

REVIVAL AND RENEWAL IN BAPTIST LIFE

The Contribution of William Steadman (1764-1837)*

In the 1825 circular letter to the Yorkshire and Lancashire Association, William Steadman noted that 'within the last thirty years a new face has been worn, and a new course of action has been adopted by a great majority of the Christian world.'¹ He referred to the great missionary impulse, overseas and at home. 'A new face ... a new course of action ...': this is surely a striking description of that revival and renewal which had led to the transformation of English Dissent. In contrast to the introspective 'walled garden' mentality of many in the mid-eighteenth century,² from about 1780 onwards we see the proliferation of outward-looking projects, in village preaching, Sunday School work, training, associational life, foreign mission, and inter-denominational enterprises of all kinds. This has been vividly described by Deryck Lovegrove in the important work, *Established Church, Sectarian People: Itinerancy and the Transformation of English Dissent, 1780-1830*. He demonstrates the crucial role of itinerant evangelism in church growth during the period 1780-1830, and lists *over seventy* organisations, active in itinerant evangelism, formed in this period by calvinistic dissenters.³ Michael Watts also highlights the significance of itinerancy and other evangelistic activities, but analyses the wider context, giving a clear picture of opposition as well as growth.⁴ As far as the Particular Baptists are concerned, the contribution of leaders such as William Carey, Andrew Fuller, John Ryland and John Rippon is well known. But all the themes relevant to revival and renewal at this time - itinerancy, training, Associational life, interdenominational sympathy, and mission - can be seen clearly in the life of William Steadman (1764-1837).

Trained at Bristol, under that great exponent of village preaching, Caleb Evans, Steadman took up his first pastorate at Broughton in Hampshire. Eight years of hard work and discouragement followed; but Steadman started as he was to continue right through his ministry. He determined to go out into the unreached villages around, and would not be deterred by opposition, apathy, appalling weather, fear, or sheer fatigue. Moving to Plymouth Dock in 1798, Steadman had the joy of seeing far more visible success in his ministry, and he also continued his efforts in village preaching. But his great life work began in 1805, when he moved up to Bradford, to lead the fledgling Academy at Horton (later Rawdon College). Beginning with one student, in miserably cold and damp rented accommodation, by the time he retired in December 1835 he had trained 157 men, of whom there were still 111 in active ministry all over the world.⁵ He achieved this at the same time as pastoring the growing Westgate church, engaging in continued itinerant

evangelism and acting as secretary of the local association. Active until the end, he preached his last sermon in Westgate in March 1837, and died in the following month aged seventy-three.

Using Steadman's *Memoir*, a number of his sermons, circular letters, and unpublished correspondence, we will examine nine themes as illustrative of the main features of revival and renewal in Particular Baptist life at the turn of the nineteenth century: I The Priority of Gospel Preaching, II Liberation from Hyper-Calvinism, III The Importance of Ministerial Training, IV The Value of Associational Life, V Baptist Distinctives but Interdenominational Sympathy, VI Foreign Mission: The Eschatological Expectation, VII Social Awareness, VIII Fellowship Expressed in Loyal Friendship, IX Experiential Spirituality.

I THE PRIORITY OF GOSPEL PREACHING

First and foremost, Steadman was an inveterate evangelist. All his best energies were focused to the great end of fulfilling the Great Commission. As a Pastor, he delighted to baptize converts and receive them into membership but, not content to restrict himself to his own church, he also worked throughout his life in itinerancy, church planting, and the encouragement of associational life, so that the churches together could engage more effectively in these enterprises. At the Academy he aimed to train stormtroopers⁶ rather than scholars: men who would above all be 'useful' and 'laborious' in the plain preaching of the Gospel.

While at Broughton, he preached in many of the surrounding villages, either in cottages or hiring rooms at his own expense. Most notably he started a pioneer work at nearby Stockbridge, which inspired many of the surrounding ministers to engage in itinerant evangelism and church planting themselves.⁷ He also began a Sunday School. This was not supported by his own congregation which distressed him greatly; nor were they supportive of some of his village preaching trips. Steadman drew inspiration at this time from his reading of the solitary endeavours of Brainerd among the Indians. He persevered whatever the weather: early in 1795 he literally waded through floods to reach Stockbridge, only to find no one there to hear him. He 'returned home with a wet skin and a clear conscience. He had done what he could.'⁸ When similar conditions prevailed the next month, on just one occasion he missed going, but was tormented in his conscience about it.⁹

The Baptist Home Mission Society commissioned Steadman to lead their first formal forays into the home mission field. He spent eight weeks in Cornwall with John Saffery in the summer of 1796, each of them preaching three times each Sunday, and virtually every night. The usual procedure was to use the Dissenting meeting place if there was one, or else the Methodist Chapel; if neither were available they generally found they could obtain permission to use the Town Hall or market room; otherwise they used private homes or the open air. They were often able to pay the town crier to advertise their meetings. Numbers of hearers were often large, sometimes several hundred, and in mining areas they gathered up to a

thousand. After this first tour, Steadman wrote to John Rippon, encouraging him to promote similar missions in other parts of the country, especially those which were less evangelized:

The obligations of real Christians to labour to the utmost to bring others to an acquaintance with the Gospel, appear to me so numerous, so powerful and so obvious, that I feel surprised that the godly among the Baptists, and other denominations, have made so few efforts to accomplish it. Nor can I conceive of any more effectual means of doing it, than that of itinerant preaching, carried on either by stated ministers ... or else by those who entirely devote themselves to it. Perhaps there are persons to be found, whose talents and inclinations may better fit them for itinerants than for settled pastors ... And most churches would probably spare their pastors for a month or two in the year ... Of the necessity of such exertions, within the bounds of this kingdom, little doubt can be entertained ... Whilst it is readily allowed that the millions of heathens abroad call loudly for our help; do not the hundreds and thousands of little better than heathens at home call loudly for our pity too? ... It gives me ... pleasure to learn that our brethren in the metropolis have taken up the business with spirit and resolution ...¹⁰

This was a reference to the formation of the London Baptist Society for the Encouragement and support of Itinerant and Village Preaching in 1797, and Steadman went on to suggest a weekly concert of prayer for its success.

The following summer the Baptist Home Mission Society again sponsored Steadman to intinerate in Cornwall; this time he was accompanied by a Bristol student, F. Franklin. Because Steadman was remembered from the last year, audiences were larger than before, and he discovered several cases of solid conversion resulting from his previous ministry. Again he preached over eighty times during the tour. Steadman returned twice in 1802, visiting young Baptist churches in three locations. The following year he visited London to collect money for their support.

There is no doubt that the vast scope for village preaching in the north played a major factor in persuading Steadman to leave his beloved people at Plymouth Dock in 1805. He wrote to Saffery soon after arrival in the north:

With respects to my own situation, it calls loudly for thankfulness ... our congregation at Bradford increases rather than otherwise ... And the scope for village preaching is almost boundless ... I have been already 9 or 10 places and could easily double the number, all within 4 miles ... At present I reckon my situation for this kind of preaching one of the first in the Kingdom. I pray God to give me wisdom and zeal to improve it - and so set an example of ministerial exertion to my neighbouring Brethren, as well as the young men under my care. It is painful to think how little there has been of that there, notwithstanding the very favourable circumstances in which they are placed.¹¹

His son wrote:

The inhabitants of the surrounding villages readily lent their houses for the preaching of the Gospel ... the scenes of his village labours, as Little and Great Horton, Allerton, Heaton, Manningham, Cutler's Heights, Bowling, Birkenshaw, Bierley, and Low Moor, with other places, too many for enumeration, where he preached more or less statedly for years, lay at a distance of from two to four miles from his house, whither he had to return [on foot] late at night, after preaching in a crowded house, through the snow, the rain, and the darkness of many a dreary winter. In addition to pastoral and village labours, he was constantly required to preach on public occasions, such as the meetings of the association, ordination services, funeral discourses, and double lectures ...¹²

As well as these village efforts, he preached three times a Sunday and once during the week at Westgate,¹³ and there were many conversions as a result of his ministry. By 1813 he had baptized 164 people, and added 175 to the membership.¹⁴ In 1817 the chapel had to be enlarged. By 1819 there were 263 members, and 300 in Sunday School. Numbers continued to grow, and a second Baptist church was founded in 1823. Between July 1823 and May 1824 Steadman baptized thirty-six, including his son Thomas, later to become a minister. Thirty-nine members were added by baptism in 1825. Eventually the number of hearers, (sometimes up to 900) necessitated another extension to the building at Westgate. He was faithful in fulfilling other pastoral duties; thus his regular excursions out into the villages did not adversely affect ministry in his own church.

II LIBERATION FROM HYPER-CALVINISM

One of the features of this period of revival and renewal was the fresh enthusiasm of Calvinist ministers for the task of proclaiming the Free Offer of the Gospel. This is not to suggest that Calvinism was ever incompatible with evangelism: it should not be forgotten that Geneva under Calvin sent out a steady stream of missionaries back to France, many of whom were martyred. Those faithful to Calvin's insistence on both Divine Sovereignty and human responsibility were never embarrassed to offer Christ indiscriminately. Benjamin Keach, for example, was uninhibited: 'God calls, nay cries to you sinners ... He sends his Ministers to call you, to invite you, who tell you all things are now ready.'¹⁵

However by the mid-eighteenth century, many Calvinist Baptists in England had tied themselves up in knots trying to rationalize the paradox between sovereignty and responsibility. Although some have qualified the simplistic categorizing of John Gill as a hyper-calvinist, of the existence of hyper-calvinism there can be no doubt. It not only led to a refusal to offer Christ to the unconverted, but it led to a general suspicion of human means, which resulted in opposition to Sunday Schools, Associations, ministerial training and foreign missions at least during this period. So W.R. Ward describes the 'hypers' as 'classic non-joiners'.¹⁶

Robert Hall sen. had clarified the matter for many in his *Helps to Zion's Travellers* (1781). He wrote categorically: 'The gracious grant is indefinite, the way to Jesus is open and free for whosoever will without exception.'¹⁷ Andrew Fuller confessed he had felt himself 'encumbered' with inhibitions, and regarded with envy the freedom with which the apostles addressed the unconverted. His discovery of their freedom led to the publication of *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation* (1785).¹⁸ The logical conclusion was reached in 1792, when William Carey argued that means should be used also to present this Gospel invitation to those abroad as well as at home.

A profound influence in this rediscovery of the scriptural congruence of sovereignty and responsibility was the example and writing of Jonathan Edwards, the great American Calvinist preacher and thinker. Steadman counted Edwards as one of his favourite authors. He, like Edwards, was able to preach definite atonement at the same time as extending the most fervent gospel invitations. So in the sermon, 'The Attraction of the Cross of Christ',¹⁹ on the text 'But I, when I be lifted up, shall draw all men to myself', Steadman focuses on the efficacy of Christ's drawing, that Christ draws in a way which is powerful to save, now and for ever. He draws and keeps his own people: drawing by the attraction of a love which is omnipotent. The 'all' does not infer universal salvation, rather that Christ's people will be drawn from all classes, races and conditions of people, and that there will be a vast number of them. He urges that the great aim for ministers should be to bring people to Christ, and urges all his hearers to seek this salvation.

While at Plymouth Dock, Steadman encountered those who were 'unhappily tinged with hypercalvinistic errors' and antinomianism. He wrote:

Felt the necessity of great caution in representing those doctrines, [Election and Reprobation] and in stating the proportion of attention they should occupy in the public ministry. Am convinced that the mistakes about them are not so much owing to a minister's propagating anything untrue or unscriptural concerning them, but to their insisting too much upon them, to the neglect of other more plain and useful doctrines of the Gospel.²⁰

The doctrine of election was, for Steadman, not something for speculation, but a solid incentive to evangelism. He could go out and preach in the hardest and most discouraging of situations, and have confidence that the Holy Spirit would work in salvation. Yes, the means of grace were to be used at all times. The recurring word in his letters and memoirs is 'exertions'. He believed in hard work, but ultimately the conversions would come from the sovereign work of God.

In one of the 111 ordination sermons he preached, he urged Richard Pengilly:

Do not let us be fettered, in our addresses, by any apprehensions of running foul of the Divine Decrees, or opposing the doctrine of man's inability. We honour the Divine decrees most effectively, when we use the means our Lord himself has prescribed for their execution; and bring the inability of man most effectively to light, by delivering to him the solemn messages with which we

are charged; and which messages we know, unless they are accompanied by the life-giving energy of the Holy Ghost, will be uniformly rejected ... Nothing is more plainly revealed in Scripture than the duty of Ministers to preach the Gospel to sinners without distinction.²¹

Steadman was not a 'non-joiner'! He was a Calvinist who believed in the means of grace: that, whether by itinerant preaching, Sunday Schools, training, associational endeavours, foreign mission, the Gospel might be more effectively promoted.

III THE IMPORTANCE OF MINISTERIAL TRAINING

Men such as John Fawcett had long realized the need for an academy such as the one at Bristol to serve the Baptist churches of the north. Fawcett's protégé, John Sutcliffe, had to travel 'on foot, almost penniless, in the depth of winter, from Wainsgate to Bristol',²² a two hundred-mile, seven-day journey which highlighted the need for another academy. Fawcett and others from the Yorkshire and Lancashire Association formed the Northern Education Society in 1804, with a view to beginning a training institution for ministers. They had invited Joseph Kinghorn of Norwich, among others, to lead the new work; all of these had declined. When they finally asked Steadman, he was persuaded to visit, saw the opportunities, and was constrained to accept the call.

To appreciate the challenge facing Steadman on arrival at Bradford, we have to realize that not only did he have to start the academy from scratch, but he had also to contend with a great deal of prejudice against ministerial training. The results of this were all too apparent as he surveyed the scene. On arrival in Yorkshire he noted:

Most of the ministers were illiterate, their talents small, their manner dull, and uninteresting, their systems of divinity contracted, their maxims of Church discipline rigid, their exertions scarcely any at all.²³

The kind of prejudice he had to overcome was typified in the attitude of many to believer's baptism:

One thing in particular has kept the Baptist churches small and low. Their old ministers were originally men of the lowest class, destitute of education, and greatly inclined to rigidity and severity in all their measures. From a foolish scrupulosity, they have objected to baptistries in their places of worship, and administer the ordinance in rivers, to whatever disadvantage it might subject them. At Bradford they have baptized in a small stream, the only one near them, scarcely deep enough, muddy at the bottom, and from which the minister and the persons baptized have at least a quarter of a mile to walk along a dirty lane in their wet clothes before they can change. The place likewise, is quite unfavourable for seeing or hearing, and by that means the benefits of the ordinance are lost to the congregation, few of whom ever

attend it. Persons of a little more genteel or delicate feeling are quite kept away ...²⁴

Needless to say a baptistry was swiftly installed at Westgate!²⁵ But the longer term need was to replace the old ministers. By 1809 he could register satisfaction that a mini-revolution had taken place in some local churches: they had replaced their ministers with Horton men:

I cannot help feeling pleased that there is so much energy left in those almost decayed churches as to cause them to attempt the removal of those pastors who either have no talents, or have never strove to use them; of which description there have been too many in this quarter.²⁶

And by the time he retired, all the surrounding churches were led by Horton-trained ministers.

Steadman's vision was for the men he trained to be pastor-evangelists in his own image. His main aim was that they should be *useful*. The academic criteria took second place to zeal, diligence, and the ability to communicate the Gospel plainly. As his son wrote: 'Sensible, intelligent and active ministers were everywhere required; and on these sterling qualities he sought to ingraft as much literary and theological knowledge as circumstances rendered expedient and feasible.'²⁷

The four-year course at Horton included English composition, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Theology, Sermon classes, plus geography, history, philosophy and other disciplines. Admittedly studies were frequently interrupted when the needy churches around called on the students to supply their pulpits. Steadman was also lenient to a fault in allowing the use of translations in the language work. But things were tightened up considerably when in 1818 the son of Dr Ryland, Jonathan Edwards Ryland was taken on as the Classics Tutor. By that time there were fifteen students in the academy: the number increased to nearly thirty by the late 1820s. Accommodation had by now considerably improved.

The least pleasant of Steadman's tasks was constant 'begging' (as he put it) for the Academy. Right to the end of his life he never took a holiday, for vacations had to be spent fund-raising. There were periodic question marks over its viability, and if money ran out he had to go out 'begging' mid-session. In January 1823 he wrote to Saffery:

All we now want is money, and I do not despair of that. I expect however a hard struggle ... We are in arrears and have already two applications for admission beyond our number ... At present I hardly know what we shall do or where we shall apply; but I know God is all sufficient, and by his help, should my life be spared, I will make another effort, rather than not admit them.²⁸

He resolved to go down to London to collect, 'where I am pretty well known in the character of a mendicant ...'²⁹ In the March of the following year he wrote again:

'All I want in that department [the academy] is money: a want likely to attend me through life, like the debt on Mr Whitefield's orphan house did him.'³⁰

In response to an inquiry in 1830 from Joseph Kinghorn about a young friend wishing to enter the Academy, Steadman, now in his sixties, wrote:

Were the times as they were, and my strength and spirits what they were ten years ago ... I would take him ... and ... go contentedly unpaid for his board. But things are so changed that the collecting of money is ... almost a hopeless business, and my strength and spirits are so much diminished by two fits of illness ... that I have not courage to make those attempts which at that time I made with ease ... Instead therefore of a month or six weeks begging, it is my intention for the first time in my life, to spend a few weeks of the approaching vacation in a state of rest ...³¹

The following summer of 1831, Steadman fiercely resisted pressure to reduce the number of students because the Academy was in debt, writing to Isaac Mann as follows:

... I pleaded for the sixteen ... pledging myself to give, at the close of the year, £50, if needed towards making up the deficiency. I have so far carried my point ... You know it is not the first risk I have run or the first sacrifice I have made. My spirit revives. I call to mind the days of old;- my leaving Dock;- the spirit manifested at the outset;- the rise and progress of the cause;- the buildings and accommodations;- the various appearances of God on its behalf. I must not, therefore, give it up, nor become a patient spectator of its decline ... 'I will not see the death of the child.'³²

Such determination bore incalculable spiritual fruit. Deryck Lovegrove comments of this period: 'In one church minute book after another the appointment of a minister from one of the new institutions is marked by a revitalization of church life and the appearance of an expansionist outlook.'³³ This was certainly true of the Baptist churches receiving Steadman's students as pastors. His students 'revived nearly defunct churches in industrial and city areas.'³⁴

IV THE VALUE OF ASSOCIATIONAL LIFE

Joshua Thomas, the minister under whom Steadman was converted, and whose encouragement led him to preach and to train, was 'an ardent supporter of associated work.'³⁵ Steadman maintained the principle of the independency of the local congregation, but equally was adamant that this should never exist without genuine interdependency with other congregations. He knew that isolation meant weakness, and certain failure as far as the task of mission was concerned. The only means by which the nation with its growing towns could be reached was by co-operative endeavour. He was generous in recognizing the contribution of other denominations but argued that for practical reasons the day-to-day realities of concerted action should take place within an association of like-minded churches.

Steadman wrote the *Circular Letter* for the Yorkshire and Lancashire Association in 1807, and took as his subject 'The Utility of Associations'.³⁶ He described the practice whereby member churches sent ministers and messengers to an Assembly once a year, where news was exchanged, prayers offered, measures adopted for their common welfare, a circular letter approved for distribution in the churches, and the Word ministered. He denied that such Assemblies had any 'ecclesiastical authority',³⁷ for the churches are 'independent societies, subject to Jesus Christ, and accountable to him alone ...'³⁸ He did not argue that Associations were divinely appointed, and did not bring forward Scriptural example (strangely no mention of Acts 15!) but rather simply argued the 'principle common to mankind, who in whatever object they are engaged, associate together in order to unite their strength in the pursuit of it.'³⁹ Religion strengthens this natural tendency, providing spiritual unity and a common goal. Variety in circumstance and giftedness is a powerful argument for association:

And does not the great disparity of capacity and talents, which is another circumstance contributing to associations among men, exist to a great degree among christians? This is so obvious a fact, as to need no illustration: not only among private christians, among ministers, but even among churches, is there a very great disparity of gifts and abilities ... How desirable is it therefore that they should associate together, in order that the abundance of one should be a supply for the lack of the other, and their talents and capacities be so blended, as, like the complicated movements of a machine, to produce one grand and uniform effect.⁴⁰

Steadman accepts that the ideal would be 'association of all the churches of Christ under Heaven', but argues that distance, numbers, and diversity of belief make that impossible. But association in a limited area, between churches which agree 'not only upon the larger, but the lesser points of christianity', is both practical and desirable.⁴¹

He then lists the advantages of associational life. The churches can rejoice with those who are prospering, and sympathise with, pray for and help those who are struggling. Christian love will be increased. Ministers benefit from being able to discuss problems and share wisdom; their congregations benefit from the larger preaching meetings made possible by grouping in associations. But the greatest advantage is that it is the means of:

ministers and churches uniting their endeavours and concentrating their strength for the further advancement of the interest of Christ in the world. Individual efforts, though laudable, are generally weak and ineffectual: but what one or a few churches cannot do, many may accomplish. Churches which are going fast to decay, and which may despair of recovery by their own efforts, may be recovered by the efforts of others. Differences in others, which threatened their extinction, may be healed by the wise and affectionate councils of their brethren. Breaches occasioned by the death or removal of

their pastors, may in others be at least partially repaired by the united assistance of many. In the same way infant societies may be nursed up, until they arrive at such a state of maturity and strength, as to be able to provide for themselves. Yea, by the united efforts of many, how much may be done towards carrying the gospel into the several towns, and villages, and hamlets of our own country ... in order to attempt the accomplishments of such objects, opportunities must be afforded of mutual consultation. And what can furnish such opportunities so effectually as the associations we recommend?⁴²

From 1816 until his death, he held the position of Secretary of the Yorkshire and Lancashire Association. He used this position to encourage itinerant preaching and church planting, and to nurture failing churches. During this period the Association began a fund in 1827 to help needy pastors.⁴³ Briggs observes that this association 'was an essential vehicle for enabling the churches to minister to people on the move from the countryside into the new rootless, industrial towns and villages.'⁴⁴

Steadman was also aware of the advantages of wider co-operation between Particular Baptist churches. In the June 1812 issue of the *Baptist Magazine* it was announced that the day after the missionary meetings, there would be a gathering 'to take into consideration the proposed measure for an annual general association of the Particular Baptist Churches.'⁴⁵ Steadman was not present at that meeting, but his friend Saffery was. Sixty men supported the proposal for 'A more general Union of the Particular (or Calvinistic) Baptist Churches in the United Kingdom.'⁴⁶ Two men (John Sutcliff and Robert Hall) were to be invited to preach at the 1813 annual gathering, with Steadman and Hinton as stand-bys. Sutcliff and Hall fulfilled their invitation at the 1813 gathering, Hinton and Steadman were formally invited to address the 1814 meeting (with Saffery as the stand-by); in the event it was Steadman and Saffery who preached in 1814. Steadman was present again at the annual meeting in 1820.

V BAPTIST DISTINCTIVES BUT INTER-DENOMINATIONAL SYMPATHY

As far as Steadman was concerned, the Gospel was his chief concern. He was forthright in opposition to Roman Catholicism.⁴⁷ He referred to it as AntiChrist, 'the most corrupt of all systems bearing the name of Christianity.'⁴⁸ He was also utterly opposed to Unitarianism or Socinianism:

That system we consider erroneous in the extreme, as detracting from the Divine glories, degrading the person of the Redeemer, setting aside the design of his death, and teaching men to build their hopes of salvation on a foundation directly the reverse of that which God himself has laid.⁴⁹

Thus any progress made by the Roman Catholics or Unitarians was to be regretted, for he believed they obscured the way of salvation and denied the basic truths of the Gospel.

On the other hand, he was willing to support anyone, of whatever denomination, who preached the Gospel clearly. Any progress made by evangelical churches could be applauded, even when there was disagreement on the issues of baptism, election, the extent of the death of Christ, or the certain efficacy of the grace of God in conversion. He did not hesitate to call them 'unscriptural' on these issues but, because they 'adhere to the chief of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity', he could rejoice at their success.⁵⁰

In this attitude he was typical of what W.R. Ward has termed 'the outpouring of undenominational religion' at the end of the eighteenth century.⁵¹ He was a convinced Baptist, but 'find I love those who love Jesus Christ, though they do not follow in all things with me.'⁵² On his preaching tours in Cornwall he was willing to work with Methodists, Independents, or evangelical Church of England ministers.⁵³ He was not pleased when one of his hosts tried to 'lug me into a dispute about baptism.' The generally charitable Steadman wrote: 'Plagued with the impertinence and bigotry of my host'⁵⁴ In a sermon, 'The Salvation of Men, the Desire and Prayer of Every Faithful Minister', he concluded by urging his hearers to seek salvation. They are to seek out a faithful Gospel ministry: it signifies little, comparatively, whether he be a Church Minister, or a Presbyterian, or an Independent, or a Baptist, or a Methodist (though in these things you will do well to follow that denomination you think comes nearest to the standard set you in the New Testament.) But is he one who seeks your salvation? And who uses right methods to accomplish it?⁵⁵

Steadman was clear in his own distinctive beliefs, and believed that association was only practically effective between those of like mind; but none the less urged love and mutual understanding between Christians:

... does not our situation, as protestant dissenters, as calvinists, as baptists, furnish a very urgent reason for uniting and associating together. We do not, its true, value ourselves upon these distinctions, for distinctions sake, but place ourselves in such a predicament, from a consciencious [sic] regard to the will of our Divine Lord. And therefore, though in conformity to that will, we are necessitated to separate from our brethren in some outward forms and practices, we love all who love Christ ...⁵⁶

Steadman worked at maintaining good relations with the other ministers in Bradford.⁵⁷ He was convinced of the 'closed table' position with regard to the Lord's supper, but when preaching away from home did not ask questions, and would preside at the Lord's Table in open communion churches.⁵⁸

As far as promoting Baptist distinctives was concerned, he was convinced that the best method was to focus on the primary task of evangelism: far better to be known for baptizing numerous converts than to concentrate on 'sheep-stealing' from other churches:

Whatever importance we attach to the ordinance of Baptism (and importance we do attach to it,) we do not consider it as of the *greatest* importance. We

do not consider it as essential to salvation ... Our attention then as Baptists should be directed to that part which is confessedly of first importance.⁵⁹

Lest he be misunderstood as belittling baptism he continued:

Though we are far from regarding Baptism as of the first importance, we are equally far from regarding it as of no importance, or of little importance. We know it to be the command of our adorable Lord - to have been honoured by his example - and to be a standing law in his kingdom; and we cannot but consider the deviation from such a command, and the substitution of the Baptism of infants in the place of the Baptism which Christ has enjoined, as an evil of no inconsiderable magnitude.⁶⁰

Thus Baptists insist on 'the primitive institution' and desire that 'our sentiments and our practice should spread as widely as possible.'⁶¹ But evangelism, not contention, is the most effective means of achieving this end.

VI FOREIGN MISSION: THE ESCHATOLOGICAL EXPECTATION

Steadman's diary entry for 31 December 1792 reads:

In the evening I read some of Outram; and afterwards the account of the Particular Baptist Society for Propagating the Gospel among the Heathen. It revived me, and did my heart good to think that God had put it into the heart of any to attempt that good work; and I cannot but look upon this as one of the many favourable indications of the approach of the universal spread of the Gospel, and of the latter day glory.⁶²

So on 3 January 1793 he recorded: 'Wrote a letter to Mr Carey, of Leicester, and sent it, together with half-guinea subscription for "The Society ..."' He immediately set about raising support for the new mission both in his own congregation (who gave nearly £7), and in surrounding churches.⁶³ Together with Saffery, he formed an association to promote the mission in Hampshire and Wiltshire. During 1793 and 1794, he considered the possibility of volunteering for the mission field himself, especially as his friend, Samuel Pearce, in the process of volunteering, urged him to consider accompanying him. Various reasons dissuaded him, including the needs at Stockbridge, his sight defect which would hinder language study, and the frailty of his wife, but he remained a fervent supporter of the mission throughout his life. He was active in collecting funds for it, twice itinerating in Scotland for that purpose. During and after the damaging controversies between the home committee and the Serampore missionaries, he remained charitable towards the actions and motives of the Serampore men.

We have mentioned that Jonathan Edwards was one of Steadman's favourite authors, and he shared Edwards's optimism that the missionary enterprise would herald in the millennial age. In his sermon 'On the Attraction of the Cross of Christ', he spoke of the effects of Christ's death as follows:

[He] had in full prospect a period yet future, even that period in which his kingdom should be commensurate with the world ... a period when after the destruction of AntiChrist, the Jews in a body shall be brought to embrace the true Messiah ... and the fullness of the Gentiles brought in ... He saw his heralds going forth in his name and his strength, in every direction; the Elliots; the Brainherds; the Swartzes; the Careys; the Vanderkemps; that led the way, and a host of other worthies who followed after them. He beheld the Indian abandoning his ferocity, the Negro rising up from his slavery, the African emerging from his barbarism, and the Hindoo throwing off his idols and bursting the chain of his cast [sic] all uniting in their cordial acceptance of his salvation ...⁶⁴

Thus it is unsurprising that his 111 students still in active ministry when he died were 'scattered over the great Gospel field, at home and abroad, in Great Britain and Ireland, on the continent of Europe, in the Canadas, in the United States, the West Indies, Southern Africa and Hindustan.'⁶⁵

VII SOCIAL AWARENESS

One feature of the Evangelical Awakening was a heightened awareness of some social issues. There was the conviction that the preaching of the Gospel would not only lead to eternal salvation for many, but that lives would be transformed in the here and now; that vice and crime would be reduced, that gross poverty would be ameliorated.

This was very much Steadman's perspective. The preaching of the Gospel was the priority: he urged his students to avoid heavy involvement in politics for the focus of their preaching had always to be Christ. But he believed that this would result in social as well as eternal benefit. He noted well the civilizing impact of Methodist itineration in Cornwall during his missionary tours there.⁶⁶

Steadman's conviction was that the affairs of government were ultimately under the rule of God. For example, in 1804 England was bracing itself for the threatened invasion by Napoleon and his forces, and taxes rocketed:

The state of the Country and the increase of Taxes become a very serious evil; but at times I am able to reflect that the Earth and the fullness thereof are as much the Lord's now as they were before ... Mr. Pitt sprang into existence ... Oh for more faith! ... He has already done greater things for our souls, than we need him to do for our bodies!⁶⁷

He was not afraid to criticize the Government on occasion. In a sermon on the National Fast Day of 1794, 'Hearing the Voice of God's Rod', he condemned the failure to act on slavery:

Amidst the many national sins, which we may reasonably suppose have been the procuring cause of our present distresses, that iniquitous traffic in human flesh, that slave trade, must be looked on as one of the most crying. And if, after all the attempts made to abolish it, and all the enormities that attend it,

it be still carried on, what dreadful vengeance have we not reason to expect! The voice of our brother's blood crieth out against us and its cries will not always be unheard!⁶⁸

In the sermon entitled, 'The Safety of true penitents in a time of public calamity', he condemned the conduct of war by the current government, and regretted the suspension of Habeas Corpus.⁶⁹

Steadman wrote the *Association Circular Letter* of 1807, and concluded with a typical passage:

We cannot prevail upon ourselves to close this epistle, without congratulating you brethren, upon two very pleasing events that have distinguished the last year, we mean the abolition of the Slave Trade, and the happy success of our mission in India. By the former not only is our nation disburdened of an enormous load of guilt, but thousands of Africans released from bonds which enslaved their bodies; by the latter, numbers of the inhabitants of Asia are released from a more cruel bondage which enslaved their souls, and have the word of God put into their hands, which we trust will eventually promote the salvation of millions. We hope these are preludes of still greater things, even of that day in which the Redeemer shall take to himself his great power and reign, and banish slavery, ignorance and sin from our world.⁷⁰

The correspondence with Saffery often alludes to the economic distress caused by the threat of French invasion during his years at Plymouth Dock. Once in Bradford, Steadman found himself encountering the poverty and suffering concomitant with the industrialisation of the area. In 1825 there was dreadful hardship during and after a twenty-three week 'turn out', and tension between 'the different classes opposed to each other.' The sympathies of Steadman's son were clearly with the factory owners, for he writes that the 'president of the obnoxious combination' was a member of the church at West Gate.⁷¹ Steadman evidently had church members on both sides of the dispute:

He acted with a degree of prudence which prevented the disastrous dissensions which were very naturally feared; and when the Union dissolved, and left a multitude of the labouring population plunged in the deepest destitution, in the very depth of winter, exerted himself to the utmost to induce the wealthier classes to forget all grievances and come to their aid. A donation of £10 from him was no bad example; and signal was the triumph of generosity over resentment.⁷²

Steadman was evidently held in high regard by the citizens of Bradford. He was invited to be president of the Mechanics' Institute in 1832⁷³, which office he held until his death.

VIII FELLOWSHIP EXPRESSED IN LOYAL FRIENDSHIP

An attractive feature of this period of renewal and revival was the very close association of many of the leading figures. The friendship between Carey, Fuller, Ryland, and Sutcliff is well known: the friends remaining at home committing themselves to 'hold the rope' for Carey.⁷⁴ Steadman and Saffery became friends when Steadman was ministering down in Broughton: twelve miles away from Salisbury where Saffery was minister. Saffery took part in Steadman's ordination on 2 November 1791. They undertook a joint evangelistic trip in the local area in 1792, were both sent to Cornwall for a summer itinerary in 1796, together established a society for promoting the Baptist Mission in the Hampshire-Wiltshire area in 1797 and, even when Steadman moved away, maintained a close association through correspondence and prayer. The basis of their friendship was their common concern for the Gospel: much of the correspondence gives news of churches.

On a personal level there was a mutual trust which enabled Steadman to bare his heart to Saffery, and know that his confidence would be respected. So for example, at Plymouth Dock there were some painful tensions with his co-pastor Isaiah Birt. He described the situation to Saffery, concluding:

I did not think to have written so much on the subject; and now I feel half resolved to suppress it ... I have the consolation that I am writing to you as a tried and firm friend, who will not let it go any further ...⁷⁵

As good friends they shared personal concerns also. Steadman did not hesitate to confide in Saffery when he was utterly discouraged either through illness, or financial worry. Family news was exchanged. On the birth of his second daughter in 1803, Steadman wrote:

I now have one great boy, and two little girls ... Our little Mary was 16 months and a day old when her sister was born. She seems fond of her, but now and then gets jealous and thinks her in the way.⁷⁶

Saffery's first wife died relatively young: Steadman writes: 'I was not much surprised to find you were looking again towards matrimony, though my good wife cries out "What, already!"'⁷⁷ In turn, in a terrible year which saw the deaths of his oldest son, William, at age seventeen, and his baby son at age seventeen months, and the critical illness of his wife, Steadman longed for the support of his friend: 'I wish I could come and see you, but know not how to indulge the hope.'⁷⁸ Less than a year later, his wife was dead, and Steadman writes:

My children, except the youngest,⁷⁹ are well, and so is Miss Meekes, I cannot be sufficiently thankful for her sympathy and kind attention throughout our affliction, nor can I make her a sufficient recompense. What ... if you should hear of her becoming Mrs. S. in 9 or 10 months time?⁸⁰

The marriage did indeed take place. Miss Letitia Meekes was a relative of the first Mrs Steadman and had lived with the family for about five years.

On a spiritual level, Steadman and Saffery were very honest with each other. In a letter written in 1816, Steadman expressed his own experience of Romans 7, so freely as would only be possible to a deeply trusted friend:

We are growing old together, and a number of our companions and most of our seniors are gone off the stage ... [then in answer to comments about his usefulness made by Saffery] ... I have not I think been inclined to rate my abilities highly, nor have you; but at this time of life we are both of us forced to think ourselves superior to some of our brethren, for they either cannot or will not do as we have done ... But by the grace of God we are what we are, and shall be what we hope to be. I feel myself a poor sinful creature, and in general can hardly think I do anything for God. I have to combat with various temptations to which I was formerly a stranger, particularly to infidelity. And yet I have more sense of the excellency of Christ and the Gospel than ever. It seems as if I never felt more therefore, nor ever preached with more heartfelt delight on whatever relates to the Redeemer, and yet with it all I find I have enough to do to overcome the temptation and believe myself to be a christian.⁸¹

On Saffery's death, Steadman wrote:

He was one of my oldest and most intimate friends, with whom, at my first setting out, I acted most in concert in all my public efforts - efforts then of a singular cast. My time will not be long; but I take encouragement from the account of his peaceful departure.⁸²

IX EXPERIENTIAL SPIRITUALITY

In writing on the theme of revival and renewal in Baptist life, it seems appropriate to conclude with a note on Steadman's spirituality. His letters reveal that warm devotion to Christ which characterizes the period of Evangelical awakening.⁸³ So for example in 1804, in the midst of poverty (which caused the bitter disappointment of missing that year's Association Meeting) and various other trials he wrote: 'of how much value and utility is faith in a crucified Saviour! I find a little of that will carry me above every difficulty ...'⁸⁴ Or conversely: 'We cannot live comfortably anywhere without the presence of God, the want of which I have of late painfully felt.'⁸⁵

In the midst of increased responsibilities at Bradford, he looked back to the years at Broughton:

I sometimes look back upon the days I spent trudging over the downs, or through the woods in the neighbourhood of Stockbridge ... with a considerable degree of thankfulness, pleasure and regret. Those were days in which God was teaching me much of himself, and in which I enjoyed much peace of mind, and had strong desires of spending myself and being spent in

the service of Christ though I saw little fruit attending my labours. Here I have had more success, and perhaps less spiritual enjoyment, though, blessed be God, I have some.⁸⁶

Throughout his life he betrayed a transparent humility. Coming from a very poor background, he never considered himself socially superior to others, but mixed freely with all. He had no aspirations to style or good looks, as one said: 'his manner, as well as his appearance, were far from being in his favour; especially in the estimation of fastidious hearers'⁸⁷ A slight defect, as well as poverty, had deprived him of much formal education: he had worked with terrific determination to educate himself, but was without pretension. He suffered from asthma, which was a frustration, but he displayed patience and resolve in working as hard as possible despite this.

His journal is attractive in its honesty, Steadman freely confessed to ambition,⁸⁸ envy of more successful ministers,⁸⁹ half-heartedness,⁹⁰ pride,⁹¹ and a critical spirit when hearing others preach.⁹² For example, writing from Plymouth Dock:

... to my great shame I must acknowledge that my gratitude bears but little proportion to my mercies. When I was fagging on at Broughton against wind and tide I thought I should have been *overcome* with a sense of the mercy which I have experienced here. But alas, here, I sometimes feel as unthankful as I did there! An evil heart of unbelief still attends me, and one which leads me to overlook the past and at another while to distrust the future goodness of my God. At other times I feel a disposition to envy the prosperity of others, and seem displeased that though God has done *great* things for us, he should have done *greater* things for others. For these things I humble myself before God ...⁹³

It has been said that the test of true humility is not just the capacity for self-criticism, but willingness to receive criticism from others. This capacity Steadman displayed. He often reproached himself for 'levity'⁹⁴ (he clearly had a terrific sense of humour) and received a letter after one of the Cornwall tours alluding to the same characteristic:

... You regret not improving conversation more, and in giving way to levity. This reflection had been made by some here, who, not-with-standing, ever think of you with great respect. What pleased me was, that you so severely inspect yourself. I conceive no man ever rose to eminence in religion that was not a frequent critic on his conduct ...⁹⁵

But there was not that false humility which refuses to recognize giftedness:

A calm, unpretending, but fixed consciousness of his own strength eminently distinguished him; and often induced him to venture on enterprises which other men, though possessed of equal abilities and superior learning, timidly declined.⁹⁶

He was ambitious, but ambitious to serve Christ to the limit of his capacity. On being called to be tutor at the new academy, he wrote:

I believe I have some qualifications for such a situation, though in others I am very defective ... And I must confess that I have had earnest desires and hopes that God would do something by me for the good of his Church, which he has not yet done; though I would cheerfully wait his time for doing it ...⁹⁷

He was outstandingly generous, and often imposed on. He was also very much at home in visiting even the humblest of his congregations, and on warm terms with his students. His unselfishness was a natural outcome of his God-centred outlook on the whole of life: a perspective shaped surely by his study of Jonathan Edwards. Thus he was able to comfort the bereaved Saffery on the death of his wife in words which could come straight from Edwards:

though he has taken part of *ourself* away, he has not taken *himself* away. And *he* and not *they* is the blessed offspring of our felicity. Nor will he leave us long behind ...⁹⁸

CONCLUSION

Steadman had confidence that Almighty God himself was doing a great work in his time. We have noted his certain belief in the final victory of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was also convinced of the reality of judgement: he and those to whom he preached would have to give an account of themselves before Christ. Such considerations compelled him to those labours which, impressive as they are, are not atypical of other figures of this period of revival and renewal. They were moved by shared convictions: all based on the absolute truth of the Word of God.

In 1944, Ernest Payne, in memory of whom this essay is presented, spoke of the decline of Nonconformity. He wrote: 'It is in any case certain that without a renewed sense of mission, without a renewal of their spiritual convictions, the Free Churches of England are certain to suffer further weakening.'⁹⁹ More than fifty years on, the need for renewal remains. Perhaps some inspiration may be derived from looking back to that time of revival of Baptist life during which William Steadman laboured so faithfully.

NOTES

Thanks are due to Mrs Susan Mills for helping to access sources in the Angus Library.

1 William Steadman, *The Obligations under which the Churches in the Yorkshire and Lancashire Association are laid to promote the Spread of the Gospel, and to establish New Churches within the Limits of the Association, and in the Country which surrounds it* (The Circular Letter of the

Baptist Churches of the Yorkshire and Lancashire Association assembled in Westgate, Bradford, 24-25 May 1825, Bradford, 1825, p.4.

2 The declining state of dissent in the early to mid-eighteenth century has been well documented. Ernest Payne wrote: 'Anyone who has turned the

- pages of eighteenth century minute-books knows how narrow and introspective many Dissenting churches had become...'. E.A. Payne, *The Free Church Tradition in the Life of England*, 1944, p.73. As far as the Particular Baptists were concerned, Samuel Stennett (1727-95) wrote: 'Useful solid ministers are taken away, and few likely to fill up their places. Many churches are destitute.' quoted in Raymond Brown, *The English Baptists of the Eighteenth Century*, 1986, p.78. Brown comments that Baptists were grateful for new freedoms, but not 'correspondingly zealous in evangelism ... Physically tired and emotionally drained, they were only too glad to be left in peace ...', p.12.
- 3 Deryck W. Lovegrove, *Established Church: Sectarian People: Itinerancy and the Transformation of English Dissent, 1789-1830*, Cambridge, 1988, pp.182-184.
 - 4 Michael Watts, *The Dissenters*, volume II *The Expansion of English Nonconformity 1791-1859*, Oxford, 1995, pp.132-158.
 - 5 Thomas Steadman, *Memoir of the Rev. William Steadman, D.D.*, 1838, p.479.
 - 6 J.H.Y. Briggs, *The English Baptists of the Nineteenth Century*, 1994, p.76.
 - 7 *Memoir*, pp.112-113.
 - 8 *ibid.*, p.125.
 - 9 *ibid.*, p.126.
 - 10 Letter to Rippon, *ibid.* pp.149-151.
 - 11 Bound volume of forty-seven letters from William Steadman to John Saffery, written between 1797 and 1820, held in the Angus Library. Letter no.26, 3 March 1806.
 - 12 *Memoir*, p.238.
 - 13 *ibid.*, p.237.
 - 14 *ibid.*, p.250.
 - 15 Brown, *op.cit.*, p.155, note 9.
 - 16 W.R. Ward, *Religion and Society 1790-1850*, 1972. For example, William Gadsby took up his pastorate in Manchester, in 1804, but remained aloof from that associational life which Steadman so fervently promoted.
 - 17 Brown, *op.cit.*, p.95.
 - 18 Andrew Fuller, *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation: or the Duty of Sinners to Believe in Jesus Christ*. In Volume II of *The Complete Works of Andrew Fuller*, pp.328-393, reprinted Sprinkle Publications, Harrisonburg, Va, 1988, p.329.
 - 19 William Steadman, *The Attraction of the Cross of Christ*, Sermon delivered at the Baptist Association, Hebden Bridge, 2 June 1814, Halifax, 1814.
 - 20 *Memoir*, p.200.
 - 21 William Steadman, *The Christian Minister's Duty and Reward: addressed as a charge to Mr Richard Pengilly when ordained Pastor of the Baptist Church at Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, August 12th 1807*, Gateshead, 1807.
 - 22 C.E. Shipley, ed., *The Baptists of Yorkshire*, 1912, p.279.
 - 23 *Memoir*, pp.227-8.
 - 24 *ibid.*, pp.234-5.
 - 25 Steadman himself did not hesitate to baptise in the open air, for example in Wakefield in 1818 he baptised three candidates in the river. Shipley, *op.cit.*, p.164.
 - 26 Letter no.29, 5 June 1809.
 - 27 *Memoir*, p.229.
 - 28 Steadman to Saffery, 16 January 1823, Reeves Collection, R15/6.
 - 29 *ibid.*
 - 30 Steadman to Saffery, 31 March 1824, Reeves Collection, R15/7.
 - 31 Steadman to Kinghorn, 29 April 1830, Angus Library.
 - 32 *Memoir*, p.395.
 - 33 Lovegrove, *op.cit.*, p.84.
 - 34 Robert G. Torbet, *A History of the Baptists*, rep.1963, p.89.
 - 35 W.T. Whitley, *A History of the British Baptists*, 1923, p.226.
 - 36 William Steadman, *The Utility of Associations: A Circular Letter addressed to the Baptist Churches* (26 churches listed), Bradford 1807.
 - 37 *ibid.*, p.5.
 - 38 *ibid.*, p.6.
 - 39 *ibid.*, p.6.
 - 40 *ibid.*, p.9.
 - 41 *ibid.*, p.10.
 - 42 *ibid.*, pp.14-15.
 - 43 J.H.Y. Briggs, *op.cit.*, p.205.
 - 44 *ibid.* pp.205-6.
 - 45 E. A. Payne, *The Baptist Union: A Short History*, 1959, p.19.
 - 46 *ibid.*, p.21.
 - 47 *Memoir*, pp.364-5. Steadman's own conviction in controversial matters was 'that the best way to secure conviction is not to arouse men's deepest prejudices by ostentatiously attacking their errors, but to preach the cross of Christ in the spirit of love. He thought the darkness would disperse if the light were sufficiently diffused.' *ibid.* p.365.
 - 48 *Circular Letter* 1825, p.12.

- 49 *ibid.*, p.11.
 50 *ibid.*, p.10.
 51 W.R. Ward, *op.cit.*, p.2.
 52 Quoted in Brown, *op.cit.*, p.141.
 53 *Memoir*, p.157, for example, 'The clergyman, whose name is Rawlings, is a pious and evangelical man; and what is by no means common to the evangelical clergy, he is very candid, a lover of Dissenters, and an encourager of all who preach the Gospel.'
 54 *ibid.*, pp.167-8.
 55 William Steadman, *The Salvation of Men, the Desire and Prayer of every Faithful Minister. A Sermon preached at Winterston, Wilts. 17 April 1797. Bristol, 1797.*
 56 *The Utility of Associations*, p.16.
 57 *Memoir*, p.472.
 58 *ibid.*, p.474.
 59 *Circular Letter* 1825, p.4.
 60 *ibid.*, pp.4-5.
 61 *ibid.*, p.5.
 62 *Memoir*, p.95.
 63 *ibid.*, p.99.
 64 *The Attraction of the Cross of Christ*, pp.39ff.
 65 *Memoir*, p.479.
 66 Letter to Rippon, *ibid.*, p.148.
 67 Letter no.22, 25 September 1804.
 68 William Steadman, *Hearing the Voice of God's Rod; And the Safety of True Penitents in a time of Public Calamity: the substance of two sermons preached in Broughton in Hampshire; the former Feb. 28th 1794, the latter Feb. 25th 1795, J. Caston, 1795, p.26.*
 69 *ibid.*, p.44.
 70 *The Utility of Associations*, p.18.
 71 *Memoir*, p.363.
 72 *ibid.*, p.364.
 73 *ibid.*, p.364.
 74 Michael A.G. Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul: John Sutcliffe of Olney, his friends and his times*, Darlington, 1994, p.12.
 75 Letter no.11, 10 September 1800.
 76 Letter no.19, 13 March 1803.
 77 Letter no.16, 15 November 1801.
 78 Letter no.35, 23 December 1811.
 79 Sadly this little one too died. Eighteen months saw the deaths of three children and his wife.
 80 Letter no.37, 19 September 1812.
 81 Letter no.40, 20 January 1816.
 82 *Memoir*, footnote on p.350.
 83 David Lyle Jeffrey, ed., *A Burning and a Shining Light: English Spirituality in the Age of Wesley*, Grand Rapids, 1987.
 84 Letter no.22, 25 September 1804.
 85 Letter no.15, 7 October 1801.
 86 Letter no.29, 5 June 1809.
 87 *Memoir*, p.467.
 88 *ibid.*, p.72.
 89 *ibid.*, p.72.
 90 *ibid.*, p.74.
 91 *ibid.*, p.85.
 92 *ibid.*, p.114.
 93 Letter no.15, 29 October, year unclear.
 94 e.g. *Memoir*, p.130.
 95 Letter from Revd R. Redding of Truro, 10 April 1797, *ibid.*, p.169.
 96 *ibid.*, p.13.
 97 Letter 23, 26 March 1805.
 98 Steadman, Letter to Saffery, Reeves Collection, R15/4.
 99 Payne, *Free Church Tradition*, p.21.

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Just before Christmas the Society learned of the sudden death of Dr Ian Sellers, a long-standing friend of the Society. An appreciation will appear in the Society's newsletter.