Sandeman for their rational Calvinist Biblicism. Many of the early Scotch Baptists had been Glasites, or Old Scots Independents. Over the years there were divisions, and the true heirs of 1765, the Scotch Baptist 'integristes', gradually died out, while the more progressive churches merged either with mainstream Baptists or with the Campbellites.

ARCHIBALD McLEAN AND ROBERT CARMICHAEL

Edinburgh, the birthplace of the Scotch Baptists, remained for many years the mother church. From 1765 there was slow, erratic, but real expansion. In 1767 McLean found an opening in Donaldson's printing works in Edinburgh,¹⁵ the firm that had published in 1761 the first edition of Glas's works, and here he worked until in 1785 the church, by paying him 60 guineas per annum rising later to 100 guineas, enabled him to give his full time to his pastoral, literary, theological and missionary labours. Scotch Baptists were not in principle opposed to a paid ministry, but they were usually unable to support it, although the Edinburgh church sent out a number of Highland Missionaries, and £5 per annum was contributed in the 1830s to John Charlton in Beverley.

Converts from outside Edinburgh were at first attached to the one church, until in 1769 Carmichael went to Dundee, setting in order a church there, whilst in 1770 churches were formed by McLean in Glasgow and Montrose, where a group of Glasites became Baptist. In other Scottish towns, Galashiels, Kirkcaldy, Paisley, Largo, Aberdeen, Perth and Newburgh, groups met and in due time were set in order with elders. In almost all cases Glasites or Old Scots Independents had preceded the Baptists. Moreover, there were several small influxes from Independent churches in Edinburgh and Glasgow, bringing talented men like William Braidwood and Robert Moncrieff into the movement.¹⁶

Others, becoming convinced of believer's baptism, allied themselves with the Edinburgh church for a while: Charles Stuart of Dunearn, formerly minister of the parish of Cramond, George Grieve, Presbyterian minister of Wooler, and James Watt, an Antiburgher minister, all of whom took up medicine as a career. The earliest English congregations were in Wooler, Ford Forge and West Allerdale, all in Northumberland, and in Whitehaven, Chester, Hull and Beverley. Before the death of McLean in 1812, there were churches in Nottingham, London, Liverpool and Lane End, now Longton in the Potteries.¹⁷

It seems that the church at Haggate,¹⁸ near Burnley, had an independent origin in 1760, possibly influenced by the Inghamite churches at Winewall and Wheatley. Only in 1834 did it become formally linked with the Scotch Baptists, although church tradition suggests an earlier Scottish connection, and certainly there is a possibility that McLean's writings circulated in Lancashire.

It was by a combination of annual visits by McLean and the circulation of his

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controversial and expository writings, as well as by continuous correspondence, that the churches were spread and held together in a complete unity of doctrine and practice. McLean corresponded with William Richards of Lynn in the 1780s and that turbulent Welshman may have established an *ecclesiola in ecclesia* in his Norfolk church.¹⁹ With greater effect he entered a lengthy correspondence with J. R. Jones of Ramoth, whose espousal of unenthusiastic Christianity with strict church order divided the Baptists of North Wales, and carried with it for a time even Christmas Evans. A distinct body of churches in North Wales was formed, with its own splits and reunions, which continues in ten churches today. Jones agreed with McLean on faith and on the practices of the primitive church, but disagreed on the millenium and on the extent to which fellowship with other Christians was to be allowed.²⁰ McLean, while he was a doughty controversialist and had no hesitation in disputing with Fuller at some length on the nature and effects of faith, and the necessity of a holy disposition for faith to take root, was, unlike his Glasite teachers, anxious to spread the Gospel. He encouraged mission work from the churches, and firmly and generously supported the work of the Baptist Missionary Society, raising for it considerable sums, both from his churches and from special preaching events.

Some of his views led to prolonged controversy and division. True to his biblicism, he found it impossible to speak of the Son of God as eternally generated, thereby departing from the Westminster Confession of Faith, preferring instead to refer his generation, or begetting, to His incarnation and resurrection from the dead, to both of which the Scripture applies the word 'begotten', and assigns that as the reason that He is called the Son of God. 'It becomes me, however, to be very modest on this subject, as there may possibly be a sense in which He is begotten of which I have no idea at all.'²¹ None of his followers, after the division shortly to be noticed, appears to refer to this at all, and in the mid-nineteenth century edition of his works, his essay on eternal generation is omitted at the wish of the subscribers.²² In his *Reminiscences of the Pleasance*, J. Williamson speaks of this doctrine as still a shibboleth in the 1830s. 'Was Jesus the Eternal Son of God or the Son of the Eternal God?' was a question asked of aspirants to membership of the Edinburgh church.²³ In the 1840s this was the issue which divided Philpot from the other Strict and Particular churches.²⁴

As must be inevitable, when new possibilities of exploration into Scripture are opened, lay exhortation and lay eldership being new ideas much derided in Scotland when Glas introduced them into his societies, some adventurous or mischievous spirits created internal dissent. McLean reported faithfully the divisions which weakened Scotch Baptists during the eighteenth century, and the splits of 1810 and 1834/5, which dissipated the effects of McLean's teaching, sent many Scotch Baptists into less contentious parts of the Baptist family.

In 1774 an unnamed member of the Edinburgh church argued for various radical positions - only real believers should pray in public, no peculiarity was to be attached to the office of elder, Christians were not bound to observe the first day of the week or the prohibition on blood eating. He was, after disturbing arguments, expelled and formed, with several dissidents, a new society which was alleged to deny both the divinity of Christ and the eternity of punishment. This group, however, soon dissolved. Later in the same year Dr Walker, the only member with means, disagreed with the church over a matter of discipline and withdrew, and the church lost its place of worship in the Magdalen Chapel.²⁵

In 1776 the Glasgow church adopted Sabellian views and progressed to Socinianism. McLean invited delegates to Edinburgh to discuss the alleged heresy. The Glasgow elders, Beg and Stuart, came but by way of Dundee and Montrose, where they unsettled the churches. Stuart refused to yield, and all fellowship

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between the churches ceased. But Beg and most of the church, and the waverers in Dundee and Montrose, were reconciled. After being refused readmittance to the Glasgow church, Stuart formed his own group which survived until 1850.²⁶

Meanwhile Dr Walker had become willing to be reconciled to the Edinburgh church, if he could bring his elder, Shand, with him. A Mr Shand, who may be the same man, was admitted to the Edinburgh Glasite church in 1760.²⁷ Dr Walker then caused trouble on the subject of eternal generation, with Shand still wishing to be an elder. He was much put out when Braidwood, recently received from the Old Scots Independents, was chosen, and finally Shand and Dr and Mrs Walker left, in a secession which survived Walker's death in 1791.

In 1780 the ruinous controversy about the place and functions of the eldership began. Whilst much was said and written, much remains obscure. The apparent question at issue was: may a group of believers not set in order with a presbytery eat the Lord's Supper or not? McLean and Braidwood, and later William Jones and James Everson, with Andrew Duncan in Glasgow, consistently said they must not. A subsidiary question was: must there be, as Glas held, more than one elder to conduct the Lord's Supper? The usual Scotch Baptist answer was that one elder was sufficient but that the church was incomplete without a presbytery. The qualifications for eldership were closely examined, and to scriptural qualifications financial freedom to serve was added. On forbearance, it was asked whether a church should be in fellowship with another which allowed even one member to believe that it might be possible to eat without elders. There was also the possibility that a bare two or three might meet and consider themselves the church, yet such a small group could scarcely carry out Christ's rule of discipline. There were also those who believed that nothing could change from the principles of 1765.

There were no divisions in this area in the 1780s, but several useful members were lost, such as Andrew Swanston, Charles Stuart and George Grieve, all theologically-trained men. Stuart continued as an occasional hearer. It is remarkable that these churches, with both their propensity to be dogmatic and their insistence on unanimity, not to mention their constriction on forbearance and catholic charity, survived at all. It is a tribute to McLean, Braidwood and H. D. Inglis, a great triumvirate, that the Edinburgh church was put on such a firm footing. In 1785 McLean estimated the membership at 380, besides several out-parties.²⁸

1808 was a good year for Scottish Baptists. Christopher Anderson bought for his young congregation the Episcopal Chapel in Rose Street, long famous as Charlotte Chapel, and James and Robert Haldane were baptised. These new evangelical influences from a wider Christian world could not be ignored by the Scotch Baptists: the Glasgow church received another fifty converts from Old Scots Independents in 1808, who did not think it necessary to have elders before celebrating the Lord's Supper. Despite intervention by the aged McLean, two years later 160 members, led by Dr James Watt, left the church in Glassford Street, and circulated their account of the division.²⁹ D. S. Wylie, formerly an elder in Paisley and now in Liverpool, agreed with Watt, as did the churches at Paisley, Dunfermline, and a section in Dundee, which eventually settled in Rattray Street. In Glasgow questions about the trusteeship of the building, held by James Duncan of the strict party, and personal disagreements exacerbated the split. But Watt and the progressive party flourished. The Edinburgh church remained united and the other strict churches remained in fellowship with it. It is these churches that are listed in the circular of 1822 published by Witton Davies.³⁰

The relationship between the churches, the hegemony of the Edinburgh church, and the place of creeds and confessions all played an important part in this. In no real sense were the Scotch Baptists independent. Correspondence, visits, advice

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(sought and unsought), and the participation of elders in ordination, as well as their occasional transfer, ensured a close communion and a unity in doctrine and practice within the sisterhood of churches. Each church, once set in order, was believed to have the necessary gifts of a church of Christ. Difficulties arose at this point. Who controlled the gifts? What changes were possible? Were the original principles, or was the Bible, the rule of faith? All these issues are evident in the 1810 pamphlet and remained with the churches to the end.

The tension concerned two influences on McLean's career, struggling for dominance. The strict biblicism of Glas and Sandeman is obvious both in this theology and his ecclesiology. But he had been converted under the ministry of John McLaurin of the Ramshorn Church in Glasgow, a leader in the remarkable revivals of the 1740s, associated with Whitefield and exemplified in the 'Cambuslang Wark', from which McLean derived his enthusiasm for mission at home and abroad. While Sandemanianism is quite distinct from Hyper-Calvinism, it is similarly inimical to mission. Scotch Baptist history is a struggle between the two influences, with the Old Scotch Baptists becoming ever more Glasite, and the progressive parties entering more fully into the evangelical heritage.

In 1812 McLean died, full of years and honour. No one else could approach his stature as pastor, leader and writer. Braidwood lived until 1830, while Inglis had died in 1806. Their successors, H. D. Dickie and Robert Anderson, nephew of Christopher, led the Edinburgh church into less exclusive ways.

WILLIAM JONES AND HIS WRITINGS

It is impossible to explore the story of the Scotch Baptists without meeting the name of William Jones. He supplied the memoir of McLean to an edition of his works which he edited and published in 1823, wrote a pioneering history of those primitive Christians, the Waldensians; produced a *Cyclopaedia of Sects*; edited the works of Samuel Stennett; wrote on other religious and political subjects; and edited a series of periodicals devoted to primitive Christianity, collecting much earlier material, and putting forward, from Liverpool and then from London, news, reviews, essays, biographies and poems concerning the Scotch Baptist churches and similar bodies.³¹

Jones was born into an Anglican family at Gresford, Denbighshire, in 1762.³² His brother-in-law, baptised in London by Stennett, had joined Little Wild Street before moving to Chester, where William Jones joined him in business. A Baptist church was gathered in Chester, which called Samuel Ecking of Shrewsbury to be its pastor. In 1783 Ecking, some of whose essays were published a year later³³ and who is referred to by Fuller in his *Strictures*, changed his sentiments 'from looking for symptoms of faith to simple belief in gospel testimony'. He was accused, not surprisingly, of Sandemanianism, but he took his church, including Jones, with him. He died, still a young man, in 1785, his attention not yet drawn to 'the order of Christ's house as exemplified in the practice of the first churches'. The leadership in Chester passed to Thomas Bayley, who later founded a noted Scotch Baptist dynasty in Nottingham. The church heard of McLean, who sent twelve copies of the *Commission* to Chester, but refused a visit until the church gave up its disorderly practice of communicating without a pastor. In 1786 they obeyed, and McLean stayed for five weeks with Jones, baptising him and five others.

In 1793 Jones moved to Liverpool, where with D. S. Wylie he founded a church in 1798. Jones at first resisted invitations to be ordained an elder because of the demands of business and his wife's reluctance. He comments that the Haldanes, becoming Baptist, 'ought to have associated with the parent stock, but set up for themselves, and were only partially enlightened about the laws and institutions of the

Kingdom of Christ.³⁴ They introduced novelties, such as public discipline, and held that the elder's office was not essential to the Church of Christ. Clearly he holds the Haldanes partly responsible for the 1810 division, in which Jones parted company with Wylie.

In 1812 Jones moved to London, where he was occupied with his books and editorial labours. Despite bankruptcy in 1826, he remained active until his death in 1846, just after he had been nominated to a small charitable annuity by Queen Victoria. Though a newspaper report of this said he was a member of no church, he still claimed to be a Scotch Baptist, although he had moved through a series of divisions in the London church, glimpsed in Whitley's *Baptists of London*.³⁵

Although Jones was a strenuous upholder of the strict view of the elder's office, after 1835 the strict churches of Edinburgh and Glasgow distanced themselves from him, probably because of his short, but for Scotch Baptists disastrous, championing of the teachings of Alexander Campbell in his last periodical venture, *The Millennial Harbinger, and Voluntary Church Advocate*, March 1835 - June 1836, in which he reprinted material from Campbell's periodicals, *The Christian Baptist* and *The Millennial Harbinger*. This development began with a visit to the Scotch Baptist church at Windmill Street in 1833 of Peyton C. Wyeth, a young American artist, who told Jones of a powerful revival of primitive Christianity in America. Jones had heard of Campbell as the antagonist of Robert Owen and now eagerly promulgated his writings, until he began to disagree with him on the work of the Holy Spirit and the meaning of Baptism. The damage had been done. Campbellite ideas split the churches in North Wales, from some of which members with the new views were expelled, while in other cases they took over the building. The largest Scotch Baptist church in England was in Nottingham, with a second church nearby at Old Basford; the Nottingham church was severely divided. James Wallis, later a leading Church of Christ editor, was expelled with his friends in 1836, and the new body, with its evangelistic thrust, less rigid church order and more popular appeal, soon outstripped the Scotch Baptist church in size.³⁶ Most of the early Churches of Christ were formed either by secession of the whole, as in Auchtermuchty, or part, as in Edinburgh and Glasgow, of the Scotch Baptist community.

The Scotch Baptist churches were ripe for division in the 1830s. While Edinburgh had stood firm in 1810, younger leaders were now tentatively exploring the possibility of forbearance on the matter of eating without elders. Attempts were made to be reconciled with the divided churches, and in 1834, in Aberdeen, moves to bring together two churches in mutual forbearance led to a schism, firstly in Edinburgh, where the senior elders led out a group eventually to settle in Argyle Square, and then in Glasgow, where the strict church, after suspending communion with everyone for a time, split and Andrew Duncan led a group of diehards out, and in Dundee, where the church divided, 80 for and 57 against forbearance. There was division in London, and elsewhere churches waited to take sides. The Haggate Church at Burnley aligned itself with the strict party in Edinburgh, coming for the first time into Scotch Baptist organisation. Andrew Liddell, a strict deacon in Glasgow, later an elder, visited Haggate in 1835 but could not communicate because the church was still in agitation over the Supper question. By 1836 a portion had left, the remainder were judged 'plain, simple-minded Christianlike people who have something to learn but are willing to be taught', and Liddell ate the supper on his visit in March.³⁷ The church at Beverley, after receiving letters from both factions, decided on the strict path in 1837. In that year Duncan listed the strict churches as follows: a church in Edinburgh having two pastors, Pattison and Horsburgh; a church in Stirling having two pastors; a church in Falkirk having one pastor; a church in Dundee having two pastors, Pirie and Gilbert; a church in Montrose and one in

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Wooler, uncertain whether one or two pastors; a church at Haggate having two pastors; a church in Newburgh, Fife, having two pastors; a church in Largo, Fife, having one pastor; and two or three others with which he is unacquainted. One may have been at Galashiels, which was certainly a bastion of strictness from the 1840s. Beverley was still undecided, and Glasgow seems to have had only one pastor.³⁸

From the returns to the Parliamentary Commission on Religious Instruction in Scotland, produced in 1837, we can gain some idea of the relative strength of the various parties. In Glasgow, Andrew Duncan and his friends met in the Andersonian Institute, with 33 members and 58 attenders, including a few from Kilmarnock and the Highlands; David Smith and W. Dick of the original church met in George Street with 45 members and 95 attenders; the Watt church of 1810 was now in Portland Street under D. McLaren, father of Alexander, with 180 members and 275 attenders. The latter two and another church under Rev. W. Shirreff, formerly of St Ninian's Parish, Stirling, were about to unite in 1841 to form the John Street Scotch Baptist Church. In Edinburgh the strict party in Argyle Square had 109 members, 190 hearers and a few poor and working-class people. The Niddry Street Church had 172 members and 500 hearers, of whom three-quarters were poor and working class.³⁹

In 1844 the statistics of the Baptist Union of Scotland's first Annual Report, published at Cupar, give for Glasgow: Hanover Street, the united church, about 300 members, and Brown Street, the strict party, 54. In Edinburgh, Bristo Place, whither Niddry Street had moved, had 260, and Argyle Square 130. In Dundee, North Seagate (the strict party of 1810) mustered 65, South Seagate (the strict party of 1835) 53, and Meadowside (the less rigorous party of 1810) 109. The Glasgow George Street church maintained James Blair at Saltcoats until he left for an 'English' church at Ayr in 1837. The Bristo church supported a travelling agent in 1838, who visited Sanquhar, Dumfries, Chester, and Whitehaven and found there Scotch churches of the more open order.⁴⁰ These scattered statistics give some idea of the fragmented and weak state of the churches as mid century approached.

THE CHURCH AT BEVERLEY

James Everson, elder of the Beverley church, provides evidence of the later development of the strict churches. Correspondence of this church, from a letter from Archibald McLean in 1809 to a whole batch in 1835-39 from various leaders has been preserved.⁴¹ It includes letters from Wallis of Nottingham, Duncan and Liddell of the strict party in Glasgow, Robert Anderson of the Bristo church in Edinburgh, and letters from the pastors of some of the smaller churches, and ends with a letter from John Cowan, elder of Galashiels in 1848, written just prior to his death from typhus at the early age of twenty-five. In 1849 Everson began a journal, *The Christian Advocate and Scotch Baptist Repository*, the only periodical to have 'Scotch Baptist' in its title, and maintained it until 1853. Also, in the Humberside Record Office in Beverley, is preserved the Register of Births of the Scotch Baptist Meeting House from 1787-1837, and the papers of the Particular Baptist Church, later in Lord Roberts Road, founded, perhaps significantly, in 1833.

Beverley seems an unlikely place for Scotch Baptists to take root. Dominated by two great churches, the Minster and St Mary's, it is a market town, more recently known for its barracks and racecourse. Most Scotch churches seem to have begun among weavers, as in Largo and Paisley, or other textile workers, as in Nottingham, although many congregations contained a few learned men, doctors, teachers and printers. The Beverley church seems to have been an offshoot of the Hull church - at that time the river was navigable to the town. McLean in his letter regrets that the two communities cannot be united so that gifts can be shared. In 1809, when he

wrote, the Lord's Supper was not being celebrated in Beverley, and brothers Brandham and Selby, deacons for some years, had separated from the group. John and Mary Selby's first child was registered in 1792, seventh in the list beginning in 1787, which presumably contained the names of children of hearers as well as members. The name Brandham begins to appear in 1792 also, and Richard Jamieson, the third deacon listed in the 1822 letter, began to register his children in 1799, Altogether 145 names are registered between 1787 and 1837 when James Everson sent the book to the Home Office.

The name of the single elder in 1822 was John Charlton. Jones printed a letter which he wrote to his married daughter in London in 1823 describing the last illness of her mother. The correspondence indicates that he kept a school, preached in the surrounding villages, for which the church received £5 annually from the Edinburgh church, and remarried, for greetings are again sent to Mrs Charlton. He lived in Wednesday Market and appeared as Rev Jno Charlton, Baptist minister, in Beverley town lists. A note in the Register of Births states that it came into the hands of Andrew Duncan, Glasgow, while officiating for Mr Charlton at Beverley in October 1833. Letters to Deacon Selby mention Charlton's serious illness, and he died in May 1834. The note adds that James Everson from Monmouth was set apart to the pastoral office over the Scotch Baptist Church at Beverley on Thursday, 1st May 1834, and the register was delivered to him by Duncan on 9th May.

The church, meeting in a 'neat meeting house in Walkergate' erected in 1808, seems to have remained united through the troubles, to have thrown its lot in with the strict party by 1837, and to have been untouched by Campbellism. A few early members of the Particular Baptist Church had been members of Walkergate Meeting, and some of these appear to have returned to a Scotch allegiance. The last transfer to the Particular church was noted in 1891.⁴²

James Everson was led to Scotch Baptist principles by reading the works of Glas and McLean, and by corresponding with Duncan and others. How he came from Monmouth to Beverley is a mystery. While there he supported himself as a teacher, although he is listed as a printer. After the church joined the strict party, Everson appears to have been a staunch defender of the 'principles of 1765', advocating close communion, the presence of at least one elder, and the importance of the Sandemanian background of Scotch Baptist theology and practice. Indeed, he reprinted a treatise on the *Church of God* by Simplex (John Young, Writer to the Signet and Edinburgh Glasite elder) and other purely Glasite material. He also published news from Particular Baptist churches and showed interest in the work of Frederick Crowe in Honduras, where strict communion churches were being set up. Oncken received honourable mention, although a correspondent is very critical of the strict party in Edinburgh allowing members to attend a meeting to support the German mission along with members of all the other Baptist churches. Everson reviewed John Thomas's *Elpis Israel* which was causing agitation among the Campbellites. Various correspondents assail him with their even more exclusive views, whilst one 'liberal' suggested improvements in Scotch Baptist churches: shorter sermons, better prayers, and an end to public confession of faith before baptism.⁴³

Everson's publications carried occasional news about the Welsh churches, and recorded in 1849 the death of John Berry, elder at Haggate for 24 years. He notes that Andrew Liddell is ordained elder at Brown Street, Glasgow, by Horsburgh of Argyle Square and Cowan of Galashiels, and in 1852 is able to report 'that William Thirsk has been ordained his colleague at Beverley, without laying on of hands as we had no presbytery, but now we have a presbytery.'⁴⁴ Why were there no elders from sister churches? Everson's last appearance in a Beverley Directory was in 1858.⁴⁵

A little more information can be gleaned about this sturdy church. In 1888 a

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new chapel was built in Wilbert Lane,⁴⁶ now the headquarters of the St John's Ambulance Brigade. Costing £800 and providing 200 sittings, its erection reflects a period of some prosperity following on a lean time, for in 1865 there were only twelve members.⁴⁷ By 1881 Thirsk had been joined as elder by Thomas Loft, a painter who lived in a cottage abutting the chapel. Thirsk and Loft continue to appear in lists of subscriptions to the Scottish Baptist Home Missionary Society until individual names are no longer published after 1914. Witton Davies testified in 1922 that the church still survived, but there are no entries in Green's *Almanack* after that year. It is interesting that in 1882 the chapel is referred to in Slater's *Directory* as 'The Sandemanian or Scotch Baptist Chapel'.⁴⁸ Everson had left his mark!

According to John Cowan, in 1848 Largo in Fife, with James Kellock as elder, was the liveliest church in the strict connection.⁴⁹ In 1865 it had 51 members,⁵⁰ but in 1867 the church divided, a 'new' church, with a pastor, seceding from the old,⁵¹ which continued until 1927. In Galashiels the undivided church rebuilt in Stirling Street in 1870, with J. Ward of Argyle Place, Edinburgh, and Thomas Proctor and Abraham Altham of Haggate as preachers at the opening.⁵² In 1875 this church also split, with one section calling a pastor and the strict party continuing with Alexander Thomson and colleagues in Victoria Street until 1912, when a pastor was called.

The *Largo Village Book* of 1927 quotes a printed report of a conference of Scotch Baptists held at Harrogate (surely Haggate!) in 1872. Largo was represented by James Kellock, Newburgh by James Wood, who pleaded for 'restriction rather than extension of our communion in this latitudinarian age', W. Thirsk of Beverley, who 'looked to zeal not to learning for preachers', and John Edwards of Haggate, who claimed that it was man's comment on the Word that had caused divisions. This conference decided that it was legitimate to receive money from unbelievers, but not to solicit it.⁵³

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE SCOTCH BAPTISTS?

In Scotland the more liberal churches moved slowly into the mainstream. Academy Street, Aberdeen, having from time to time employed evangelists alongside the elders, died quietly in 1920, leaving its assets to closed communion Home Mission churches. In Dundee, Meadowside church, with distinguished elders such as Sir Charles Barrie, manufacturer and Lord Provost, called a full-time pastor in 1891, although retaining elders too, and came into the Union in the early twentieth century, uniting in 1987 with the former English church in Ward Road. John Street Church in Glasgow followed the same pattern, dissolving in the aftermath of city redevelopment in the 1970s and releasing its assets for Castlemilk. The church at Storie Street, Paisley, divided in 1842, with the more conservative forming the George Street congregation. Both churches, however, called paid pastors by the latter half of the century. Thomas Watson McAlpine of George Street, grandson of the first Paisley elder, Thomas Watson, and father of Sir G. McAlpine, President of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland in 1910, died in office in 1877. He was noted for his knowledge of Latin, Greek, French and Hebrew, and his careful preparation of discourses, and is not untypical of the Scotch Baptist elder at his best.⁵⁴

When the strict party at Argyle Square dissolved themselves in 1874, most members went back to Bristo, although Archibald Shearer, one of the elders, joined the open membership church at Dublin Street, and eventually became a deacon.⁵⁵ The paid pastorate was restored, remembering McLean, in 1870, and plurality of elders ceased with the resignation of Percival Waugh in 1923. By 1905 the afternoon service had been dropped, the pastors hoping that the exhortation of the brethren, that hallowed custom, would be continued at the midweek service. In 1927 the word

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'Scotch' was finally dropped from the church's name.⁵⁶ The congregation moved to a new suite of buildings in 1935, the preacher at the opening being T. R. Glover. The original church of 1765 had travelled far!

In 1852 the church at Kirkcaldy, which had hitherto escaped major rift, divided, and the more progressive moved, still with Scotch polity, into a new building at Whyte's Causeway, where twenty years later a full-time pastor-evangelist superseded the businessmen who had been pastors. The original church, associated with Ninian Lockhart, remained in Rose Street until 1968, when it moved to Hayfield and remains in communion with the more conservative group of the Churches of Christ. Elsewhere in Scotland churches merged with English groups, as in Falkirk and Stirling, became one-pastor churches, as Newburgh did in 1908, or died away, as eventually did the cause in Largo.

The Haggate church grew and prospered under Scotch Baptist polity in the nineteenth century.⁵⁷ In 1866 the present large chapel on the hill above Burnley and Nelson was opened. In 1867 a new church began in Burnley, becoming Angle Street, now merged in Burnley Lane. In 1886, just before his early death, Abraham Altham built a church for Scotch Baptists down the hill at Brierfield, which still practises plurality of elders, although it is now in membership with the Baptist Union, practising closed membership but open communion.⁵⁸ In 1893 another church was formed in Bradshaw Street, Nelson, which closed after 1945.

For many years these churches worked closely together, sharing elders and resources, and being visited on significant occasions by Messrs Oxley and Thirsk from Beverley, and in the 1880s by W. P. Lockhart, grandson of Ninian Lockhart of Kirkcaldy and founder of the Toxteth Tabernacle, Liverpool. It is said that he ran that church somewhat on Scotch lines, and certainly he was fond of associating with the Haggate people.⁵⁹ Changes came to the mother church at Haggate. In 1953 it joined the Baptist Union and called a full-time pastor. Under the ministry of the Rev. Joy Ford, the church opened its membership in 1975. The present secretary remarks that, while they were invited in 1986 to send representatives to Brierfield's centenary, only a few older members were aware of the old connections.⁶⁰

The churches of North Wales seem to be the last bastion of McLeanism. Their history, from the time of J. B. Jones of Ramoth, has been complex and tangled, and most of their records are in Welsh. They might well be the subject of another article. The Campbellite troubles of the 1830s greatly divided the churches. Rhos split and Criccieth, the church of Lloyd George, became for a time Church of Christ. There are records of preachers from Edinburgh in North Wales in the 1870s. New chapels were being built. Tabernacl in Rhos in 1884 had its foundation stone laid by elders from Haggate. In 1896 En-Gedi Chapel was built for farmers above Harlech, and in 1904 Calfaria Chapel in Rhos was opened. In 1924 there was a difference of opinion in Rhos which led to a division between the older people and a new generation of educated non-fundamentalist preachers, some of whom had been conscientious objectors during the Great War and were members of the Labour Party. Two elders, the brothers Jones, became Labour Members of Parliament after 1945, and one was enobled as Lord Maelor. Since the 1940s, however, the momentum has been lost and today there are four elders in ten churches, and only one of them is under seventy. The pulpits are open to preachers of other denominations, and some of the distinctive ideas are forgotten, yet the name lingers on - Bedyddwyr Albanaid.⁶¹

Mention has already been made of John Cowan, the elder at Galashiels who died in his 26th year in February 1850. On 11th December 1848 he wrote to James Everson a letter which, both in information and tone, typifies the old Scotch Baptists.⁶² Congratulating Everson on his pamphlet, *Reasons for Being a Scotch Baptist*, he remarks on his industry:

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It is amazing to me how you get on at all. Preparing two discourses, delivering them every Lord's Day: speaking at two meetings through the week: lecturing sometimes at public institutions: printing placards etc.: yet writing and printing treatises on theological subjects, is indeed a prodigious amount of labour. The half of it would make me quail. Yet, "every man as he has received the gift must minister the same".

Since I saw you I have not been very much idle either... I spent a sabbath very pleasantly at our sister church in Edinburgh, who are still moving on in their usual tranquil way.

After visiting Mr and Mrs Liddell at Plean House,

We went up to Stirling one of the days. Truly the few things that remain there have much need of being strengthened for they are ready to die. The Lord's Day following I spent at Glasgow. The Church there is harmonious but not increasing. Mr Auld has entered upon his new duties and seems to like them very well... the health of many of the members and of their families was not very good and though as a church they have peace and enjoyment, yet truly their candlestick is burning low... on the following Lord's Day I was at Largo. This is I believe the liveliest church in our connexion. They are enjoying peace, their gifts for edification are excellent, their hearers pretty numerous, and they have the prospect of two additions by baptism, so soon as the health of the applicants will permit...

He returns to Galashiels:

The health of my colleague and of the church is good... trade is better. The Baptist Union Church here have lost sixteen of their members lately.⁶³ They differed with their minister and seem to have adopted more primitive views. They are for the most part hearing with us... Oh, the profession is at a low ebb, and the worst symptom of all is the want of any desire in the minds of its adherents for its revival, and consequently the want of proper exertion for that object. Our churches will never be what they have been, I fear, if indeed they long survive... but let us not despair or faint in the Lord's work. His end will be served independently of man.'

NOTES

- 1 A. C. Underwood, *A History of the English Baptists*, 1947, pp.188-193.
- 2 J. J. Goadby, *Bye-Paths in Baptist History*, 1871, pp.42-6.
- 3 T. W. Davies, 'The McLeanist (Scotch) and Campbellite Baptists in Wales', *Transactions of the Baptist Historical Society*, 7, 1921, pp.147-181.
- 4 ed. W. G. McLoughlin, I. Backus, *On State, Church and Calvinism*, Harvard 1968, pp.411,502.
- 5 J. Betjeman, *Collected Poems*, 1973, (used by permission). cf. D. B. Murray, 'The Influence of John Glas', *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, 22, 1984, pp.45-6, and D. B. Murray, 'The Social and Religious Origins of Scottish Non-Presbyterian Protestant Dissent from 1730-1800', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, St Andrews University, 1977, for more on the Glasites and their influence on Scotch Baptists.
- 6 ed. J. Gifford, C. McWilliam, D. Walker, *The Buildings of Scotland, Edinburgh*, Harmondsworth, 1984, p.337.
- 7 A. Fuller, *Strictures on Sandemanianism*, 1810, in *Collected Works*, 1850, p.236.
- 8 A. Leaver, *Historical Fragments of Haggate Baptist Church*, 1934, p.2.
- 9 For Campbellites, see A. C. Watters, *History of the British Churches of Christ*, Birmingham, 1948, and D. M. Thomson, *Let Sects and Parties Fall*, Birmingham, 1980.
- 10 cf. R. Coad, *A History of the Brethren*

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- Movement, Exeter, 1968.**
- 11 cf. A. Walker, *Restoring the Kingdom*, 1985.
 - 12 **Christian Songs** passed through several editions until published in its final form in Edinburgh in 1875. There is detail in Julian, *Dictionary of Hymnology*, 1892, s.v.
 - 13 **Christian Advocate and Scotch Baptist Repository**, Beverley, October 1850, p.240.
 - 14 **Baxter Mss** in Dundee University Library.
 - 15 W. Jones, *Memoir of the Author*, in A. McLean, *Works*, 10th edn., Elgin 1847-53, vol.1, p.cxxvi.
 - 16 *ibid.*, p.cxxvii.
 - 17 A. McLean in *An Account of the Scots Baptists in Rippon's Annual Register*, 1795-6, p.373. cf. also W. Jones, ed., *Theological Repository*, 4, Liverpool, 1808, pp.197-8.
 - 18 There are two Histories, that by A. Leaver, 1934, is more accurate and less fanciful than the 1960 Bi-Centenary Booklet. In the *Baptist Register*, 1798-1801, p.21, Rippon mentions Hag-gate: 'a small village north of Coln; about 20 members, their faith and order somewhat different from that of other Baptist churches in England'.
 - 19 For Richards, see J. A. Oddy, 'The Dissidence of William Richards', *BQ* 27, July 1977, pp.118-127.
 - 20 T. W. Davies, *op.cit.*, p.159. cf. also 'English Letters in the Cwrwmawr Collection', *BQ* 16, 1956, p.323ff.
 - 21 McLean's exposition of Christological Doctrine is his main work, *The Commission Given By Jesus Christ to His Apostles Illustrated*, in *Works*, Vol.1, pp.31-5, seems quite orthodox! and Spurgeon gives his Paraphrase and Exposition of Hebrews three stars in his *On Commenting and Commentaries*.
 - 22 Prefatory note to McLean's *Works*, 10th edn., vol.7, Elgin, 1853.
 - 23 J. Williamson, *Reminiscences of the Old Baptist Church, Pleasance*, 1901, p.15.
 - 24 S. F. Paul, *Historical Sketch of the Gospel Standard Baptists*, 1945, pp.24ff.
 - 25 A. McLean, in Rippon, *op.cit.*, p.373.
 - 26 J(ames) B(rown) in *Christian Advocate*, 1, Edinburgh, 1864, p.39.
 - 27 List of members of the Glasite Church, Edinburgh, in private possession.
 - 28 A. McLean in Rippon, *op.cit.*, p.373.
 - 29 **Letter from the Baptist Church in Glassford Street, Glasgow, 1810**. This pamphlet contains, in normal print, the opinion of the 'liberal' majority, and in much smaller print the minority, 'strict' view.
 - 30 T. W. Davies, 'A Scotch Baptist Circular', *Transactions of the Baptist Historical Society*, 6, 1919, pp.252-57.
 - 31 For details cf. R. Taylor, 'English Baptist Periodicals, 1790-1865', *BQ* 27, 1977, pp.50-82.
 - 32 W. Jones, *Autobiography*, ed. by his son, 1846, p.2.
 - 33 S. Ecking, *Three Essays on Grace, Faith and Experience*, Chester, 1784.
 - 34 Jones, *op.cit.*, p.36.
 - 35 W. T. Whitley, *Baptists of London*, n.d.? 1929, pp.74-5, 156. There are also references to a church meeting at Dorchester Hall in the 1850s in both the *Primitive Church Magazine* and *Christian Advocate and Scotch Baptist Repository*, vol.5, 1852, p.63. A leaflet asking for donations towards the building of a new chapel by this group, endorsed by Edinburgh elders of the less strict school, is in the *Beverley Mss*.
 - 36 D. M. Thomson, *op.cit.*, pp.21-2.
 - 37 *Beverley Mss*. These are in the possession of Mr Owain Jones, Mold, after several changes of ownership and place of residence. I am indebted to Mr Jones for information on the North Wales churches.
 - 38 *ibid.*
 - 39 D. B. Murray, 'Baptists in Scotland before 1869', *BQ* 23, 1970, pp.261-2.
 - 40 **From the Baptist Church Meeting in Bristo Street, Edinburgh, Edinburgh, 1838**, p.2.
 - 41 *Beverley Mss*.
 - 42 **Membership Book of the Lord Roberts Road Baptist Church, Beverley, in Humberside Record Office, Beverley**; as is, in microfilm, the Register of Births of the Scotch Baptist Church in Walkergate, Beverley.
 - 43 **Christian Advocate and Scotch Baptist Repository**, Nov.1851, pp.251-2. John Thomas became one of the founders of Christadelphianism, which attracted a number of former Campbellites into its membership.
 - 44 *ibid.*, vol.5, p.80.
 - 45 Slater's *Directory of Beverley*, 1858.
 - 46 Slater's *Directory*, 1903 text.
 - 47 *Baptist Year Book* 1865.
 - 48 Slater's *Directory*, 1882.
 - 49 *Beverley, Mss*.
 - 50 *Baptist Year Book*, 1865.
 - 51 ed. Yuille, *History of the Baptists in Scotland*. Glasgow, 1926, p.151.
 - 52 *op.cit.* p.135.
 - 53 *Largo Village Book*, Cupar, 1932, p.21.
 - 54 **Obituary in the Scottish Baptist Magazine**, 1877.
 - 55 **Obituary in SBM**, 1894.
 - 56 **Bristo Baptist Church Yearbooks**.
 - 57 cf in addition, ed. W. T. Whitley, *Baptists in North West England*, 1913, pp.165-7.
 - 58 **Centenary Booklet**, Brierfield Baptist Church, 1986.
 - 59 Leaver, *op.cit.*, p.12.
 - 60 Private correspondence.
 - 61 Notes of an address given to the Scottish Baptist History Project, 1985. For the Jones brothers, see D. W. Bebbington, 'Baptist M.P.s in the Twentieth Century', *BQ*, 31, 1986, pp.269-70.
 - 62 *Beverley Mss*.
 - 63 Reference to a church planted by the First Union of 1845, associated with Francis Johnstone

See also author's thesis, and D. Mitchell, 'Archibald McLean, 1733-1812, Baptist Pioneer in Scotland', Edinburgh Ph.D. thesis, 1950.

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